Cuban Rebel Is Visited in Hideout By HERBERT L. MATTHEWSThe New York Times

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Cuban Rebel Is Visited in Hideout

Castro Is Still Alive and Still Fighting in Mountains

This is the first of three articles by a correspondent of The New York Times who has just returned from a visit to Cuba.

By HERBERT L. MATTHEWS

of Cuba's youth, is alive and fighting hard and successfully in the rugged, almost impenetrable fastnesses of the Sierra Maestra, at the southern tip of the island.

the area, but the Army men are fighting a thus-far losing battle to destroy the most dangerous enemy General Batista has yet faced in a long and adventurous career' as a Cuban leader and

dictator.

in Cuba. No one connected with the outside world, let alone with the press, has seen Señor Castro except this writer. No one in Havana, not even at the United States Embassy with all its resources for getting information, will know until this report is

published that Fidel Castro is really in the Sierra Maestra. This account, among other

censorship in the history of the Cuban Republic. The Province of Oriente, with its 2,000,000 inhabitants, its flourishing cities such as Santiago, Holguin and Manzanillo, is shut off from Havana as surely as if it were

things, will break the tightest

another country. Havana does Continued on Page 34, Column 1



Siera Maestra Febren 17 de 1957

Tidebastwik

Fidel Castro at a heavily shaded outpost on Feb. 17. He gave the signature to the correspondent who visited him.

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Cuban Rebel Chief Is Visited in Mountain Hideout

FOUND STILL ALIVE First Reporter to Talk With

Fidel Castro Is Informed Movement Is Gaining

Continued From Page 1

not and cannot know that thousands of men and women are heart and soul with Fidel Castro and the new deal for which they think he stands. It does not know that hundreds of highly respected citizens are helping Señor Castro, that bombs and sabotage are constant (eighteen bombs were exploded in Santiago on Feb. 15), that a fierce Government counterterrorism has aroused the populace even more against President

movement of opposition to General Batista has been developing. It has by no means reached an explosive point. The rebels in the Sierra Maestra cannot move The economic situation is good. President Batista has the high officers of the Army and the police behind him and he ought to be able to hang on for the nearly two years of his present term that are still left.

Batista.

However, there are bad spots in the economy, especially on the fiscal side. Unemployment is heavy; corruption is rife. one can predict anything with safety except that Cuba seems in for a very troubled period.

July Movement are the flaming symbol of this opposition to the regime. The organization, which is apart from the university students' opposition, is formed of youths of all kinds. It is a revolutionary movement that calls itself socialistic. It is also na-The program is vague and

couched in generalities, but it amounts to a new deal for Cuba, radical, democratic and therefore anti-Communist. The real core of its strength is that it is fighting against the military dictatorship of President Batista. Truly Terrible Risk

To arrange for me to pene-

trate the Sierra Maestra and meet Fidel Castro, dozens of men and women in Havana and Oriente Province ran a truly terrible They must, of course, be protected with the utmost care in these articles for their lives would be forfeit-after the customary torture-immediately if any could be traced. Consequently, no names are used here the places are disguised and many details of the elaborate, dangerous trail in and out of the Sierra Maestra must be omitted.

eral Batista cannot possibly hope to suppress the Castro revolt. His only hope is that an Army column will come upon the young rebel leader and his staff and wipe them out. This is hardly likely to happen, if at all, before March 1, when the present suspension of constitutional guarantees is supposed to end. Fidel Castro is the son of a Spaniard from Galicia, a "Gal-

From the looks of things. Gen-

lego' like Generalissimo Fran-cisco Franco. The father was a pick-and-shovel laborer early in this century for the United Fruit Company, whose sugar planta-tions are on the northern shores tions are on the northern shores ready Saturday afternoon to mud, not daring to talk of Oriente Province. A powerful start for the Sierra. build, a capacity for hard work and a shrewd mind led the father up in the world until he became up in the world until he books.

a rich sugar planter himself. was effective, we took my

When he died last year each of along in the car as "camouline including Fidel, inflage." Cuba is at the height of herited a sizable fortune. Flight to U. S. and Mexico

cause the General had staged the jig would be up. a garrison revolt and prevented the Presidential elections of that house of a sympathizer of Señor

year 1956, he announced, was had purchased in Havana "for a to be the "year of decision." Befishing trip." warm for the cold fore the year ended, he said, he night air of the mountains and would be "a hero or a martyr." dark for camouflage. The Government knew that he had gone to Mexico and, last

summer was training a body of youths who had left Cuba to a certain house where three join him. As the end of the year youths who were going in with approached the Cuban Army was me had gathered. One of them very much on the alert, knowing was "One of the Eighty-two," a that something would be tried proud phrase for the survivors and that Fidel Castro was com- of the original landing. I was some distance away and a soling back. He was already, in a to meet five or six of them. A dier went to announce our armeasure, a hero of the Cuban courier who owned an open, rival and ask whether he would he isn't, but that is the faith he youth, for on July 26, 1953, he Army-type jeep, joined us. had led a band of youths in a His news was bad. A Govern- Later he came back with the

rique Pérez Serantes, intervened been a very heavy rain in the seemed a great luxury. It was was hastily covered up. But the to minimize the bloodshed and Sierra in the afternoon and the too dark in the grove to see plane went on to bomb higher in got Señor Castro and others to road was a morass. The others anything, surrender on promises of a fair impressed on him that Fidel We spoke in the lowest postrial. Fidel Castro was sentenced Castro wanted me in there at sible whispers. One man told brown eyes flash; his intense to fifteen years in prison but all costs and somehow it had to me how he had seen his broth- face is pushed close to the lister was a sentence of the house of the lister was a sentence there was an amnesty at the be done.

er's store wrecked and burned tener and the whispering voice, time of the Presidential elections

The courier agreed reluctantly, by Government troops and his as in a stage play, lends a vivid of Nov. 1, 1954, and he was let All across the plain of Oriente brother dragged out and exessence of drama.

Province there are flat lands cuted. "I'd rather be here, fight"We have been fighting for

the continent, and began to or-with sugar and rice plantations, ing for Fidel, than anywhere in seventy-nine days now and are ganized the 26th of July Move- and such farms have innumer- the world now," he said.

There were two hours before tro said. "The soldiers are fighthat the youth of Cuba are now The courier knew every inch of dawn, and the blanket made it ing badly; their morale is low fighting the Batista regime.

The blow, which at the time taking a very girevitous route. With the light I rould see here, fighting the seventy-nine days now and are stronger than ever," Señor Castalla and the soldiers are fighting the seventy-nine days now and are stronger than ever," Señor Castalla and the soldiers are fighting the seventy-nine days now and are stronger than ever, "Señor Castalla and the soldiers are fighting the seventy-nine days now and are stronger than ever," Señor Castalla and the soldiers are fighting the seventy-nine days now and are stronger than ever, "Señor Castalla and the soldiers are fighting than the soldiers are fighting than anywhere in seventy-nine days now and are stronger than ever, "Señor Castalla and the soldiers are fighting than anywhere in seventy-nine days now and are stronger than ever, "Señor Castalla and the soldiers are fighting than the soldiers

ers and lead an open attack against the Government. However, the Gramma had been spotted by a Cuban naval patrol boat. Planes flew in to strafe and the men on the yacht decided to beach her.

Playa Olorada, unhappily for the invaders, was a treacherous swamp. The men lost their food and most of their arms and supplies and soon were being attacked by army units. They scattered and took to the hills. Many were killed. Of the eightytwo no more than fifteen or twenty were left after a few President Batista and his aides

were remarkably successful from then on in hiding what happened. The youths they captured were forced to sign statements saying that they had been told Fidel Castro was on the Gramma with them but that they had never seen him. Thus doubt was cast that he had ever come to Cuba.

sorship, Havana and the other who spoke English, was my "in-Cuban cities crackle with the townstan". The others made up most astonishing rumors; one terpreter." The others made up constantly encouraged by the similar fictions. Government has been that Fidel Before leaving Castro is dead. Only those fight-showed me a wad of bills (the ing with him and those who had Cuban peso is exactly the same Throughout Cuba a formidable faith and hope knew or thought size and value as the United he was alive—and those who States dollar) amounting, ap-knew were very few and in the parently, to 400 pesos, which utmost peril of their lives if was being sent in to Señor their knowledge was traced. Castro, With a "rich" American

> those who wanted to believe, Our story convinced the Army kept asking was: "If Fidel is guard when he stopped us, alalive, why does he not do or say though he looked dubious for a something to show that he is?" little while. Then came hours of

> rival and he had sent word out could go no farther, to a trusted source in Havana that he wanted a foreign corre- we were to meet Castro's scouts; spondent to come in. The con- but we had to walk some first tact knew as soon as I arrived and it was hard going. At last

Sierra Maestra. After the first few weeks the was the meeting point. Army had given out the report

that the remnants of Senor Castro's forces were being starved out in the Sierra. In Three of us waited while two road under heavy guard. reports reaching Havana troops were losing proved true Arrangements for Interview

blocks and reach a near-by town cess, that would be a jumping off me in Havana with the news troops around us. that the meeting was set for the We stopped in a following night in the Sierra and of trees and bushes, dripping of the range so that I would not There are no roads there, and where we were to meet, no horses could go.

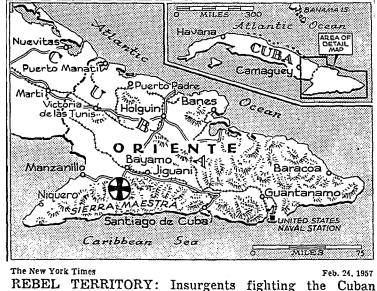
time meant driving all night and the next morning, so as to be The plan worked out to get through the Army's road blocks

(more than 500 miles away) on

in Oriente was as simple as it was effective. We took my wife the tourist season and nothing could have looked more innocent than a middle-aged couple of Someone wno knew the family American tourists driving down school and the University of one look at my wife, hesitate a Havana, where he studied law second, and wave us on with and became one of the student friendly smiles. If we were to be opposition leaders who rebelled questioned a story was prepared against General Batista in 1952 for them. If we were searched In that way we reached the

Castro outside the Sierra. There Fidel had to flee from Cuba my wife was to stay amid warm in 1954 and he lived for a while hospitality, and no questions in New York and Miami. The asked. I got into the clothes I Weather Turns Bad After nightfall I was taken to

The blow, which at the time taking a very circuitous route With the light I could see how We are killing many, but when seemed an utter failure, was he could bring us close enough. young they all were. Señor Cas- we take prisoners they are never



Government are operating in the Sierra Maestra (cross). Because of the complete centain village. One of the youths,

Before leaving one of the men

This was the situation when planter, it would be natural for the writer got to Havana on the group to have the money if Feb. 9 to try to find out what we were searched. It was interwas really happening. The cen-esting evidence that Fidel Cassorship has been applied to for-tro paid for everything he took eign correspondents as well as from the guajiros, or squatter What everybody, even farmers, of the Sierra.

Since Dec. 2 he had kept abso-driving, through sugar-cane and lutely quiet—or he was dead. rice fields, across rivers that
As I learned later, Señor only jeeps could manage. One As I learned later, Señor only jeeps could manage. One Castro was waiting until he had stretch, the courier said, was afety except that Cuba seems Castro was waiting until he had stretch, the courier said, was a for a very troubled period. his forces reorganized and heavily patroled by Government Fidel Castro and his 26th of strengthened and had mastery troops but we were lucky and uly Movement are the flaming of the Sierra Maestra. This for-saw none. Finally, after slitherymbol of this opposition to the tunately coincided with my aring through miles of mud we will and he had sent word out could go no farther. It was then midnight, the time

and got in touch with me. Be- we turned off the road and slid a stocky Negro with a black tionalistic, which generally in cause of the state of siege, it had down a hillside to where a heard and mustache, a ready, Latin America means anti-Yan- to be someone who would get stream, dark brown under the believed and mustache, a ready, cause of the state of siege, it had down a hillside to where a beard and mustache, a ready, to be someone who would get stream, dark brown under the brilliant smile and a willingness the story and go out of Cuba to nearly full moon, rushed its for publicity. Of all I met, only write it.

Then came a week of organistic of the boys he wanted his name mentioned slipped and fell full length in a time had to be fixed and arthrough with the water almost several of the youths had rangements made to get through to my knees and that was hard lived in the United States and the Government lines into the anough to do without falling. Spoke English others had the Government lines into the enough to do without falling. spoke Fifty yards up the other slope learned it at school. One had Patrol Was Not There

The patrol was not there.

reality the Army had ringed the of the men went back to see if Sierra with fortified posts and we had missed the scouts somecolumns of troops and had every where, but in fifteen minutes The they returned frustrated. The that courier suggested that we might frequent clashes were taking move up a bit and he led us place and that the Government ahead, but obviously did not heavily know where to go. Señor Castro's men have a characteristic signal that I was to hear in--two low, soft, tonecessantly-The first problem was to get less whistles. One of our men through the Government road- kept trying it, but with no suc-After awhile we gave up.

We had kept under cov Friday, Feb. 15, Señor Castro's times, for the moonlight was contact man got in touch with strong, and we knew there were We stopped in a heavy clump

that Señor Castro and his staff from the rain, the ground under would take the chance of com- foot heavily matted, muddy and ing a little way toward the edge soaked. There we sat for a whispered confab. The courier, and have to do too much climbing, another youth who had fought previously with Castro, said they would go up the mountainside and see if they could find any To get from Havana to Oriente of the rebel troops. Three of us were to wait, a

rather agonizing wait of more than two hours, crouched in the move, trying to snatch a little sleep with our heads on our knees and annoyed maddeningly by the swarms of mosquitoes that were having the feast of their lives. At last we heard a cautious.

welcome double-whistle. One of us replied in kind and this had to be kept up for a while, like two groups meeting in a dense remembers Fidel as a child to Cuba's most beautiful and fog until we got together. One of 4 or 5 years, living a sturdy fertile province with some young of our party had found an adfarm life. The father sent him to friends. The guards would take vance patrol and a scout came fog, until we got together. One with him to lead us to an outpost in the mountains. The scout was a squatter from the hills, and he needed to know

every inch of the land to take us as he did, swiftly and unerringly across fields, up stee hills, floundering in the mud. up steep The ground leveled out bless-

denly. The scout stopped and whistled cautiously. The return whistle came. There was a short parley and we were motioned on, sliding down into a heavy grove. The dripping leaves and boughs, the dense vegetation, the mud underfoot, the moonlight—all gave the impression of a tropical forest, more like Brazil than Cuba. Appointment at Dawn Señor Castro was encamped

join us or we should join him. desperate attack on the Moncada ment patrol of four soldiers in grateful news that we were to

struck on Dec. 2, 1956. That day We had to go through one tro, according to his followers, shot. We question them, talk a 62-foot diesel-engined yacht, Army roadblock and beyond that is 30, and that is old for the kindly to them, take their arms the Gramma, landed eighty-two would be the constant risk of 26th of July Movement. It has and equipment, and then set young men, trained for two Army patrols, so we had to have a motley array of arms and uni- them free.

English; others been a professional baseball player in a minor league and his wife is still in the United States. Logistics of Rebellion

The part of the Sierra we

were in grows no food. "Some-times we eat; sometimes not," one rebel said. On the whole, they obviously keep healthy. Supporters send in food; the farmers help; trusted couriers go out and buy supplies, which the he needed and could get more. storekeepers sell them at great risk and against Government Batista for \$72 a month?" he orders.

Willy Should Soldier Street Raul Castro, .Fidel's younger

Taking him, as one would at firmed this fact. Such being first, by physique and personality, this was quite a man—a get him, but in present circumskinned, full-faced, with a straggly beard. He was dressed in an olive gray fatigue uniform and carried a rifle with a telescopic sight, of which he was very proud. It seems his men have something more than fifty of these and he said the soldiers feared them. "We can pick them off at a thousand yards with these guns," he said.

After some general conversation we went to my blanket and

sat down. Someone brought tomato juice, ham sandwiches made with crackers and tins of coffee. In honor of the occasion, Señor Castro broke open a box of good Havana cigars and for the next three hours we sat there while he talked. No one could talk above a whisper at any time. There

were columns of Government troops all around us, Señor Castro said, and their one hope was to catch him and his band. The personality of the man is overpowering. It was easy to see

the imagination of the youth of edly at last and then dipped sud- age and of remarkable qualities plane to New York. of leadership. The Eighty-two Formed As the story unfolded of how

he had at first gathered the few remnants of the Eighty-two

around him; kept the Government troops at bay while youths came in from other parts of Oriente as General Batista's counter-terrorism aroused them; got arms and supplies and then began the series of raids and counter-attacks of guerrilla warfare, one got a feeling that he is now invincible. Perhaps inspires in his followers. They have had many fights, and inflicted many losses, Señor

Barracks in Santiago de Cuba. a jeep had placed itself on the wait and Fidel would come along Castro said. Government planes In the fighting then about 100 very road we had to take to get with the dawn. Someone gave me came over and bombed every students and soldiers were killed, near the point where we were a few soda crackers, which tasted day; in fact, at 9 sharp a plane but the revolt failed. The Arch- to meet the Castro scouts at good. Someone else stretched a did fly over. The troops took up bishop of Santiago. Msgr. En-midnight. Moreover, there had blanket on the ground and it positions; a man in a white shirt rigue Pérez Sergates intervened been a very heavy reign the secret leavy the same of the castrod of the secret leavy that the same of the secret leavy the same of the same of the same of the secret leavy to the same of th Castro said. Government planes the mountains. Castro is a great talker. His

months on a ranch in Mexico, a good story ready. I was to be forms, and even a few civilian "I know that they are always on the Oriente shore below an American sugar planter who suits. The rifles and the one arrested afterward and we

know how to fight this kind of mountain warfare. We do.

"The Cuban people hear on the radio all about Algeria, but they never hear a word about us or read a word, thanks to the censorship. You will be the first to tell them. I have followers all over the island. All the best elements, especially all the youth, are with us. The Cuban people will stand anything but oppression."

I asked him about the report that he was going to declare a revolutionary government in the

"The "Not yet," he replied. time is not ripe. I will make myself known at the opportune moment. It will have all the more effect for the delay, for now everybody is talking about "There is no hurry. We are sure of ourselves. Cuba is

in a state of war, but Batista is hiding it. A dictatorship must show that it is omnipotent or it will fall; we are showing that it is impotent. The Government, he said with

some bitterness, is using arms furnished by the United States, not only against him but 'against all the Cuban people." "They have bazookas, mcrtars, machine guns, planes and bombs," he said, "but we are safe here in the Sierra; they

must come and get us, and they cannot." Señor Castro speaks some English, but he preferred to talk in Spanish, which he did with extraordinary eloquence. His is a political mind rather than a military one. He has strong ideas of liberty, democracy, social justice, the need to restore the Con-

has strong ideas on economy, too, but an economist would consider them weak.

The 26th of July Movement talks of nationalism, anti-colonialism, anti-imperialism. I asked Señor Castro about that. He answered, "You can be sure we have no animosity toward the United States and the American

stitution, to hold elections. He

people." "Above all," he said, "we are fighting for a democratic Cuba and an end to the dictatorship. We are not anti-military; that is why we let the soldier prisoners go. There is no hatred of the Army as such, for we know the men are good and so are many of the officers.

"Batista has 3,000 men in the field against us. I will not tell you how many we have, for He works in obvious reasons. columns of 200; we in groups of ten to forty, and we are winning. It is a battle against time and time is on our side."

Confident of Financing

To show that he deals fairly with the guajiros he asked some-one to bring "the cash." A soldier brought a bundle wrapped in dark brown cloth, which Señor Castro unrolled. There was a stack of peso bills at least a foot high-about \$4,000 he said, adding that he had all the money

"Why should soldiers die for Raul Castro, Fidel's younger give them \$100 a month, and give them \$100 a month, and came into the camp with others of the staff, and a few minutes later Fidel himself strode in.

Taking him, as one would at firmed this fact. Such being

stances he seems almost invulnerable.

"They never know where we are," he said as the group arose to say good-by, "but we always know where they are. You have taken quite a risk in coming here, but we have the whole area covered, and we will get you out safely."

They did.

We ploughed our way back through the muddy undergrowth in broad daylight, but always keeping under cover. The scout went like a homing pigeon through woods and across fields where there were no paths straight to a farmer's house on the edge of the Sierra. There we hid in a back room while someone borrowed a horse and went for the jeep, which had been under cover all night. There was one road block to

get through with an Army guard so suspicious our hearts sank, but he let us through. After that, washed, and looking once again like an

American tourist, with my wife as "camouflage," we had no that his men adored him and trouble driving back through the also to see why he has caught road blocks to safety and then Cuba all over the island. Here knew, we had been away fishwas an educated, dedicated faing for the week-end, and no natic, a man of ideals, of courone bothered us as we took the Tomorrow: The opposition in Cuba to President Batista and the use of terrorism in.

combating terrorism.