The Cuban revolution and its significance for the rest of Latin America have been the subjects of much recent comment and controversy. The Reporter, which holds an anti-Castro position, finds, in a September 15 editorial entitled "Latin America Joins the World," that the historical isolation of Latin America from "zooming, world-circling ideologies" was long ago breached by the dictatorship of Peron. Peron, writes editor Max Ascoli, "made a thorough fascist state of Argentina; and if he has been dethroned, he has nevertheless established two irrefutable facts. One is that a totalitarian dictatorship can find its main supporters and beneficiaries among the workers; the other is that under that kind of government a fairly prosperous nation can go thoroughly broke in record time."

"Castro," continues the editorial, "is well on his way to proving that he is a Moscow-oriented, worthy principle of Peron. But then, even after his fall, other foci of infection arc bound to spring up south of the Rio Grande. The pattern is catching, misery is everywhere, and Moscow is on the job." In an accompanying article by George Sherman, Washington correspondent for the London Observer, The Reporter goes on to explain the case against Castro. After noting the achievements of the new regime, Mr. Sherman reports evidence of "a deep social unrest and near bankruptcy . . . a sense of betrayal."

The main emphasis of his article is on the activities, as yet limited, of the underground movement known as the Democratic Revolutionary Front (D.R.F.), organized by "respected anti-Batista men," supported chiefly by the middle classes, and closely allied to the Catholic Church. The D.R.F. hopes to "save the revolution," but, as Mr. Sherman writes, "disagreement about what the revolution must be saved from is profound."

Taking an opposite line, for the moment, from The Reporter, The New Republic devotes almost the whole of its September 12 issue to "Cuba, a Dissenting Report." The author is Samuel Shapiro, a specialist in Latin American affairs, and he begins at the beginning, with a brief review of Batista's rise to power and the role played then and thereafter in Cuban affairs by the United States. Mr. Shapiro's analysis of the revolutionary government's aims and accomplishment. its ideological bias, its reception by the Cuban people, and its alleged threat to U.S. security notably contradicts most of the interpretations that have appeared in the U.S. press. His conclusion is that "Castro's Cuba follows a leftist-nationalist-neutralist line, basically similar to the positions adopted by Nasser's Egypt and Tito's Yugoslavia-get all you can from the Big Powers, and given them as little as possible in return." "It will be vitally important," he writes, "for our next President to adopt a sensible policy in dealing with this infuriatingly sovereign little island."

Mr. Shapiro's appeal to "the next President" is echoed by Paul Johnson in the New Statesman. In "The Plundered Continent: Nationalism in Latin America" (September 17) Mr. Johnson writes that, "at present [U.S.] policy is heading straight for disaster. In Washington, a fumbling and misinformed State Department—supplied with every conceivable rubbish by the Central Intelligence Agency—assumes without question that Fidelismo and Communism are the same thing. This is a momentous error: seen in the future perspective of the Sixties, they are natural enemies. To fall into this confusion, and to attempt to destroy Fidelismo, will merely consolidate their temporary alliance and make an eventual Communist triumph far more likely."

In January, Mr. Johnson notes, "a new generation will take power in the U.S. Most Latin-Americans hope it will be a Democratic one. In the bitter history of their relations with the U.S., they cherish one warm memory: that of Roosevelt and his 'good neighbor' policy. They believe there is a chance that if Kennedy and his young team are elected, Washington will not only accept the political fact of the Cuban revolution, but will draw the correct economic conclusions from it: the need for a continental scheme of assistance on the scale of the Marshall Plan."

In other periodicals:


"Issues Before the Fifteenth General Assembly," International Conciliation, September. A guide to new and unfinished business to be taken up at the current session of the UN. Copies are available at 50 cents each; single and bulk orders should be addressed to Taplinger Publishing Co., 119 West 57th St., New York 19.