

# The West's Most Easy-Going Dictatorship

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**Havana** (Worldwide Press Service)—A quickie uprising last month, student demonstrations this month are part of the volatile normality of Caribbean life. But though plots and revolutions come and go, Fulgencio Batista Y Zaldivar—like Ol' Man River—just goes "ruling" along.

Batista is probably the only man in Latin American history to have successfully seized power twice through military coups. He came to power in 1933, stepped down voluntarily in 1944, and decided he would like to rule again in 1952—a thought which he rapidly translated into action.

He has ruled Cuba longer than any other man—a total of 15 years. He is only 55 years old.

## Two Revolts, 100 Plots

In the four years since Batista took over the reins of government in March, 1952, there have been two armed uprisings and over 100 big and little conspiracies have been uncovered. At least 200 separate arms caches, stocked by would-be revolutionaries, have been found across the island and even as far away as New York state.

Conspirators have included such diverse characters as University of Havana students and the Cuban military attache in Washington. Weapons uncovered have ranged from U.S. Army hand-grenades to Russian army submachine guns.

And yet Batista is today as firmly in the saddle as he ever has been. In fact, his regime is known as the most easygoing dictatorship in Latin America—virtually a democracy when compared with the iron-

fisted governments of Venezuela and the Dominican Republic.

## Opposition Is Vocal

There is a two-house Congress in Havana, and though Batistianos have a clear majority, the opposition is highly vocal. Attacks on the government can be heard on radio and TV, and oppositionists write columns which are published in the press. The magazine "Bohemia," with the largest circulation in Cuba, is outspokenly against the Batista regime.

Only in times of exceptional stress—following two unsuccessful uprisings—have civil rights been suspended and press censorship imposed.

Why is Batista so easygoing? The answer is simple: He is sure of himself.

University students can riot, oppositionists can howl and professional plotters and politicians can conspire, but the people just are not in the mood for revolution and bloodshed.

## U. S. Capital Pours In

The country went through a recession, but it is now back on its feet. New American investment capital is pouring in. Businessmen are doing well. Wages are satisfactory, and the cost of living is not rising.

As a result, people who are earning their daily bread are not interested in fighting. Batista may not be a 100 per cent popular hero, but there exists no deep urge—such as would be caused by economic suffering—to throw him out.

And even if Batista were ousted, who would take his place? There is no leader

who has the public's confidence or support.

At any rate, most Cubans realize that Batista, if thrown out, would probably be succeeded by professional politicians who would restore the leftist anarchy of the late 1940s, or by a military dictatorship which would not have Batista's easygoing attitude.

And although the oppositionists may plot, and occasionally even some army officers, Batista knows full well where the basis of his real power lies: among the enlisted men and non-commissioned officers of the Cuban army.

## Makes Army Comfortable

Batista himself was a soldier, corporal and sergeant from 1921 to 1933. He always has looked after the interests of the lower ranks. He has raised pay and built one of the most comfortable military establishments in the world at Camp Columbia in Havana, hub of the Cuban army.

As a result, the soldiers are loyal to Batista personally. Ambitious officers may plot, but what good are officers without men to lead?

The soldiers demonstrated their loyalty by quickly suppressing two major uprisings against Batista. The first occurred in the attack against Fort Moncada in Santiago de Cuba in 1953. The second was the recent attack on Fort Goicuria in Matanzas.

Batista's position was amply summed up recently when a Cuban official, referring to a plot that had been nipped, said: "The conspirators lacked only one thing. That was Batista."