

STUDENTS GUIDING DESTINIES OF CUBA

Directorate, Whose Members Range From 19 to 30, Held 'Idealistic and Impractical.'

STERN MEASURES LIKELY

Youthful Rulers Are Expected to Resort to Repression as Problems Multiply.

By RUSSELL B. PORTER.

Wireless to THE NEW YORK TIMES.

HAVANA, Sept. 14.—This writer has visited a meeting of the Students Directorate, which, at least temporarily, is ruling Cuba, and he has sought to plumb the minds and get a clearer view of the ideas and aspirations of the members.

The meeting was held in a mansion owned by the wealthy father of a member of the directorate—that father being a distinguished Cuban who was educated in the United States and who lived in exile in New York during the Machado régime. About twenty of the thirty directorate members attended, sitting in a complete circle.

The age of the youngest was 19. The oldest was 30. Two were young women. All were former students at the University of Havana, whose principal schooling has been in terroristic methods since the university was closed in 1930 because of anti-Machado agitation. Most of the members had been imprisoned, some for several years, and some wore the sullen, suspicious, hang-dog look that prison life breeds.

Dictates Government Policies.

This revolutionary junta, which dictates the policies of the Grau San Martin government and so far has kept control of the army, meets daily for hours as a time—almost in permanent session—deciding the policies of the government of 4,000,000 Cubans and attempting to settle the vast economic and social issues and conduct international relations.

The junta members all have equal authority. There is no chief or permanent chairman. A new chairman is selected at each meeting. The only permanent post is the secretaryship, which is merely a recording function, not an executive one, like that of Joseph Stalin.

The members of the directorate are elected by the students of all the schools of the University of Havana. They assert that they represent virtually all 4,000 of the young men and women, who were attending the university when it was closed by Machado. They also claim the support of councils representing students in the schools of each province, plus some university alumni and some professors.

President Grau San Martin, whose selection for the Presidency of Cuba the directorate dictated, and several members of his Cabinet, all of whom the directorate selected and who carry out its decisions, belong to the professorial advisory group, or "Cuban brain trust."

Deny They Are Fascists.

The student leaders regard their government as a Left dictatorship, but not communistic. It is both intensely nationalistic and socialistic, but its leaders object to being called "National Socialist," because they oppose fascism. They say their movement compares most closely with the new revolutionary republic of Spain, although differences are required by different conditions.

It is obvious that the spirit of the movement is closely allied racially and socially with that of the Spanish revolution, which made a tremendous impression, not only on Cuban students who were exiles in Spain, but also on Latin-American countries with Spanish ethnic and cultural inheritances.

The directorate here asks one year in which to accomplish the task of establishing the "new Cuba" as a completely sovereign State with fundamental political economic and social reforms.

These students assert they have no personal ambitions and no fear that they will fail to turn the government back to the people when the new Constitution has been completed and general elections have been held. They say all the members of the directorate are pledged not to accept any post in the government. And they add that they will devote themselves to guaran-

teeing that the necessary reforms are accomplished without interference by politicians, reactionary Cuban commercial interests or American financial and big-business interests.

What are these reforms? The directorate desires to wipe out all remaining vestiges of the Machado régime, including corrupt pro-Machado army officers, politicians, officeholders and university professors, by "purification" boards like those of the French Revolution, but, the students say, without anything like a guillotine. They want reform of the electoral laws and of the whole political structure to try to prevent future Machados. The new Constitution will derive from Latin rather than Anglo-Saxon traditions.

For Financial Reorganization.

They advocate complete reorganization of the financial and economic structure, including revision of the foreign debt terms within Cuba's capacity to pay, tax reforms to lessen levies on necessities of life and a national banking and currency system removing Cuba from monetary and financial dependence upon the United States.

The social and agrarian reforms contemplated include the breaking up of the huge sugar estates, owned largely by American stock companies controlled in Wall Street, and laws to create a middle class of prosperous farmers. Eventual nationalization of the sugar and mining industries is being considered. Autonomy for the University of Havana, the development of industrial schools and rural education to reduce the present high rate of illiteracy also are part of the program for the new Cuba.

Regarding relations with the United States, the students want abrogation of the Platt Amendment and revision of the reciprocity treaty. They desire to establish Cuba as a completely sovereign republic not as a quasi-colony as it is now, many allege. Life and property will be respected, the student leaders say, and compensation will be given for land taken for agrarian reforms.

The directorate insists reforms were impossible under the de Cespedes government because Dr. de Cespedes, the students say, was dominated by old school political leaders and the United States. If counter-revolutionary efforts are made either by a Right group or by Communists, the students affirm, they will fight to the end to protect their revolution.

So far there has been only mild, if any, press censorship, but it is reported that the tapping of telephone wires and other signs indicate a possible development with the imprisonment of political offenders and other repressive methods that always accompany a dictatorship. Some of the directorate members frankly admit the probability of such steps, but they assert there will be no "official assassinations" and tortures like those under the Machado régime.

Confusion At the Palace.

Having seized power, the students now are face to face with reality in their attempts to consolidate their strength, maintain order, show their capacity to govern, gain recognition by Washington and organize a constituent assembly. The

confusion existing at the Presidential Palace as the Grau San Martin Cabinet attempts to bring order out of chaos, amid haphazard throngs of students, soldiers, sailors and job hunters, indicates that Cuba's "brain trust" is better at planning than making a plan work.

The students evidently need older and more experienced heads to help them, but they insist they cannot accept any compromise that would return the politicians to the government because the politicians would play politics and scuttle the reform program. How can the students carry out an ideal and completely free election of delegates to a constituent assembly without letting the political leaders organize their parties and carry on politics? The chances are that the students will emulate past dictators and keep strict control until the Constitution they want is adopted.

They say their system will be so good that even the worst politicians will not be able to wreck it. How can they solve the army problem and keep the recently mutinous sergeants, corporals and privates from repeating military coups? How can they restore "purified" officers to commands over former mutineers?

Qualified and impartial observers think a solution of this problem is impossible unless the students get public support (now lacking) to subordinate the army to the civil authority. The directorate insists it can do so by itself.

It declares that the moral force of the student movement plus a militia being organized of 400 armed students will keep the soldiery in support of the government. Moreover, the directorate plans to reduce the army by an indefinite number.

How can the directorate raise governmental revenue to pay the army and other employes and the other expenses required in carrying on stable government? Here, really, the students are facing the test of reality, and there is no answer from the directorate or the palace, while well-authenticated reports pour in of failure to collect taxes and of diminishing tariff revenues.

New Support Held Essential.

The general opinion, both of Cubans and Americans, even those supporting the ultimate aims of the student movement, is that "the boys," as the directorate members are generally called, cannot possibly succeed unless they abandon their intransigent attitude sufficiently to win over some of the Opposition.

The prevailing attitude was summed up by a distinguished non-political Cuban who is friendly to the students' aims, but disapproves of their methods. He said:

"What a pity! The boys are pure idealists, but so impractical. They are just boys playing with handling the government—a weapon worse than any machine gun. They may destroy themselves and all the rest of us. They think the whole country is with them, except the politicians, but they are mistaken.

"If they continue in their refusal to listen to advice, they may sacrifice the very fruits of the revolution which they want to preserve and plunge the whole country into chaos and anarchy. It is absolutely impractical to try to build a new Cuba on the unsound foundation of a mutinous army."