

MARTIN KENNER and JAMES PETRAS, Eds.: *Fidel Castro Speaks*. New York, Grove Press, Inc., 1969.

THE CUBAN REVOLUTION has been an inspiration to many, particularly the young, both in the United States and in Latin America. While its appeal has perhaps diminished with time, it still has a visible impact, for example, on the thinking of the New Left in the United States. For radical leftist groups, Castro's speeches are the fount from which revolutionary ideas flow. The duty of every revolutionary, therefore, is not only to make revolution but also to purify himself by bathing in Castro's baptismal stream.

It is doubtless for this reason that Martin Kenner, an activist in "The Movement" and a writer for the underground press, and James Petras, a professor of political science at Pennsylvania State University, have prepared this volume of Castro's speeches. They explain in their introduction that "particular aspects of the Cuban struggle, and Fidel's articulation of them, are of most interest to the youth [of the United States]—blacks, GIs and students—who are themselves in struggle."

In selecting the 16 speeches reprinted in the book, the editors evidently chose two particular themes in Castro's thought which they considered most appropriate to their audience: 1) the necessity for revolutionaries to create for themselves the necessary conditions for struggle rather than waiting for material conditions to sweep them into power; and 2) the vision of a Communist society and a "new socialist man." All the selections revolve around these two themes.

Mr. Kenner has supplied a short editorial note for each speech, but some of these notes are at best superficial and often misleading. Mr. Kenner explains, for example, that in the latter part of 1966 the Cuban revolutionary leadership shifted its support away from the official Communist parties in Latin America towards militant activist groups committed to armed guerrilla warfare. But he claims that this shift "involved an analysis of revolutionary strategy" (p. 146)—in other words, that the sole reason for Castro's shift was his estimate that armed struggle was the correct strategy to attain power. Yet, Castro's advocacy of armed struggle has fluctuated, depending on the

balance between his own desire to control the Latin American revolutionary movement and his need to obtain concessions, particularly military and economic aid, from the Soviet Union to bolster Cuba's faltering economy, rather than on any estimate of the strategic situation. Perhaps the best evidence of this was provided by Castro's August 23, 1968, speech approving the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia—a speech not included in this volume. With Cuba in serious economic difficulties, Castro pragmatically endorsed the Soviet action, reduced his own commitment to armed struggle, and parroted the Soviet line in Latin America. However, the editors choose to ignore the complexity of Soviet-Cuban relations and do not even consider the possibility that Castro's policies in Latin America may have been largely influenced by his need to reach and preserve an accommodation with the Kremlin.

The book is particularly weakened by the editors' omission of any of Castro's speeches showing either a departure from his insistence on armed struggle or his subservience to the Soviet Union. The Fidel Castro that speaks in these pages is, therefore, a different Castro from the one that speaks today.

The editorial notes are further vitiated by outright errors of fact. For instance, on p. 107, the editors refer to the October 1962 missile crisis both as "the Caribbean crisis in the fall of 1964" and as "the Caribbean crisis in October 1963."

Despite these serious shortcomings, the book does make available for the first time in English some of Castro's significant speeches. Whether they will, as the editors apparently hope, become a guide for American revolutionaries is difficult to say. It is hard to believe that Castro's more recent actions, particularly his justification of the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia and his generally increased subservience to the Kremlin, as well as the soft-pedaling of his support for revolutionary movements elsewhere in Latin America, will commend his ideas to American youth. Those who idolize Castro fail to contrast his speeches with his actions. The young people, in particular, fail to see that the real Cuba emphasizes military service and the regimentation of daily life, glorifies work and discipline, and criticizes the young for "doing their own thing." They also fail to realize that the outcome of the revolutionary

effort to which Cuban youth contributed so much has been not a freer, more liberal society, but rather the sort of authoritarianism that the leaders of the American extremist Left would like to impose.

Jaime Suchlicki

## Venezuela's CP

ROBERT J. ALEXANDER: *The Communist Party of Venezuela*. Stanford, Calif., Hoover Institution Press, 1969.

THE AUTHOR of this latest volume in the Hoover Institution series on Comparative Communist Party Politics is the most prominent American writer on Venezuelan affairs and a respected expert, in particular, on the *Accion Democratica* movement and its founder, Romulo Betancourt. At the same time, the Communist Party of Venezuela (PCV) has had one of the most interesting histories of all the Latin American Communist movements, weathering almost a decade of military dictatorship and becoming deeply enmeshed in the ideological struggles involving Havana, Moscow, and Peking. The PCV also illustrates dramatically the conflict between the disciplinary requirements of international communism and the Latin personality characteristics so deeply ingrained in the body politic in South and Central America.

Given this combination of established expertise and a fascinating topic, one would expect a vital contribution to the study of Communist operations in a free society. Unfortunately, however, Mr. Alexander's book falls short of this expectation.

As a factual primer on the history of the PCV, the study benefits from the author's unique appreciation of the Venezuelan scene and his perception of the struggle of fragile democratic movements in Latin America, and it should provide a handy reference for students of Venezuelan affairs. On the other hand, it offers only shallow insight into the interaction between the PCV and international Communist developments. The dramatic splits within the Venezuelan Communist movement are readily accessible to public view and shed

important light on the Sino-Soviet dispute as well as on Moscow's problems with Castro. Alexander barely touches on these questions and—beyond quoting at length from documents of the Venezuelan government police (*Dipegol*)—fails to discuss the blatant Cuban attempt to intervene directly with men, money, and arms in support of the unsuccessful Castroite guerrilla movement in Venezuela.

Soviet support of the PCV's armed-struggle tactics both in their original phase and in the later stage of Cuban domination is repeatedly questioned by Alexander. Yet the facts reveal Soviet complicity in both instances. Police arrests of terrorist units in Caracas uncovered a number of professional international Communist operatives (including several Spanish technicians from the staff of the notorious Soviet expert, General Lister, who was training subversives in Cuba). Soviet complicity was also evident in the Beltramini affair, which Alexander naively attributes solely to the Italian Communist Party.\*

Mr. Alexander is also not entirely correct in claiming that the PCV has lost its influence among professional organizations as a result of its unsuccessful resort to armed struggle. The party still dominates the association of journalists and student and faculty groups at the University of Caracas.

Finally, the author underestimates the tremendous advantages enjoyed by the Communists under the Perez Jimenez military dictatorship, emphasizing instead the difficulties the PCV faced in operating illegally. In fact, Perez Jimenez tolerated the operation of one PCV faction and ignored the underground activities of the other, while aggressively attacking the genuine liberal-democratic forces. When the dictatorship was overthrown in 1958, the Communists emerged as a strong, relatively well-disciplined, and reasonably popular political force, although these resources were, as Alexander correctly notes, dissipated as a result of the party's ill-starred romance with armed struggle.

**Kempton B. Jenkins**

\*Beltramini, an Italian Communist, was caught by the Venezuelan police in 1964 when he tried to enter the country with a large shipment of cash apparently intended for the PCV and its guerrilla activities. The evidence clearly indicated that the money came from Communist international operating funds controlled by the Soviets.

## Cuba's Students

JAIME SUCHLICKI: *University Students and Revolution in Cuba, 1920-1968*. Coral Gables, University of Miami Press, 1968.

THIS BOOK OFFERS an interesting case study of the fate of a revolutionary student movement, both before and after the consummation of an actual revolution. Focusing on the student body of the University of Havana, the author, currently on the faculty of the University of Miami and a research associate of its Center for Advanced International Studies, describes the struggle of the Cuban student activists for an autonomous university and a better nation.

Starting with the university reform movement of the 1920's, he follows in some detail the students' fight against the dictatorship of Machado (1928-33) and Batista (1934-44), their frustration resulting from the failure of the *Auténtico* party (a democratic left-wing party led by a former university professor and student leaders in opposition to Batista in 1935-1944) to fulfill its promises of structural changes in the universities, the institutional breakdown of the educational and political system caused by Batista's *coup d'état* in 1952, and the subsequent rebellion against the dictator. One of the most precious goals of the student movement—university autonomy—was realized after the 1933 Revolution and was consecrated in the 1940 Constitution. But this achievement was subverted by gangs of pseudo-students become political activists. Under the shelter of academic immunity, they engaged in political infighting and intimidated their professors and the university administrators in order to pass examinations without studying and to obtain academic sinecures.

The student goal of developing a better nation, which seemingly had been realized with Castro's revolutionary triumph of 1959, was also bound to be frustrated. Stating that as a result of the revolution the state and the university had become identical and that conflict between them was therefore impossible, Castro seized control of the student movement and proceeded to eliminate university autonomy. Suchlicki describes numerous tactics used to achieve these purposes: public opinion

was mobilized against student leaders challenging Castro's power; government support was given to a loyalist pseudo-student in his candidacy for the presidency of the Federation of University Students (FEU); charges of counterrevolutionary activity were directed against non-conforming professors and students; the militia, a paramilitary organization, was ordered to occupy university buildings; and discharged faculty members were replaced with loyal but incompetent revolutionaries.

In 1962, the former president of the Communist Party (PSP), Juan Marinello (a former cabinet member under the first Batista's administration), who had criticized the students' attempt to kill the dictator in 1957, was appointed rector of the University of Havana. The independent FEU disappeared five years later, merged with the League of Young Communists (UJC). The new status of the university was defined by its new rector in 1966 as follows: "In countries like Cuba, where the people are running the country through their government, university autonomy is really something that is quite illogical. The university is part of the state. . . ."

According to Suchlicki, political participation and intellectual pluralism at the Cuban universities have been sacrificed to the cause of intellectual uniformity and mobilization behind the state's economic plans. However, Castro's university reform has corrected two significant weaknesses of the prerevolutionary system of education by providing channels for the upward mobility of gifted individuals and filling the nation's need for technicians.

This has been accomplished by developing special programs which prepare workers and peasants for enrollment in the university (where most of them study on scholarships), and by a shift in career orientation away from traditional humanistic studies toward science and technology. But the costs have been high; they include the elimination of democracy in the student movement, eradication of university autonomy, elimination of student independence (university admission and the distribution of scholarships are based on party loyalty), and the mobilization of the students for labor tasks at the expense of study time. Structural changes in the administration have resulted in the deterioration in the quality of teaching and an increase in student absenteeism.