

1850s Spain, aware of British pressures against Brazil, moved to reduce the slave trade. Abolitionist sentiment in both Spain and Cuba grew markedly during that decade and after the Civil War in the United States. In the Junta de Información of 1866-1867 Cuban and Puerto Rican delegates worked optimistically with Spanish officials to effect political reforms and moved toward emancipation of the slaves.

The September 1868 revolution in Spain included a decree concerning free birth in the colonies, but the Cuban uprising that started a few days later complicated the problem, though its leaders announced gradual and indemnified abolition. The Ten Years' War, Spain's own convulsions, and British-American threats further confused matters. Very slowly, the Moret law passed by the Spanish Cortes in 1870 for qualified emancipation came to be enforced. An act of 1879 speeded the process, and by 1886 slavery in Cuba supposedly ended.

Since Spanish and Cuban history from 1817 to 1886 is full of futility, meaningless negotiations, frustrations, and unsatisfactory solutions, Corwin's narrative necessarily includes some material that is tedious. The author does not seem particularly sure-footed in the wilderness of nineteenth-century Spanish politics, and he repeatedly refers to ministers as ambassadors. A few colorful and perhaps revealing items that other writers might have included he omits. No doubt there are further sources to be covered. In all, however, this is a lucid and authoritative account.

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*Reminiscences of the Cuban Revolutionary War.* By ERNESTO CHE GUEVARA. New York, 1968. Monthly Review Press. Illustrations. Maps. Notes. Pp. 287. \$6.95. (Distributed by Grove Press, New York).

Ernesto "Che" Guevara was a charming man, and it is unfortunate that the formal writings attributed to him preserve little of his personality. But something of Che does emerge from these "reminiscences" gathered from various Cuban sources and translated by Victoria Ortiz. The most fascinating section of the book is the last—a collection of twenty-six letters, in one of which the *comandante* uses apt scatology to characterize the editor who embellished his "Las Villas Diary" (p. 273). Che's dry wit, his revolutionary iconoclasm, and his genuine humility come through strong in this final section,

which, however, deals only slightly and indirectly with the Cuban Revolutionary War.

The guerrilla campaign of 1956-1958 is discussed in thirty-two disjointed chapters which originally appeared under Che's byline as separate articles in Cuban periodicals beginning in 1959. The propaganda content is high, and there are numerous asides designed to blacken the names of men who had served the revolution but, at publication time, were considered "enemies of the people"—e.g., Huber Matos, Felipe Pazos, and Andrew St. George. The coverage of military operations is uneven. Minor skirmishes of 1957 are depicted in detail, while the repelling of General Eulogio Cantillo's offensive (May-June 1958) is barely mentioned. Che's march across Camagüey to Las Villas is described from the "Las Villas Diary," but there is nothing about his equally remarkable feat of uniting under his command the diverse guerrilla groups in the Sierra del Escambray prior to descending to Santa Clara in December 1958. The account of the decisive battle of Santa Clara is sketchy.

Nevertheless, there is much of value in this volume. The chapters on the genesis of the rebel army in the Sierra Maestra should be read and pondered by everyone who hopes to understand the course of events in Cuba since 1958. The rebel army of the Twenty-sixth of July movement made the Cuban Revolution. The army of the Sierra succeeded because of the extraordinary unity and discipline forged by two years of self-denial and struggle—two years of battling the forces of nature and those of Batista.

By the end of 1958 the rebel army had emerged as a unique and irresistible force in Cuba. The underground fighters of the cities had been as brave as those of the mountains, but they had not sacrificed as much; and they lacked the unity and discipline of the *fidelista* guerrillas. Non-*fidelista* guerrilla outfits like the Segundo Frente del Escambray and the Directorio Revolucionario fell far short of the Twenty-sixth of July army in quantity and quality. The men of the Sierra Maestra prevailed. The others, claiming that the revolution had been betrayed, went into exile, where they continue to furnish much questionable data to unsuspecting researchers. Che Guevara's *Reminiscences of the Cuban Revolutionary War* is a more reliable source for those trying to learn how a handful of *barbudos* were able to seize absolute control of Cuba.