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 This Stranger
 P. Dooley, George

Finally, an Objective Film on Cuba

By PAUL D. BETHEL

Finally, television has produced an objective film on Cuba and Cuban exiles living in this country. More surprising still, the film is the product of WPBT, Channel 2, Miami, in cooperation with the Corporation for Public Broadcasting. The reader will recall assaults made on the public conscience by such NET productions as "Report from Cuba," "Three Faces of Cuba," and that latest film abortion, "Fidel!" which is now making its rounds of college campuses under the auspices of radical groups.

The latest venture into the Cuban political controversy is "This Exile and This Stranger." In a filmed introduction, George Dooley, president of Miami's WPBT, Channel 2, has the temerity to say: "To tell the personal story of the Cubans in America, we have called upon the only qualified authority—the only expert on the subject—the Cuban exiles themselves."

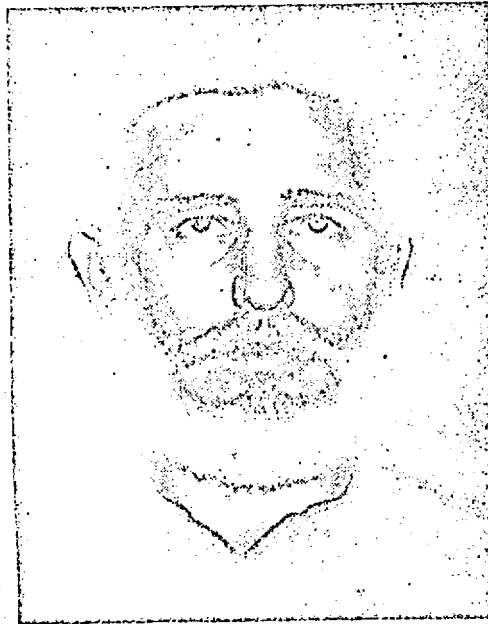
Dooley heightens his risk of political decapitation at the hands of enraged liberals by also giving a few facts about pre-Castro Cuba, saying: "Before Fidel Castro, Cuba, when compared with other Latin American countries, had a remarkably high standard of living. The small country of Cuba was fifth in per capita literacy, fourth in gross national product, third in medicine, and, in the field of communication, first in the ownership of television and radio sets."

Mr. Dooley notes that any number of statistical studies attesting to the industry and progress of the Cuban exile have been made. But he also notes that the human story of Cuban exiles—why they left Cuba, their fears, hopes and frustrations, has remained untold on the screen.

Producer Bill Chastain (winner of a Peabody Award last year) takes it from there. There is no script. The viewer is spared the preaching of a narrator who hauls witnesses before the camera to support his views. Thus, the one-hour film adroitly avoids the pitfalls into which "on-the-spot," made-in-Cuba (viz: Mike Wallace of CBS, for example) preachments inevitably fall.

Life as it is in Castro's Cuba is a by-product of a very human story emerging from myriad interviews taken on camera—a butcher, a woman architect, an executive editor of a newspaper taken over by force of arms, Cuban youngsters, a housewife, a fisherman who escaped with his wife by small boat, even chaperones at a teen-age party in Miami.

Scenes taken of Cubans arriving at Miami International Airport, fear and apprehension sketched into their almost



Most Cubans found out that exchanging Fulgencio Batista for Fidel Castro was no bargain.

sleep-walking transit from airplane to "Freedom House," heart-wrenching shots of these pitiful refugees sobbing as they clench small welcome gifts given by Cuban-organized committees in Miami and the wordless, frantic embraces between exile and newly arrived refugee, tell more about the decade of terror living under Fidel Castro's Communist regime than reams of copy.

Ironically, the short introduction at the beginning of the film has unidentified American voices complaining: "You have to speak Spanish here today to get a tank of gas... I said they oughta go

back to Cuba, and I meant that... I just don't like it, Cubans taking jobs of the Negroes 'cause they work for lower wages...."

As the viewer straightens in his chair, the camera follows a white-haired Cuban lady shopping in Miami's "little Havana," then freezes on her lined face as the famous words of poet Steven Vincent Benet flash on the screen, read by a powerful voice:

"Remember, that when you say I will have none of this exile and this stranger, for his face is not like my face and his speech is strange, you have denied America with that word."

These words set the stage for what follows—a lively hour of both education and entertainment as the Cuban exiles tell of their life in a strange land, and why they came here.

They tell how, each in his own way, they counted on U.S. help to save them from communism, trace their bitterness to our faltering resolve at the Bay of Pigs with a repeat performance during the missile crisis and feel that the lodgment of Soviet power in Cuba is taken much too lightly in this country.

But they are also reaching a new maturity, perhaps an understanding that Cuba is not the only point of friction and confrontation between two irreconcilable ideologies and come up with a resolve of their own that somehow, some way, the Cubans must liberate their country.

Not all those interviewed will go back to a liberated homeland. A young girl articulates this point of view, saying: "I feel Cuban but I also feel American. I was brought up in this country." Time after time, Cuban exiles say they want to "visit" Cuba but have no plans to live there—principally the youth.

But it is also youths who tell how the Castro regime steals everything from those who intend to leave the country. And there is remarkable unanimity among even those who do not intend to return that Cuba must be liberated.