

Cuba's Perennial Rebel

Manuel Antonio de Varona

MANUEL ANTONIO DE VARONA Y LOREDO, now here helping to draft a program for Cuba's "new revolution," has been a revolutionary for thirty-seven of his fifty-two years.

He is one of the seven members of the Revolutionary Council formed to unite all

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anti-Castro exile groups, but he is usually regarded as the true driving force of the unity movement. He first

served as coordinator general of the Democratic Revolutionary Front, uniting five of the most important groups. On March 21 they succeeded in reaching agreement on union with the major outstanding movement, the Revolutionary Movement of the People.

It is hard to picture Dr. de Varona leading an expedition of revolutionary firebrands. He is mild-mannered and soft-voiced. His political views are democratic and nonauthoritarian and he talks in moderate terms of the situation and his aims.

But he was arrested the first time in 1924, when he was not yet 16 years old, for taking part in anti-Government demonstrations. He has taken part in at least five revolutionary movements since then, before the one against Fidel Castro. In the anti-Castro movement he has played a leading role.

Dr. de Varona has been "coordinator general" of the Democratic Revolutionary Front because its components would not have a chief. There were several reasons for that refusal. Members of the front say that, basically, they are afraid any chief would develop through force of circumstances into another Fulgencio Batista or Fidel Castro. They have had enough of strong-man leaders.

Another factor the members are less ready to admit is that none of the five groups in the front wants to delegate full powers of leadership to a member of any other group.

From a headquarters in a modest house in Miami, Dr. de Varona has been directing propaganda, fund-raising and the recruiting of young Cubans from all the anti-Castro groups to be trained for fighting.

The coordinator general is about 5 feet 8 inches tall, of medium build, partly bald and sallow of complexion. He wears heavy horn-rimmed glasses.

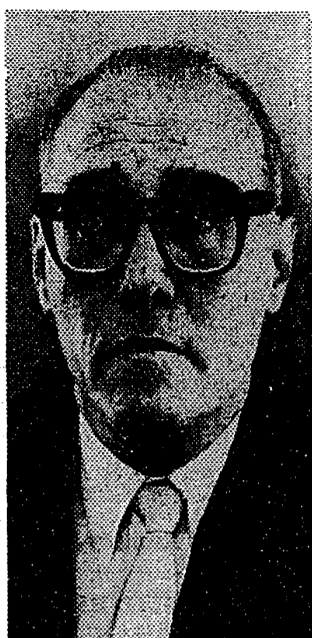
He is dignified but affable. He has a strong sense of his own importance but he is not pompous.

They Call Him Tony

His full name is long and complicated but, in general, he is known even to strangers and his subordinates simply as Tony Varona. The Loredo on the end of the name is his mother's family name and is not generally used.

Dr. de Varona was born Nov. 25, 1908, in Camaguey, Cuba, the son of middle class parents. He went to the local school, the Instituto de Camaguey, and there began his political career. He was arrested at 15 for demonstrating against the Government.

He was a leader in the school, president of the Stu-



The New York Times
*Miami is his favorite
place of exile.*

dent Association and founder of a magazine called The Student's Voice.

He was graduated in 1927 and went on to study law at the University of Havana. Because of many political interludes and periods of exile, he did not get his law degree until 1938.

In September, 1930 he was wounded by the police during a demonstration against the dictatorship of Gerardo Machado. After nearly a year in jail, he went into exile.

The cycle of revolt, jail and exile continued. He took part in another revolt in Camaguey Province in August 1931, went through jail and exile again and returned to join in the revolution that overthrew the Machado Government on Aug. 12, 1933.

He led a general strike movement against the first Government of Fulgencio Batista in March, 1935, and spent another year in jail before going into exile.

Dr. de Varona's first public office was as representative for Camaguey Province in Congress in 1940. In October, 1947, President Carlos Prío Socarras named Dr. de Varona Premier. He resigned three years later to accept the Presidency of the Senate.

His many periods of exile have been spent in a number of places, but Miami has always been his favorite. In Miami, late in 1957, Dr. de Varona took a leading part in forming a Cuban Liberation Junta (committee) which grouped seven anti-Batista organizations, including Fidel Castro's.

Dr. de Varona never held any post under Dr. Castro and was one of the first leaders to break with the Castro regime.

For all his revolutionary background, Dr. de Varona is not a radical. His rebellion has been against dictatorship and suppression of personal freedom.

In exile he has been living in a smart stucco house on San Marino Island, between Miami and Miami Beach, with his wife, Emelina, and their children, Carlos, 18, and Emelina, 12.