

respecting the cultural integrity of the world's varied peoples. To dismiss arbitrarily certain culturally honored practices as inhumane is to cast in a new mold the old imperial bias of "civilization" against "the barbarians." **WV**

DIARY OF THE CUBAN REVOLUTION

by **Carlos Franqui**

(Viking Press; 546 pp.; \$25.00/\$16.95)

THE WINDS OF DECEMBER

by **John Dorschner and Roberto
Fabricio**

(Coward, McCann & Geoghegan; 552 pp.; \$15.95)

Jorge I. Domínguez

The Cuban Revolution of the 1950s remains one of the dramatic historical events of the past quarter-century. Its long-range consequence—the coming to power of a revolutionary Marxist-Leninist regime in the Caribbean, active and influential the world over—has made Cuba important for our understanding of world affairs. These two books represent rather different but complementary ways of assisting our understanding of Cuban political life in the '50s.

Carlos Franqui was a direct participant in those events and for most of the 1960s served as editor of the official Cuban Government newspaper, *Revolución*. During the revolutionary struggle Franqui was director of propaganda for the guerrilla forces, with direct access to many guerrilla leaders as well as to leaders of the urban underground. Their interviews, collected letters, dis-

patches, and other statements—all of which form this book—are a record of what many who were fighting the Batista regime actually thought and wrote during the struggle itself.

Dorschner and Fabricio have taken a rather different path. Their book relies principally on interviews with participants in the Revolution, with special attention to the closing weeks of 1958 and the early days of victory in 1959. But the interviews were conducted in the late '70s, and the authors have chosen a novelistic writing style. They make extensive use of the interview material, which appears in quotation marks, to give a vivid and dramatic portrayal of a regime's collapse and a revolution's reach for power.

An obvious consequence of these alternative approaches is that *Winds* is far more likely to reach a broad audience than is *Diary*. Yet *Diary* is the more significant and reliable of the two because it makes public one of the major, heretofore unavailable archives of a revolutionary leadership at the point of rule. This is not to say that *Winds* is trivial or inaccurate. On the contrary, it is a remarkably fair and balanced account of an extraordinarily complex period, and ably written too. The issue is the credibility of the interviews that are the heart of the book.

Dorschner and Fabricio went through the standard and necessary collection of existing materials (newspapers, books, cables, and so forth), augmented by the acquisition of U.S. Government documents available through the Freedom of Information Act. Second, they tried to check information by cross-referencing documentary and interview material. Third, and most crucially, as they put it:

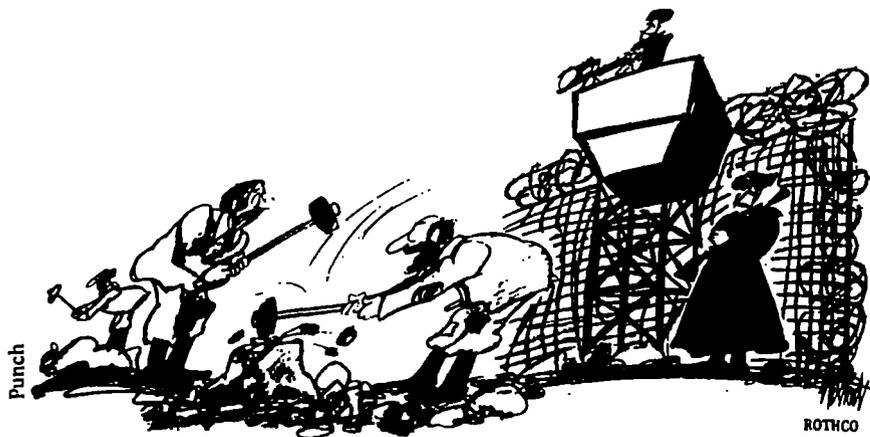
"...people's memories have proved to be remarkably accurate. Perhaps that is understandable because, for all those involved, the events are etched indelibly in their minds, much the way Americans remember exactly what they were doing when they heard John Kennedy had been shot. But for the people of this story, the outcome was far more personal and pervasive. Almost all saw their lives directly and inalterably changed, for better or for worse."

Yes, memories can be remarkable. Yes, many people I myself have interviewed about those events have been extraordinarily lucid, and probably for the reasons the authors suggest. But, no, they could not remember the very words they used, the subtle nuances, or the responses of their interlocutors at the time. It is on this crucial point that the precision of *Winds* is somewhat illusory. It is a book to be enjoyed rather than relied upon.

Both books stand out for their rather high standards of objectivity, but they are not entirely free of certain understandable biases. Dorschner and Fabricio provide the opportunity to hear the late General Eulogio Cantillo for the first, and last, time; Franqui allows us to read the thoughts of the late René Ramos Latour, once a leader of the urban underground. Both are significant figures, and no one before has given them the attention they have deserved. That their views lend these books a certain bias is a price worth paying.

Cantillo gave much thought to the role he might play in the Revolution but chose, in the end, to obey Batista, despite his contempt for the president, for his immediate military superiors, and for the regime they led as it rotted. Loyalty, discipline, military honor—these are values difficult to understand and to live by, and Eulogio Cantillo made his choice under the most difficult of circumstances.

Ramos Latour thought of himself as being engaged in "a revolutionary force comprised of Cubans of diverse origins, who are firmly united in a common ideal." Thus, in writing to Ernesto (Ché) Guevara about their ideological differences, Ramos Latour could commit himself to "a force that is neither yours nor mine, but is the Cuban revolution." He said he wanted "an America that can stand up proudly to the United States, Russia, China, or any



"This is the part of being an author I can't stand!"

other power that tries to undermine its economic and political independence," and saw no difference between the "noxious Yankee domination" and a "no less noxious 'Soviet' domination."

Ramos Latour, then, had to choose between advancing the larger goals of radical change and the risk of turning power over to those who, like Ché, believed that Marxism-Leninism was the proper path for the Latin American future. He chose the "common ideal."

Cantillo, Ramos Latour, and many others chose honorably but in ways that in the long run undermined their most deeply held beliefs. It cost Ramos Latour his life during the revolutionary struggle; it cost Cantillo years in prison. Their stories illustrate the importance of moral and political choices for all of us, and they illustrate, ably and tragically, the paths not taken by Cubans in the 1950s. 

**POWER AND THE PEOPLE:
EXECUTIVE MANAGEMENT OF
PUBLIC OPINION IN FOREIGN
AFFAIRS, 1897-1921**

by **Robert C. Hilderbrand**

(University of North Carolina Press,
262 pp., \$19.00)

Bruce Miroff

Presidential mastery of public opinion in foreign policy matters usually has been regarded as a characteristic of the cold war era. Robert C. Hilderbrand, an historian at the University of South Dakota, contends that the techniques were developed in the closing years of the nineteenth century, when technological change, overseas expansion, and Progressive ideology compelled presidents to secure broad popular support.

"As the president's interest in popular attitudes increased, so did his efforts to guide and influence them, and one outcome was a clear decline in the public's independence. To an extent unimaginable before the end of the nineteenth century, the executive became a dominant force in the leadership of public opinion; it now exercised subtle control over the efforts of Washington correspondents and employed increasingly sophisticated techniques for directing the public's view of international affairs."

The first major protagonist is William McKinley, whom Hilderbrand

portrays as a subtle strategist carefully orchestrating public responses to his administration's plans for conflict with Spain and retention of the Philippines. He devotes considerable attention to McKinley's innovations in handling the press, such as the extensive use of press releases and the establishment of an office for reporters within the White House. Though the portly president's stiff demeanor and drab character never engaged the press and the public as did Teddy Roosevelt's ebullient persona, McKinley comes off, in Hilderbrand's account, as the more important figure in establishing executive sway over the public mind.

Hilderbrand's portrait of McKinley, extensively documented from manuscript sources, is impressive. However, at times he attributes too great omniscience to McKinley's strategy. When one of McKinley's cabinet members expresses doubts about Spanish guilt in the *Maine* explosion and a second cabinet member contradicts him the next day, Hilderbrand sees neither disagreement nor disarray within the cabinet. Rather, he explains, the first statement expresses the president's anxiety to downplay the threat of war and the second expresses his concern lest the public become too disposed to absolve the Spaniards.

Theodore Roosevelt and Taft receive briefer treatment than McKinley. The single chapter on Roosevelt is perceptive, although one wishes for fuller coverage of this master self-dramatist. Hilderbrand depicts the Roosevelt administration, despite its brilliance at grabbing headlines, as a step backward in presidential news management. Whereas McKinley moved to routinize and bureaucratize the flow of information from the White House, Roosevelt personalized his relationship with the press in a fashion more typical of nineteenth-century executives. The criticism is odd both conceptually and historically. Important aspects of the presidency have always remained personalized, and the presidents who have handled the press most effectively—e.g., the two Roosevelts and Kennedy—have relied heavily on a personal approach.

William Howard Taft is the aberration in Hilderbrand's narrative. His character and convictions led him to eschew the manipulation of public opinion, and his handling of publicity in such areas as "dollar diplomacy" and the English and French arbitration treat-

ties was so lackluster that his most important foreign policy ventures remained obscure to the public. But Hilderbrand's critical view of Taft suggests an underlying ambivalence in the author's own position. While his narrative focuses on the dangers of successful executive management, Hilderbrand chastises Taft for *not* managing public opinion so as to win support for a policy (the arbitration treaties) that the author evidently finds admirable. Taft's case raises a question that Hilderbrand never squarely confronts in this book. Are there executive modes of shaping public opinion that can be characterized as genuine leadership rather than management and manipulation?

The fascinating case of Woodrow Wilson draws Hilderbrand's most extensive narrative and analysis. Wilson's dealings with the press take up half the volume. Even before coming to the White House, Wilson had reveled in the possibilities for executive mastery, writing of the president in 1908 that "he is the only national voice in affairs." In a flush of Progressive enthusiasm as he took office he pledged an open administration of "pitiless publicity." Yet in Hilderbrand's portrayal, Wilson's press relations reflect less pitiless exposure of presidential behavior than pitiless manipulation of the American public.

The most visible innovation of the Wilson presidency was the regularly scheduled press conference. Though moderately successful in this forum, Wilson chafed at the journalists' pointed questions and stopped the sessions in 1915. Privately, he envisioned a more controlled flow of information through a "publicity bureau," by means of which, as Hilderbrand observes, Wilson "hoped to put an end to misunderstandings about the nature of the 'real facts' and to see to it that newspapers had no excuse for failing to print news as they received it." The onset of the world war finally established the necessary conditions for Wilson's "publicity bureau." Hilderbrand offers a detailed picture of the Committee on Public Information, the remarkable wartime propaganda apparatus that George Creel constructed under Wilson's aegis.

After so many successful efforts to dominate public opinion, executive management failed Wilson at the decisive moment. Preoccupied in Paris with the details of the peace settlement and an ocean away from the secretary—