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FROM : HABANA 1202 December 4, 1950

2 Enclosures

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REF :

SUBJECT : CUBAN ECONOMIST COMMENTS ON LOWRY NELSON'S RURAL CUBA

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The distinguished Cuban economist and publicist, Dr. Ramiro GUERRA Sanchez, in commenting on Professor Lowry NELSON's Rural Cuba (University of Minnesota Press) in an article published November 26, 1950, in the Habana daily Diario de la Marina, summarized Dr. Nelson's work as follows:

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"...Professor Nelson's study, while extremely valuable ... is not sufficiently ample to give a comprehensive idea of the socio-economic problems of Cuba's rural population. In my opinion, without a full knowledge of those problems, a far-reaching policy of rural betterment cannot be planned. I therefore ... suggest to our Minister of Agriculture ... that he consider this issue ... rendered live by Professor Nelson's work."

In his article, copies and translation of which are transmitted herewith, Dr. Guerra outlined the scope of Professor Nelson's book and how it came about. Guerra also referred to his own frequent but unsuccessful efforts in the past to prevail upon the Cuban Government to undertake complete socio-economic studies. "Although my suggestions were applauded, I do not know whether anything was done in this respect."

CONFIDENTIAL: This last sentence obviously is cynical. Had the Government done anything, Dr. Guerra would have heard about it. The project which Dr. Guerra prepared several years ago for a socio-economic study of the rural population, like many other worthwhile plans, was shelved along with the scholarly bibliography attached to it. The tendency on the part of Government officials to discredit those of preceding administrations does not make for continuity in projects of this nature.

That basic socio-economic studies and social work are needed in Cuba is apparent from the squallor in which part of the Cuban rural population lives, portrayed to an extent in the snapshot below taken on a

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visit to coffee producing areas in Oriente Province.



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For the Ambassador:

*DuWayne G. Clark*  
DuWayne G. Clark  
Counselor of Embassy

Enclosures:

1. Copy of Dr. Ramiro Guerra's article as published by Diario de la Marina
2. Translation of No. 1.

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Enclosure 1 to UNCLASSIFIED WITH CONFIDENTIAL SECTION Des-  
patch No. 1202, American Embassy, Habana, Dec. 4, 1950.

Translation

RURAL CUBA BY LOWRY NELSON

By Ramiro Guerra

The University of Minnesota through the medium of the University of Minnesota Press in the progressive city of Minneapolis, has been publishing a series of interesting books on several foreign countries. The last one, entitled RURAL CUBA, was prepared by the distinguished sociologist Lowry Nelson, professor of Sociology at the aforementioned University. This book is made up of one volume of 285 pages, very well bound in cloth, with a preface of eight additional pages. It is made up of 13 chapters, 2 appendices, a glossary, a bibliography, an index of subject matter and an index of names. The chapters are preceded by the mentioned preface, and I list them below so that the reader may have an idea of the contents of the book. I do not hesitate to list them in English because I am sure that the readers will clearly understand them. They are as follows: I, Rich Land - Poor People; II, The Cuban People; III, The land, climate and seasonal rhythms; IV, Locality Groups and the settlement pattern; V, The evolution of the Cuban land system; VI, Land division, measurement and registration; VII, System of farming; VIII, The Social Class Structure; IX, Social Stratification in Rural Cuba; X, The Cuban family, XI, The level of living; XII, Education and the school; XIII, The Rural Prospect.

Professor Nelson was designated rural sociologist at the Department of State of the United States in September 1945, and remained in Cuba through September 1946. At that time I had the pleasure of meeting him, of having friendly intercourse with him and of appreciating the noble qualities of his character as well as his deep sense of human feeling, his simplicity and affability, his democratic spirit and his marked vocation for the studies of rural economy and sociology to which he has devoted himself, and in which he has gained a solid reputation in his country. Professor Nelson's work in Cuba was carried under the technical direction of the office of Agricultural Relations of the Department of Agriculture of the United States, and it was his general responsibility to undertake a study of rural life in the Caribbean.

As the author well states of his work, it soon became evident that one year of investigation was not sufficient to study even one of the countries integrating a region such as the Caribbean, which presents varied aspects socially,

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- 2 -

politically, economically and geographically. Visits of one or two weeks in the Dominican Republic, Puerto Rico, Virgin Islands and in Trinidad, were hardly sufficient to gather a few data and to make some general observations. Those short visits nevertheless were useful in that they enabled seeing Cuba from a better perspective, observing some of the cultural variations of our Island as compared to the other Antilles.

As the decision was taken that Professor Nelson concentrate his attention on Cuba and devote to the investigation of the Island all of the time available, he explains the plan that he followed in his work, beginning first with the comparative study of the various Censuses of Cuba. In the execution of the plan that was drawn after his arrival in Habana, he discussed with officers of the Embassy of the United States the most adequate manner in which to do his work, and the project was submitted to the Cuban Minister of Agriculture and was approved by the President of the Republic. The author closes his preface by explaining how he effectuated the investigation and mentions the assistance of employees of the Cuban Ministry of Agriculture and of numerous other persons from whom he requested information or cooperation in this or that respect.

In works of this nature, it is the general practice on the part of the editors to give an idea of the character and objectives of the study, in order to facilitate a quick appraisal and to create interest. Until such time as I comment on some chapters or features of Rural Cuba, I shall limit myself today to transcribe more or less literally what the editors of the University of Minnesota have expressed with respect to Professor Nelson's work.

A people depaupered in a rich land, such is, state the editors, the paradox of Cuba described with abundant documentation by Lowry Nelson. With the cooperation of the Government of Cuba, Professor Nelson directed a series of detailed sociological investigations in various rural districts representative of the Island. In these investigations there were gathered data on the habits of the families, agricultural methods, tenancy of farms, income, the educational opportunities, social activities, and the standard of living of more than 700 Cuban rural families. All this material was combined by the author with the study of historical data, the analysis of censuses and spot observations for a compre-

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- 3 -

hensive study which might fill in gaps in the available literature on the matter. The volume includes appendices with a description of the geography of the rural areas investigated; a report as an example, prepared by a Cuban investigator. And, I add, other complementary elements of the book which I have quoted above in listing the chapters it is made up of.

Professor Nelson's book, the general character of which was already familiar to me because in addition to my conversations with him, the periodical La Correspondencia of Cienfuegos published some of the impressions he got during the weeks he remained in Sigüanea and Manicaragua living with the rural families devoted to the cultivation of coffee and to other agricultural activities. These impressions, which I commented on in this newspaper, were of interest to me in particular because for more than 20 years I have repeatedly been advocating that investigations of this nature be made in Cuba. I remember in this connection - and on occasions I have published it - that while in Washington I wrote my esteemed friend Engineer Amadeo Lopez Castro, then Minister of Agriculture, suggesting the idea of carrying out a socio-economic investigation of the type that Professor Nelson undertook, but on a larger scale. Lopez Castro immediately and favorably accepted the suggestion I made, and in a communication he addressed to me in Washington, he asked me to prepare a project of investigation. Officials of the Department of State whom I approached in this respect, put me in touch with the bureau or agency of the Federal Government, I don't remember whether under the Department of Agriculture or of the Interior, which directed investigations of this nature in the United States with the cooperation of each State, where I was received with the open spirit which characterizes the centers of study of the United States, and I was provided with all of the information for the preparation of a project with copies of the models used by American investigators to collect information on the spot, and with a complete bibliography on the matter. All this I sent to Engineer Lopez Castro, who requested that I come for several weeks to Cuba to complete the project for an investigation and to assist in carrying it out. I assented to this honor-conferring demand but when I was about to make my trip to Cuba Engineer Lopez Castro ceased in his functions as Minister of Agriculture, and I do not know where the project went or what its destination was. Afterwards, persisting in my idea, in a lecture I delivered on invitation from the Federation of Cuban Professional Women, I proposed that they try to promote the aforementioned socio-economic investigation, and although they applauded the indication very much, I do not know whether any effort in this respect was ever made.

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Enclosure 1 to UNCLASSIFIED WITH CONFIDENTIAL SECTION Des-  
patch No. 1202, American Embassy, Habana, Dec. 4, 1950.

- 4 -

The study made by Professor Nelson, although extremely valuable, does not appear to me to be sufficiently ample to give a comprehensive idea of the socio-economic problems of the rural population of Cuba. In my opinion, without a full knowledge of these problems, a far reaching policy of rural betterment cannot be planned. I therefore suggest to our present Minister of Agriculture, Engineer Carlos Hevia, that he consider this issue which has been rendered live by Professor Nelson's work.

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- A. Cuban rural family: Coffee growing area in Oriente Province
- B. Family lives in squalor
- C. Picture taken by Joseph L. Martinez, Senior Economic Analyst
- D. Date taken: October 1949.
- E. Not for publication. Only for confidential use of Departments of State and of Agriculture.
- F. Enclosure to Habana despatch no. 1202, December 4, 1950, "Cuban . Economist Comments on Lewry Nelson's Rural Cuba."

END OF CONFIDENTIAL

Diario de la Marina, Nov. 26, 1950  
**Educación e Historia**

Por Ramiro Guerra

**"RURAL CUBA" POR LOWRY NELSON**

**L**A Universidad de Minnesota, mediante el instrumento de The University of Minnesota Press, en la progresista ciudad de Minneapolis, viene publicando una serie de interesantes libros sobre diversos países extranjeros. El último, titulado "Rural Cuba" (Cuba Rural), ha sido compuesto por el distinguido sociólogo Lowry Nelson, profesor de Sociología de la citada universidad. Está formada esta obra por un volumen de 285 páginas, muy bien encuadernado en tela, con un prefacio de ocho páginas adicionales. Consta de trece capítulos, dos apéndices, un glosario, una bibliografía, un índice de asuntos y un índice de nombres. Los capítulos están precedidos del prefacio mencionado; los enumero a continuación, a fin de dar al lector idea del contenido de la obra. No vacilo en ofrecerlos en inglés porque estoy seguro de que los lectores habrán de entenderlos claramente. Son los siguientes: I, Rich land — Poor people; II, The Cuban people; III, The land climate, and seasonal rhythms; IV, Locality Groups and the settlement pattern; V, The evolution of the Cuban land sistem; VI, Land división, measurement and registration; VII, Sistem of farming; VIII, The social class structure; IX, Social stratification in rural Cuba; X, The Cuban family; XI, The level of living; XII, Education and the school; XIII, The rural prospect.

El profesor Nelson fué designado sociólogo rural en el departamento de Estado de los Estados Unidos en septiembre de 1945, y permaneció en Cuba hasta septiembre de 1946. En ese tiempo tuve el gusto de conocerlo, de tratarlo y de apreciar las nobles cualidades de su carácter, así como su profundo sentimiento de simpatía humana, su sencillez y afabilidad, su espíritu democrático, y su marcadísima vocación por los estudios de economía y sociología rurales a que se ha dedicado, ganándose una sólida reputación en su país. La labor en Cuba del profesor Nelson se efectuó bajo la dirección técnica de la Oficina de Relaciones Agrícolas Extranjeras del departamento de Agricultura de los Estados Unidos, con la responsabilidad general de realizar un estudio de la vida rural en el Caribe.

Como muy bien declara el autor

editora, la paradoja de Cuba descrita con abundante documentación por Lowry Nelson. Con la cooperación del Gobierno de Cuba, el profesor Nelson dirigió una serie de detalladas investigaciones sociológicas en varios distritos rurales representativos de la Isla. En esas investigaciones reuniéronse datos sobre los hábitos de las familias, los métodos agrícolas, la tenencia de las fincas rústicas, los ingresos, las oportunidades educativas, las actividades sociales y el nivel de vida de más de 700 familias rurales cubanas. Todo este material fué combinado por el autor con el estudio de los antecedentes históricos, el análisis de los censos y observaciones sobre el terreno para un estudio comprensivo que llenase los vacíos en la literatura disponible sobre la materia. El volumen incluye apéndices con una descripción de la geografía de las áreas rurales investigadas; un informe, a manera de ejemplo, preparado por un investigador cubano". Además, agregó yo, los otros elementos complementarios de la obra que he citado más arriba al enumerar los capítulos que la integran.

El libro del profesor Nelson, cuyo carácter general conocía, porque además de mis conversaciones con él, dió a la publicidad en el periódico "La Correspondencia" de Cienfuegos algunas de sus impresiones recogidas durante las semanas que permaneció en la Siguanea y Manicaragua conviviendo con las familias campesinas dedicadas al cultivo del café y a otras actividades agrícolas. Esas impresiones, comentadas por mí en este periódico, me interesaron muy especialmente, porque desde hace cerca de veinte años ha venido abogando repetidamente a favor de que se hicieran investigaciones de ese género en Cuba. Recuerdo a este propósito —y en alguna ocasión lo he publicado— que hallándome en Washington escribí a mi estimado amigo, ingeniero Amadeo López Castro, ministro de Agricultura, entonces, sugiriéndole la idea de llevar a cabo una investigación economicosociológica del tipo de ésta que ha realizado ahora el profesor Nelson, si bien en una escala más amplia. López Castro acogió de manera inmediata, muy favorablemente, la sugerencia que tuve interés de hacerle, y en comunicación

...cultural en el Caribe.  
Como muy bien declara el autor de la obra, muy pronto fué evidente que un año de investigación no era suficiente para estudiar ni siquiera uno solo de los países integrantes de una región como el Caribe, que presenta aspectos tan variados en lo social, lo político, lo económico y lo geográfico. Visitas de una a dos semanas en la República Dominicana, en Puerto Rico, en las Islas Virgenes y en Trinidad, apenas fueron suficientes para reunir algunos pocos datos y hacer algunas observaciones generales. Esas visitas tan cortas fueron, sin embargo, provechosas para ayudar al autor a ver a Cuba en una mejor perspectiva, observando algunas de las variaciones de nuestra Isla en el orden cultural, comparado nuestro país con las otras Antillas.

Habiéndose adoptado la decisión de que el profesor Nelson concentrara su atención en Cuba y dedicase a la investigación en la Isla todo el tiempo disponible, éste explica el plan que siguió en su trabajo, comenzando por el estudio comparativo de los diversos censos de Cuba. En la ejecución del plan que hubo de trazarse, después de su arribo a La Habana, discutió con funcionarios de la Embajada de los Estados Unidos la forma más adecuada para efectuar su labor, sometido el proyecto al Ministerio de Agricultura de Cuba y aprobado por el Presidente de la República. El autor de la obra completa su prefacio explicando cómo llevo a la práctica la investigación planeada, y el auxilio que le prestaron los funcionarios del Ministerio de Agricultura de Cuba y numerosas personas de quienes solicitó informaciones o alguna cooperación en este o en aquel sentido.

En obras de esta clase, generalmente se sigue la práctica por la entidad editora de dar alguna idea del carácter y los objetivos del estudio, a fin de facilitar una rápida apreciación y despertar el interés de conocerla.

A reserva, pues, de dedicar más adelante algunos trabajos a comentar algunos capítulos o particulares que estime de mayor interés de Rural Cuba, me limito por hoy, en esta nota informativa, a transcribir, más o menos literalmente, lo que la editorial de la Universidad de Minnesota expresa respecto de la obra del profesor Nelson.

"Un pueblo empobrecido en una tierra rica, tal es, dice la entidad

...mente, la sugerencia que tuve interés de hacerle, y en comunicación que me dirigiera a Washington, solicitó de mí que le preparase un proyecto de investigación. Funcionarios del departamento de Estado a quienes hube de dirigirme respecto del particular, me pusieron inmediatamente en comunicación, tal como hube de solicitar de ellos, con la oficina o agencia del Gobierno federal, adscrita no recuerdo si al departamento de Agricultura o al de lo Interior, que dirigía las investigaciones de ese carácter en los Estados Unidos, con la cooperación de cada Estado en que se me acogió con el espíritu ampliamente abierto que caracteriza a los centros de estudio de los Estados Unidos, y se me facilitaron todos los antecedentes para la preparación de un proyecto, con copias de los modelos utilizados por los investigadores americanos para recoger los datos sobre el terreno y una completísima bibliografía sobre el asunto. Todo esto hube de remitirlo al ingeniero López Castro, quien solicitó de mí que viniese algunas semanas a Cuba para completar el planeamiento de la investigación y ayudar a ponerla en práctica. Asentí a esa honrosa demanda, pero cuando me disponía a realizar mi viaje a Cuba, el Ing. López Castro cesó en su labor al frente de nuestro departamento de Agricultura, y no se a dónde fué a parar el proyecto ni qué destino tuvo. Después, persistiendo en mi idea, en una charla a que fui invitado por la Federación de Mujeres Profesionales de Cuba, les propuse que tomasen a su cargo el tratar de promover que se llevase adelante la investigación sociológico-económica mencionada, y aunque aplaudieron mucho la indicación, no se si realizaron algún esfuerzo en ese sentido.

El estudio realizado por el profesor Nelson, aunque extremadamente valioso, no me parece suficientemente amplio para dar una idea bien comprensiva de los problemas económicosociológicos de la población rural de Cuba. Sin el conocimiento cabal de esos problemas no puede planearse una política de mejoramiento rural de ancha base y largo alcance, a mi juicio. En tal virtud, me permito sugerirle a nuestro actual ministro de Agricultura, ingeniero Carlos Hevia, la consideración de este asunto, al cual la obra del profesor Nelson da una palpitante actualidad.

Nov. 25 de 1950.