

TRANSCRIPT OF BROADCAST

By
Fulton Lewis, Jr.

Station WOL at 7-7:15 P. M.
1 January 1959

A very happy, new year to you, ladies and gentlemen, But if you happen to be in the little island republic of Cuba, it is not so happy because that island is torn with riots and bloodshed; the city of Havana is completely out of control; Santa Clara fell to the Fidel Castro rebels last night; his armies now are marching now on Havana; and President Fulgencio Batista has been overthrown and has fled for his life to the Dominican Republic together with most of the top side of his cabinet. With him in his flight was Andres Rivera Aguerro, the president elect who was handpicked by Batista to succeed him in the elections of last November 3rd which Castro and his rebels refused to recognize on the grounds that they were fraudulent, which they very probably were because fraudulent elections are pretty much standard equipment for all Latin American dictators. Batista left behind him a three-man military junta which very clearly is going to be short lived because Castro's leaders have already announced that the junta is unacceptable to them. Under Cuban law the senior justice of the Supreme Court, in this case Carlos M. Piedra, automatically becomes the provisional president and he issued an immediate appeal to the Castro rebels for a cease fire. He might have saved himself the trouble, however, because the main portion of violence was not the doing of the Castro forces on their way up from Santa Clara, but right there in Havana on the part of mobs and rioters who broke into stores, pillaged the stores, smashed windows and doors, rode through the streets with volleys of indiscriminate gunplay and generally tearing the city into bedlam. There are no reports of any American casualties as yet, but that may be because no information is coming out of the city or indeed within the city is obtainable. Hotels have locked and barred their doors and all guests have been ordered to stay in their rooms, but the turmoil continues and the civilian police make no effort to control the mobs. In fact one dispatch says that no police were in evidence on the street throughout most of the day.

The armed forces apparently have gone over to Castro's side and the main forces at Havana, at Camp Colombia, are remaining there apparently awaiting his orders.

Batista's 25-year-old son fled to Jacksonville, Florida with 52 other refugees. He said his father's decision to leave Cuba came very quickly--which seems to be a masterpiece of understatement--in the small hours of this morning and nobody had time to gather up anything except the barest personal belongings. They boarded respective planes at the military airport at Camp Colombia from which, day before yesterday, Cuban air force planes were maintaining a continuous round of missions against the rebels at Santa Clara hoping to suppress the revolution in Batista's behalf.

Young Batista said his father made his decision in the hope that it would pacify the people and end the bloodshed, and that President Batista wants only peace for the Cuban people. The son went on to say that some of the revolutionaries have good intentions, but there is a large number of them who are fortune seekers and that there is a very dangerous Communist influence. He said that several of Castro's chief lieutenants are members of the Communist party and that the rebel movement has strong Communist backing. He said they probably are a minority of the Castro movement but they are the best organized minority and they have great influence in shaping Castro's policies in such cases as promising a partition of privately owned land and nationalization of industries and other measures of socialistic tendency.

That Communist question was uppermost in all minds here in Washington, too, make no mistake about it, although nobody seems to have any answer to it. Assistant Secretary of State Roy Rubottom, Jr., in charge of Latin American affairs, was questioned about it yesterday even before the climax of this revolution, before a closed session of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, and he didn't have any definitive answer either. The best he was able to come up with was the negative statement that "I am aware of no evidence that there is any organized Communist element in the rebel movement."

Just where the CIA, Mr. Allen Dulles's Central Intelligence Agency, has been in all this, if this government doesn't have any better information than that, would seem to be open to serious question. Cuba after all is a very easy country in which to operate when it comes to intelligence. It couldn't be easier, and yet the State Department comes up with answers of this kind, "No information." This much can be said, the

leaders in exile in the Miami area certainly are not Communist in any sense of the word, nor is former President Carlos Prío Socarras, who has been the key figure in all of these activities. He has been in exile in Miami since March 10, 1952, when he and his government were overthrown in a bloodless coup d'etat by Batista. He said that he would try to fly to Havana this afternoon in the hope that he can be of assistance in restoring order.

(From here on the broadcast made no further reference to CIA).