

does not discuss this point sufficiently. He does, however, talk at length about the "fusion" of revolutionary groups and the Communist Party in Cuba.

"Since Castro took power without a real ideology, a real army, or a real party," Draper writes, "he could conceivably have survived without them only by making his power consistent with his promises, and thus holding his original backing together. But this is precisely what he chose not to do." The author offers what is perhaps a stronger reason: "Fidel Castro must certainly be ranked with the greatest mass intoxicators of the century, but no one is likely to mistake him for a creative political thinker."

So he went to the cadres and ideology of the Communist group, which needed him for two reasons: the Cuban Reds had a black past of collaboration with Fulgencio Batista and opposition to revolutionary action, and they lacked the *mystique* Castro seemed to communicate to the masses.

It took a year, Draper points out, to manage the "troublesome and ticklish transfiguration" of Castro into a professed Communist, but today the result is a United Party of the Revolution "built on Marxist-Leninist principles" and run by what these leaders call "democratic centralism."

Before going into the third issue—what next?—it is worth while to scan other pages for indications of Draper's estimate of Castro's strength. The picture is adverse to Castro, and it could be worse were it not for the blunders of the Western democracies. The signs:

"Removal of Cuba from the American economic sphere of influence did not mean economic liberation of Cuba. It merely exchanged dependence on the United States for more dependence on the Soviet Bloc," a dependence that, because of distance and other factors, is "an economic monstrosity."

SINCE then, Draper says, Cuba has suffered a decline from the previous standard of living, serious shortages for the past year of basic goods and services, long queues of disappointed housewives, and worker absenteeism that is openly described by Che Guevara, one of Castro's advisers, as of alarming proportions. Even the basic sugar industry has gone from bad to worse, indicating how deep is the failure of Castro's land program. After fully entering the "forced industrialization" phase characteristic of Communist-dominated countries, the Cuban people are told to make sacrifices for the future, work harder for less pay, and speed up the State plan.

What future, then? Draper writes:

As long as there are men in Cuba who believe in civil liberties, representative government, land reform instead of Soviet-style state farms, freedom of expression, association with the democratic West and free trade unions, there will be an underground, and despite the present setback [he was writing shortly after the April invasion in 1961], it will revive and grow. If no one else will provide the necessary conditions for its growth, Castro and the Communists will do so.

But no anti-Castro movement can resist Russian tanks and Czechoslovak machine guns with sympathy alone. It would be more humane and more honest to advise any movement not to resist than to resist with bare hands. Castro's democratic opponents have the right and the duty to obtain arms where they can.

If the Castro-Communism alliance was mobilized by mutual need, to what extent is such need going to help Cuba survive present tribulations? Draper is cautious on this: "As long as the Communists need him at least as much as he needs them, further surprises cannot be ruled out; Fidel's ego may give the Communists as much trouble as it has given many others." But "he has gone so far [in turning over all levers of power to the Communists] that, if he should break with them, he would invite civil war in his own ranks, bring on [further] economic disaster by forfeiting Soviet support, and totally denude himself politically and morally."

ALTHOUGH "it does not seem more far-fetched that Cuba should set off a Latin American revolution than that the tiny group in the Sierra Maestra should have set off a Cuban revolution," Draper notes that "to this must be added the conviction that the Cuban revolution cannot be finally victorious without a Latin American revolution, and that a Latin-American revolution cannot be finally victorious without a revolution in the United States."

Save for some minor areas of disagreement, the majority of experienced observers of the Cuban situation can easily concur with Mr. Draper's evaluation of the basic issues in Castro's revolution. The rest can also profit much from his book, for he seems to grasp most of the Cuban realities. This is why it is so regrettable that he fails to appreciate the role of spiritual values in the whole process, not only those within the framework of Western Christian civilization, in which Castro's revolution is taking place, but also José Martí's ideology, which has had such an impact on the entire movement. Draper comes to the edge of the question when dealing with the problem of "conscience" facing those *Fidelistas* torn between the original aims and the first discovery of "betrayal," but he should have given it more attention.

Another aspect slighted by the author is the ghost of what once was a living system of corruption, wickedness, cruelty, and exploitation, which still hangs over Cuba. Fear of returning to the "old past" is holding back those men and women in whom Mr. Draper places the hope of a successful beginning to the end of Castro's revolution.

Your Literary I. Q.

Conducted by John T. Winterich

BE A WISE OLD BIRD

Louise Darcy of Biddeford, Maine, offers a group of words each of which contains the letters O. W. and L in that order but with varying intervals between. She asks you to fill in the blank spaces on the basis of the appended definitions. Completions on page 49.

- | | |
|-----------------------|-------------------------|
| 1. _ O W _ _ _ _ L | ruin |
| 2. _ O W _ L | end of spur |
| 3. _ O W _ _ L _ | American novelist |
| 4. _ _ O W L _ _ | furtive quester |
| 5. _ _ O W _ _ _ L _ | on purpose |
| 6. _ O W _ L _ _ | wild flower |
| 7. _ _ O _ W _ _ L | Seventeenth century VIP |
| 8. _ _ O W _ _ _ L _ | every whale has one |
| 9. _ O W _ L _ _ | Kipling character |
| 10. _ _ _ O W _ _ L _ | not forbidden |
| 11. _ _ O W _ L | garden tool |
| 12. _ O W _ L | wooden pin |
| 13. _ _ O W _ L _ _ | device used in winter |
| 14. _ O W _ _ L | American poet |

The Travail of an Indigent Shepherd

"Revolt in Aspromonte," by **Corrado Alvaro**, translated by Frances Frenaye (New Directions, 120 pp. Hardbound, \$3; paperback, \$1.35), tells of Italian peasants whose livelihood is choked off by the cruel caprice of feudal landowners. Alice Ellen Mayhew devotes much of her critical attention to foreign literature.

By ALICE ELLEN MAYHEW

THIS short book is a minor classic, written with great economy and understated ferocity. It is a product of the Italian South, which, like our own, has an extraordinarily rich literary heritage. An unusual number of talented writers (three of the four Italian Nobel Literature Prize-winners) have dramatized its social and economic predicament and have vividly portrayed the barren terrain with its decaying manor, ragged children, and docile peasants at the mercy of the landowners, the moneylenders, the elements, and every piece of bad luck. Alvaro has remarked that one could love this country only if one was born into it.

"Revolt in Aspromonte" describes a village in this poor and rocky land, and an indigent shepherd's struggle to free himself from the system that is throttling him. It was written in 1930, when the southern province of Calabria was literally still a feudal society, because the liberation of the Kingdom of the Two Sicilies with its supposed redistribution of the land had done nothing for the peasants and had simply increased the fortunes of the aristocracy. The village of Aspromonte was what it had always been, a cluster of tiny rustic houses built around the palace of the Mezzatesta family, who owned all the fields, farms, and animals by which the peasants eked out their living.

The struggle that takes place in this setting is between the shepherd Argiro, who has just lost his oxen, and the decadent members of that family, to whom he appeals for help. Alvaro masterfully pictures the plight of the shepherd as he stands before the fat, scornful *patrone*, head bowed, twisting his hat, answering the mocking questions respectfully. At last he stalks out, determined to fight back. This incident,



—Brain, Magnum.
". . . one could love this country only if one was born into it."

which changes Argiro's life, makes an indelible impression on his young son, who has stood wondering by as his father is degraded and dismissed.

They visit the village moneylender, a crass and shrewd man who takes advantage of the uncomplaining peasants after the cruelty of the landowners has reduced them to desperation. With borrowed funds Argiro manages to get on his feet again, but he is still smarting under the blows of his oppressors, and his children's lives begin more and more to be shaped by their father's wish for revenge.

Argiro's eldest son, the gentle Antonello, goes away to work so that he can help to send the talented youngest son, Benedetto, to the seminary. The novel achieves its greatest poignance in the scene where Antonello, treated by his family with the kindness shown one about to start on a long, sad journey, realizes that he is a man.

We watch the family grow stronger in their hopes for Benedetto: Antonello, sweetly proud of him; the father, a trifle foolishly boastful; the mother, both afraid and trusting; the two deaf-mute little brothers, awed and respectful; and Benedetto himself, sure, ascetic,

talking quietly, with his lids fluttering. For Argiro, Benedetto is to be the answer to centuries of oppression. The poor peasant is to have a spokesman. Then disaster strikes again. In a frivolous act of cruelty, three sons of Camillo Mezzatesta set fire to Argiro's barn; the mule is destroyed, and the entire support of Benedetto falls on Antonello, who collapses under the strain.

When Antonello finds out who has caused his family this final misery, he returns to Aspromonte as a kind of avenging god. At this point the tale becomes a parable, and Antonello is no longer the gentle son of a poor shepherd, but the spirit of the oppressed everywhere who sacrifices himself by a terrible vengeance to redeem his brothers. The last two chapters are saved from abstractness only by the author's passion, which raises his story to tragedy.

What Alvaro is stating is that there can be no dignity for man without justice. At the end, when Antonello goes down to meet the police, he says, "At last I have met Justice face to face. It has taken me long enough to catch up with Her and say what I have to say."