

wasn't you who had trouble with Spanish at Harvard"). Buckley also recalls the near-perfect blindness of the American newspapers of the day, with Walter Lippmann assuring his readers: "The present Cuban military buildup is not capable of offensive action"—this, when the Soviets had already installed their missiles in Cuba.

It is much to Buckley's credit that he convincingly re-creates the very real fear and urgency of those few days after the missiles were discovered, when the whole world held its breath. And with Central America in the forefront of the news and Fidel Castro still playing his same game twenty years later, we should be grateful that Buckley has chosen to bring this apposite history once again to our attention.

There is a good reason why Buckley does such a bang-up job rendering not only the inside of the missile crisis but the character of Guevara as well. Among the twenty-two people whose assistance with the book Buckley acknowledges is Carlos Franqui, a former intimate of Castro and Guevara who wrote the classic *Diary of the Cuban Revolution, 1952-1959* and more recently *Family Portrait with Fidel* (which I reviewed in the July 1984 issue of *TAS*). In the latter book Franqui describes a Guevara disillusioned by Soviet socialism and attracted to Mao's Communism. (Guevara, of course, was to die in Bolivia when the Cultural Revolution was just getting underway—had he lived he might well have been in for some more disillusionment.) In addition to the formal acknowledgement, Buckley slips into the text of the novel a graceful tribute to Franqui's "jaunty, exuberant" editing of the newspaper *Revolución*.

But since this is Buckley's most serious and accomplished novel, I feel emboldened to register one small complaint: Why is it that our enemy (for despite all his complexity and charm, Guevara was after all the man who uttered the cry still echoing throughout Latin America: "One, two, three Vietnams!") should be relaxing with the high culture—Alfred North Whitehead, a biography of Stendahl, the poems of Garcia Lorca—while Blackford Oakes, champion of the Christian West, spends all his spare time reading Agatha Christie? There is nothing incongruous in a man of action with intellectual tastes, as Buckley, an exemplar of that sort of man if there ever was one, must surely know. Between the Cuban missile crisis and the present, there is no shortage of material for further Oakes adventures, so we can hope that Buckley upgrades his hero's reading by the time the Six Day War or the Czech invasion come along. □

FAMOUS FINANCIAL FIASCOS John Train/Clarkson N. Potter-Crown/\$8.95

Aram Bakshian, Jr.

As that great and good student of human nature, W.C. Fields, so often reminded us, "You can't cheat an honest man." Only people with flawed intellectual or moral integrity fall ready, self-made victims to get-rich-quick schemes of the sort described in John Train's amusing and gracefully written little compendium of con games.

The symbiotic relationship between the quack and the zealot eager to embrace a crank theory, or the charlatan and the speculator (more greedy than gullible), is as old as the human race. The pyramid scheme has been around a lot longer than the pyramids. Nowhere is the ancient principle of supply and demand better illustrated than in the ritual by-play between hick and huckster. When the interchange is

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on a modest or individual scale, the crime is victimless, with the smarter of two cheats coming out on top. But when, as in several cases recounted by Mr. Train, the scam is pitched to a central state authority, whole societies can be convulsed, the innocent suffering along with the guilty.

Thus, while a totally dishonest sharper like Bernie Cornfeld could only victimize individual investors stupid enough to swallow his transparently false sales pitch, Regency France could be brought to its economic knees when John Law, an émigré Scots financier, sincerely convinced the Duc d'Orléans to float the inflationary schemes of the Banque Générale.

Hence the two great lessons of Mr. Train's book: First, when unslakeable greed and invincible ignorance combine, fiasco follows; and second, the greater the involvement of the state (or influential interest groups capable of determining state policy, as in the case of Ferdinand de Lesseps' catastrophic Panama Canal company), the greater the potential damage the fiasco may inflict on innocent bystanders.

Besides entertaining us with his accounts of twenty historic cons ranging from the South Sea Bubble and seventeenth-century Dutch Tulipomania to the more recent depredations of Ivar Krueger (the Swedish Match King) and the unsavory Spanish tycoon, Juan March, Mr. Train draws a useful conclusion:

When large matters go awry, they often follow standard patterns. So perhaps this volume, like a birdwatcher's handbook, will help the reader identify some of the familiar ones—groupthink, hubris-nemesis, the Ponzi scheme, speculative manias, the "distance lends enchantment" mirage and other raptures—as they occur, alone and in combination.

Groupthink, claims Mr. Train, rules the stock market and other speculative enthusiasms because "people will go along with an authoritative leader's crazy decision even though they half-know that they are being led to perdition. They become sleepwalkers."

Great is the danger of the glib pitchman with a "convincing, but wrong, idea," because "exciting buzzwords and clever slogans often transmit fallacies, since mankind craves simple solutions to complicated problems." Communism being, needless to say, a classic case of the spurious, pseudo-scientific panacea to social and economic problems.

The hubris-nemesis syndrome, which recurs again and again in both finance and politics, may involve an initially honest, even able, leader who is driven over the judgmental edge by early successes. The illusion of invincibility leads inevitably to disaster ("It is astonishing," Mr. Train quotes Maynard Keynes as saying, "what foolish things one can temporarily believe if one thinks too long alone").

The Ponzi scheme phenomenon is as old as the hills and still drags people in by "paying off the earlier participants in a bubble with the money of the later ones. Americans encounter it regularly in pyramid clubs and door-to-door-selling organizations of the 'Dare to Be Great' variety, in which your payoff comes from recruiting salesmen, who are supposed to recruit still more salesmen, and so on ad infinitum. Something always comes along to break the flow of endless buildup. . . ." Often at play here is what Mr. Train calls the "bigger fool" theory, under which the investor willingly pays more than the real value for shares or merchandise on the assumption that someone even dumber is out there waiting to buy the stuff at an even more grotesque markup.

All so amusing . . . and all so sad. People simply will not learn. It really does seem as if certain vices and certain virtues are ingrained in the race, the good to be encouraged, the bad to be discouraged; so simple a task, and yet so endless.

If Mr. Train has any moral at all to adorn his tale, it is not his own, but that of a rather bright Swedish cabinet minister, Alex Oxenstierna, who put in his best years under Gustavus Adolphus and his semi-daughter, Christina: "*Semper vult mundus decipi: decipietur*" ("The world always wishes to be deceived; let it be deceived").

All this is to Mr. Train's credit. If he does occasionally err on the details—which he does—it is in trivial degrees, as when, in referring to the Crimean War, he writes that "dysentery killed far more British soldiers than the Turks did. . . ." One should hope so, Mr. Train, since the Turks were allied with the British against the Russians. But, then again, the whole point of *Famous Financial Fiascos* is that ignorance is invincible. How appropriate. □

SPECTATOR'S JOURNAL

IMPLANTATIONS

by Mary Ball Martínez

The Guatemalan Army of the Poor, known as the EGP and now happily extinct, was the invention of university-educated young men from well-off families. It was conceived not in the city slums or dusty villages of the home country, but in the bars and cafés of Mexico City. It was a project the planners referred to unblushingly as an "implantation." Like an artificial heart, it was to be grafted onto the living flesh of the self-contained society that makes up the Indian half of the Guatemalan people, an operation the educated young men were convinced would do the Indians good.

If, at the beginning of 1972 when the EGP was launched, no interest in rebellion was evident in any sector of Guatemala's highland regions, interest would have to be aroused. If the poor—in this case illiterate farmers—were unaware of what hurt them, the educated young men would be there to tell them. This proposal of revolution from above was virtually the same as that which would emerge a few years later in the final sessions of CELAM, the Latin American Episcopal Conference. When Pope John Paul opened the proceedings in Puebla, Mexico by declaring that priests should stay clear of political action, the bishops were quick to agree. After all, a gun-toting priest was often killed before he could pull the trigger, as in the sad case of Camilo Torres of Colombia. The role of the priest, in what the bishops considered to be an urgently needed transformation of the social order, must be limited, therefore, to arousing the faithful, showing them how they were being exploited, and letting them take it from there. Put into practice this thesis spread bloodshed and chaos over much of Latin America.

Before the liberating theologians could move in, however, ground had to be broken by professional revolutionaries, the college-bred terrorists. One of their number, Mario Payeras, a founder of the EGP, has given a lucid account of the process in a little book of memoirs called *Los Dias de la Selva*

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("Jungle Days"). I was told about the book by Col. René Carballo, comandante of Guatemala's 14th Military Zone at Solola. "You won't find it for sale here," he said. "In Mexico, yes. It tells the real story of how the subversion began in the northwest. I know, I was stationed there all during the 1970s." I finally found it at a leftist bookseller's near the National University of Mexico. Printed in Cuba in 1980, and far from being a political tract, *Los Dias de la Selva* is written with sensitivity and care for detail.

The account begins in January 1972, with the author and fourteen companions slipping into Guatemala from Mexico by night. Although their field of operations would be the mountains of Huehuetenango, for greater safety they came in through lowland jungle farther north. Penetrating only far enough to be out of range of border patrols, they cleared ground for a small base, storing a modest supply of food and ammunition, cooking by campfire, and listening to radio news from nearby countries. Payeras calls the little camp "an implantation, the culmination of several years of feverish preparation abroad."

The men were acutely aware they had not a single contact in Guatemala, and they remembered the warning of Mao Tse-tung: The guerrilla without peasant support is like a fish without water. "Our thoughts went back to the defeat and death of Che Guevara in Bolivia where the lone, hunted guerrilla fighter lacked any base among the peasantry." Attempts to implant socialism in eastern Guatemala nearly a decade earlier had come to nothing because no support could be found among the people. This time around the guerrillas were determined to give absolute priority to gaining the sympathy of the indigenous farmers of the western mountains.

By day they hunted pheasant and armadillo, taking frequent hikes into the steaming jungle in the hope of finding habitations. But their only brush with human beings came when two hunters passed their camp. When the strangers asked too many questions, the guerrilla

band decided it was time to move on. First, however, they felt they should alert their "cell" back in Mexico City with a terrorist act that would reach the media. Accordingly, they crept back to the frontier under cover of darkness and seized a small airfield belonging to the Mexican border patrol. After setting fire to the two miniature planes and raiding the food and ammunition stores they loaded their booty onto two police launches and set off up the Lacantún River. (Payeras makes no mention of the fate of the border guards, who must have been overcome as they slept.)

Upriver by morning they could hear the din of both Mexican and Guatemalan search planes overhead. They disembarked and set off into the jungle to begin what the author calls "the most terrible days" of marching from dawn to dusk, weighted down with provisions, bathed in sweat, and tortured by insects. Their passage through the tangled growth was very slow since they dared not hack their way and leave a swath visible from the air. At times they slogged through swamps up to their thighs. Payeras notes that if any of them had dared at that point to mention taking power and creating a new society, he would have been shouted down with obscenities. Except for two Indian boys, who, the author says, "never understood why we were going through all this," the guerrillas were city-bred, unused to physical hardships.

Food supplies were exhausted when the band finally reached a settlement. To their consternation, "the villagers fled into the jungle as soon as they became aware of our presence. We tried to call them, then to run after them and catch them, but soon we found ourselves standing all alone in the middle of the only street." One old man, too weak to flee, told them the name of the place was Rubelolom. To their requests for rice, beans, salt, sugar, he would only repeat, "*macá, macá*." They knew it was the Mayan word for "there isn't any," but, Payeras says, "it meant a much more terrible thing to us. It meant utter rejection by those people we had come to teach." (That the hungry men raided the abandoned

huts must be taken for granted.)

Finally reaching higher, cooler country they came on an occasional ranch or small village. Invariably greeted with "*macá*" they regularly seized food at gunpoint. Payeras, understandably, does not state the fact, but farmers in Huehuetenango will tell you that is what happened. In the high mountain village of San Mateo Ixtatan the parish priest, a Maryknoll from Idaho, told me the mayor was suspended by his jawbone for four hours until he agreed to order the villagers to work for the rebels and feed them.

Around campfires at night the fifteen continued to thrash out the baffling problem of *macá*. They could obtain food and even labor by force but not cooperation. "No one would tell us where the paths led, where other villages were. What were they afraid of? Above all, why were they indifferent to our message? Months came and went, but we could find no way to penetrate the consciousness of these people."

Soul searching of this kind discouraged the two Indian youths. One slipped away in the night. When the other asked to be allowed to return to his family, the group became alarmed. What would he tell about them? A kind of trial was held and, Payeras says, "reluctantly, a death sentence was passed. There was no other way. We had to shoot him and we did it in the forest on a summer morning when all the birds were singing. When it was over we were surprised to feel a sense of having matured. We were better warriors now."

But as yet there was no war. Other clandestine groups had entered the country, they knew, but there was no encouraging news from any part of Guatemala. Several Communist cells in the capital had not prospered, and in the rich plantations along the coast workers remained indifferent. Payeras thought he knew the reason: "An organization created for war does not prosper in peace." Action was needed.

Not until the spring of 1975, however, when another small band filtered in from Mexico to augment the ranks of Payeras's group, did they agree on what action to take. The formula was simple: To arouse the people they