

the apple of Strobel's eye and even voluntarily turned his back on Paris and moved to Baden-Baden.

Rightly or wrongly, a young composer who had the luck to receive a Donaueschingen commission from Strobel could regard himself as having arrived. This resulted, internationally, in a great deal of what Nicolas Nabokov used to call "*verstobelte Musik*"; the Donaueschingen concerts consisted of the kinds of music Heinrich Strobel personally liked, and young composers tended to listen to those programmes and then, for reasons of ambition, adapt their own styles accordingly.

The annual festival at Darmstadt also provided a major forum for avant-garde music, but in a more democratic and eclectic way. For example, it selected for performance many works from among new scores which, in one way or another, arrived in Darmstadt unsolicited—among them the first Soviet dodecaphonic work (by Edison Denisov) ever performed in a Western country. Pierre Boulez and Karlheinz Stockhausen, among other composers, occupied positions of influence in Darmstadt similar to those they held in Donaueschingen.

Within that framework, John Cage's debut in Donaueschingen had an enormous impact on European music. Younger European composers took Cage seriously to an extent which his American colleagues, up to then, never had. The great new word became *aleatoric*—involving the introduction into music, specifically musical performance, of the element of chance. In a conversation in Donaueschingen during that period, the Polish composer Kazimierz Serocki compared Cage's international influence on composition with that of Jackson Pollock on painting.

European composers who rose to positions of importance found champions in various conductors and other interpreters who sponsored their music in America. American composers—in particular Charles Ives—benefited from the tax-supported radio institutions in Europe, particularly in Germany and England, which had the financial means to make possible the performance of difficult new works requiring large numbers of avant-garde experts. Only the financial structure of musical life in those countries made such performances possible. And only after the attention attracted by those performances, generally speaking, did attention follow elsewhere.

IMPROVED COMMUNICATIONS made that sort of musical cross-pollenisation, in both directions, ever more possible and effective; and music on both sides of the Atlantic has unquestionably become the richer for it. In my personal opinion, musical composition today has in the main fallen upon sterile and evil days—from which, certainly, it will recover and rise again just as it always has. It continues to baffle me that European musicians fail to investigate and exploit many outstanding works by Samuel Barber, Aaron Copland, Roy Harris, Carl Ruggles, Roger Sessions, and other American composers of their generations—but then, on the other hand, I can think of a fairly long list of impressive European works which I discovered during my thirty-two years there, but which have remained unknown, or almost unknown, to my fellow Americans.

We have done much to enrich one another. There is still much more we can do.

A Night at an Inn

I travelled by train to meet you at a small French country town.
A literary pilgrim, I gazed about with a frown,
And tore my skirt on the iron steps as I clambered down.

You had booked two rooms at an inn. The landlady smiled. I tried
To understand what she said, as she led us up to a wide
Wooden gallery with vines, and our bedrooms side by side.

She opened the doors of all the other rooms to show
That we were the only guests, and we dined up there, in a glow
Of candles and wine and summer and her smile and the vine; and so

We talked about poems and love, and novels and love, and you
Spoke of my love for your friend. You were in love once too.
His name was Paul. He was French. That was when I first knew

Of other kinds of love. We sat in the dark upstairs
With our empty glasses and plates, no candle, two creaking chairs,
All those open doors behind us, and shared our love affairs.

With books in hand in the morning, we walked about the town;
Saw the church, the hawthorn, the river, the ways we could take, the frown
On our landlady's face as you left, I unfolded a map and sat down.

Ruth Silcock

EAST & WEST

A Look at Castro's Statistics

By Norman Luxenburg



A QUARTER OF A CENTURY ago (in January 1959) Fidel Castro entered Havana in triumph, grabbed the reins of the government, and began re-ordering Cuban society and Cuban life in general. In looking back to assess Castro's achievements since he assumed power in 1959, there is a tendency to assume pre-Castro Cuba was a typical, underdeveloped

Caribbean nation, and to forget that in many ways its standard of living was comparable to Western European countries. For example, about a year ago *The Wall Street Journal* wrote on its front pages: "The average Cuban lives very well these days by Third World standards." It went on to state that this fact had made Castro popular with the Cuban people.

However, pre-Castro Cuba was definitely not a Third World nation in the commonly accepted sense. Neither was it a typical Caribbean nation. By whatever measure used, whether it is the number of students in higher and secondary education, the number of physicians per capita, the infant-mortality rate, the gross national product in relation to its population, or number of telephones, television sets, or cars, the Cuba of the late 1950s was far ahead of any other nation in the Caribbean and the Third World. Its social development made strides—indeed significantly in the liberal administrations of Dr Grau San Martin and others, long before the Batista dictatorship—towards modernisation and the creation of large professional middle classes. Journalists, no matter how quick with typewriters, cannot safely dispense with the perspectives offered by history and sociology. It is not only the popular journals that make such errors. In 1977, a Congressional House committee headed by Representative Jonathan Bingham of New York visited Cuba and, apparently impressed by talks with Cuban officials, stated in its official report that before Castro there were "187,000 students" in Cuba and that the literacy rate under Castro had risen from 25 to 99%.

However, in pre-Castro Cuba there were not 187,000 students, but about one million. The literacy rate was not 25% but 78% (source: *Britannica*, 1959 article on Cuba; *UN Statistical Yearbook*, 1960, 1962).

IF ONE ACCEPTS without question such outlandish figures, as the Committee apparently did, it becomes very easy to excuse almost all excesses and inadequacies of the Castro régime and to ascribe many undeserved virtues to it. Before Castro, Cuba had a favourable balance of trade and a steady "hidden" income from tourism. Today the nation is operating at a deficit

THE HEADLINE which the obviously enthusiastic news editor of "The Times" (London) gave to the dispatch from Havana ran across five columns: HOW CASTRO HAS CREATED A WELFARE STATE TO BE ENVIED. For a moment we could have been caught up in some journalistic time-machine and transported into other lands and other enviable achievements. Here we are in the 1930s and the Webbs are telling us how Stalin created a welfare state to be envied. And here we are in the 1960s with a constant flow of Western TV reporters (and cameramen photographing chubby smiling babies) announcing how Mao Tse-tung was creating a welfare state to be envied, down to the last little "barefoot doctor."

In each case there was, subsequently, a rude awakening—a sad one, for no one takes pleasure in the sickly spectacle of an ill-fare state. Studies by Russian and Chinese experts, who do not accept propaganda hand-outs as genuine evidence, soon illuminated a far more critical and complex picture, and threw a sceptical light on unchecked, or unconfirmed, or ambiguous statistics. Bedraggled refugees often escaped to tell a quite different story. Most of all there was shock at the wide-eyed naivety of the

innocents or the cynical propaganda of the manipulators who get away with the same canard once (or twice) in every generation.

The "Times" dispatch (*Reuters*, 30 December 1983) included the following:

Havana

"Even Fidel Castro's harshest critics would have difficulty in belittling the progress made by Cuba's revolution, 25 years old on 1 January, in creating a welfare state worthy of a much richer country. A guarantee to free education and public health services has been one of the main goals of Cuba's Communist Government which inherited a far different society when Dr Castro's guerrilla army took power in 1959.

Official statistics, backed by United Nations specialists working here, illustrate the transformation that has taken place in the tropical, largely agricultural island. The average life expectancy of a Cuban born in the 1950s was around 50 compared with 73 today, while infant mortality has been slashed from about 60 per 1,000 live births to 16. Inoculation campaigns and improved diet, sanitation and living conditions have all but eliminated diseases which

still wreak havoc in most Third World countries. . . . [It is all] symbolic of the authorities' near obsession with providing the best in medical treatment. . . ."

"THE OBSERVER'S" observance of the Castro anniversary filled some 15 lurid pages of its colour supplement (22 January). It was rather more realistic about the past than "The Times", but equally myopic about the present. It begins in a deceptively critical tone:

"In the 1950s when its revolution began Cuba was statistically one of the richer countries in Latin America. There were more doctors and dentists per head of the population, more cars, more radios and television sets. Incomes were high. Yet these flattering statistics hid a distressing reality." (John Griffiths, p. 7)

What, then, are the distressing realities that now need to be put in the current balance against the Revolution's achievements? After all, there has never been a society in human history which has embodied all the utopian virtues; for if Greece had Periclean demo-