

# The US and the Caribbean

by Daniel M. Friedenber

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Although the playboy son of the late Generalissimo Rafael Trujillo is, as of this writing, formally in command of the Dominican Republic's armed forces, there is little reason for confidence that he will hold power without challenge. A strong underground is reported operating in the island and some 20,000 refugees, sworn enemies of the Trujillo family, are actively seeking a radical change in the regime. Though split into anti- and pro-Castro elements, the left-wing Dominican Liberation Movement will without doubt take a major part in any new revolutionary attempt and is considered the most militant and best organized of the opposition forces. The young leaders in exile, sooner or later, must move to fill the vacuum left by the assassination of the Dictator.

As a sympathizer in the fight against Batista and Trujillo, I visited both Cuba and the Dominican Republic several times over the past three years, talking with underground leaders in both countries. I traveled by sea into the Sierra Maestra mountains of Cuba in 1958, through the blockade, and stayed at Santiago de Cuba where I was arrested by the Batista forces. I wrote and campaigned for funds to aid the cause of Fidel Castro on my return to the United States.

I can state from personal contact that the attitude of many Dominicans in exile or in the underground today is similar to that of the early *Fidelistas*. And I would like, therefore, to try and review the tragic evolution of the Castro movement in the hope that all of us, Dominican friends included, might learn from the mistakes and miscalculations that were made by the Cubans.

Perhaps one of the major miscalculations was that instead of using Russia to counter US influence, instead of building up a strong 26th of July Movement national party, instead of proclaiming a doctrine of social democratic neutrality for all Latin America, Fidel Castro became an official member of the socialist bloc (a euphemism for Soviet satellites), gave the Cuban Communist Party a monopoly on politics and, as a result, impaired for many years the prospects for effective social democratic revolutions in Latin America.

Apologists say that what has happened in Cuba was

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an inevitable reaction to US power, in the same way some theorists said that the US would intervene when Mexico nationalized its oil, or that Stalin would destroy Yugoslavia when Tito broke loose. But to embrace this doctrine of inevitability, one must close one's eyes and mind to the realities of Indonesia, Yugoslavia, Ghana, Egypt - even Finland and Albania. The young Cuban revolutionaries brought themselves to where they are now by hardening certain truths and half-truths into rigid doctrine and then acting as though the doctrine were the only truth. They thought that previous revolutionary activity, in Mexico and especially Guatemala, set a pattern which would be typical for all Latin America, and that any revolution which did not follow this pattern was a facade for reaction.

Latin America, however, is enormous and heterogeneous, with many languages and cultures and peoples. Argentina, for example, bears as much relation to Panama as Germany does to Kenya. There are Indian cultures like those of Bolivia and Guatemala and specific white European cultures like Costa Rica and Uruguay. There are miserably poor countries, such as Bolivia and Guatemala again, and countries like Chile and Argentina with a strong middle-class. There are ardently Catholic countries, most especially Colombia, and places like Brazil where the Church is desperately searching for priests. In terms of US imperialism, there are Cuba, the Dominican Republic, Venezuela and the banana republics, where our financial interests are enormous, and others like Colombia and Paraguay where they are almost nonexistent. US investment declines as one gets farther away from geographical proximity to our borders.

In general, we might say that the areas where white settlement was dominant - Argentina, Chile, Uruguay and Costa Rica - have evolved a middle-class society which more or less resembles the culture pattern of the United States. Another group of countries is still to a large extent Indian and frightfully poverty-stricken - Paraguay, Peru, Bolivia, Ecuador and the Central American pockets. In a third group - and that which may determine the future of Latin America - are Indian lands, including Negro enclaves, with a white elite which has to some degree successfully integrated itself into the life of the nation. Here we find Brazil, Colombia, Venezuela and Mexico. Still another group is dominantly Negro and outside the main stream - Haiti, Jamaica and the smaller Caribbean islands. The race