business of informing, then the presumption is that he is both truthful and accurate. But the presumption is exactly the opposite; surely the testimony of the paid informer should be accepted with greater caution that that of the amateur, who may be truly disinterested. The records in security and similar proceedings of the last decade are replete with instances in which the unreliability of testimony given by professional informers has been demonstrated.

The ACLU should reconsider its proposed formula before it is accepted; the FBI, however much it might like to protect the identity of all informers, would probably be delighted to settle for a rule that protected the identity of the professional. In addition to being spurious, the distinction for which the ACLU contends sidesteps the main issue. It has yet to be demonstrated that the price of security necessarily includes the calculated risk that innocent citizens may be done a lasting injustice without due process of law. And if that were the price, it would be too high.

Is Gossip News?

Marie Torre, the New York Herald Tribune television columnist, has gone to jail for ten days rather than reveal the source of a statement allegedly made to her by a CBS official, which statement became the basis for libel action against the broadcasting corporation.

We salute Miss Torre for upholding a basic tenet of journalism — that freedom of the press implies the right of a reporter to protect the source of his information. We wish, however, that she were taking her stand on a more edifying example of her craft.

What happened last October was as follows: CBS was known to be having a dispute with Judy Garland. Miss Torre, on a fishing expedition, phoned someone at Columbia to ask what cooked. And this individual popped off to the effect that Miss Garland was “known for a highly developed inferiority complex” and that she “did not want to work because something is bothering her.” When this was published, Miss Garland felt that her professional reputation had been damaged, and she sued.

What Miss Torre printed was not news; it was a bad-tempered personal evaluation of a sort not subject to proof. It offered at least good grounds for a libel action, and yet the plaintiff is frustrated in her suit because she cannot discover who maligned her. Reporters enjoy their “privilege” by analogy with doctors, lawyers and priests; they do not hold it by law. And, although freedom of the press is always a persuasive defense, they will not hold it in fact unless they exercise enough self-restraint to avoid becoming the shields of community gossips and common scolds.

REVOLUTION WITHOUT GENERALS... Carleton Beals

Carleton Beals, veteran correspondent, lecturer and author of a score of books on South America and the islands of the Caribbean, is now in Havana to cover the Castro revolution and the new era which it presages for Cuba. Old-time readers of The Nation will recall Mr. Beals’s outstanding articles in this magazine on the invasion of Nicaragua by the U.S. Marines in 1927; thirty years later (June 29, 1957), he reported from Havana on the early stages of the Castro revolt. In the intervening years, Mr. Beals has covered every major event in the continuing struggle of Latin Americans for freedom and independence. — Eo.

Havana, January 9
FIDEL CASTRO, completing his triumphant tour of Cuba, entered this capital not on the traditional white horse, but herding a captured fleet of tanks along the edge of the city. The long parade avoided the city’s center and the National Palace, where President Urrutia and his Cabinet have been working day and night. The noisy vehicles were herded into Camp Columbia, Castro’s new residence; and there his first official act was to receive the mothers of boys who had been killed, under his command, in the battle for the Moncada Barracks in Santiago more than five years ago.

Neither police nor soldiers were on the line of march — only the July 26 youth who, with their long, black beards made this city look as if it were a Mecca for Biblical prophets. These are the “People’s Militia” who have taken over from Batista’s army, many of whose officers now languish in jail pending trial. “The military caste has been eliminated,” Castro has announced. “This revolution hasn’t produced one general, nor will it. Within days we will use our planes to rain shoes, clothing, food and pledges of land reform upon the peasants of Oriente Province. Our planes will be symbols of love and not of terror.”

Of the U.S. Military Mission to Batista, Cuba’s new leader said: “Nothing it taught the Cuban Army had any value; it merely assured the triumph of the revolution.”

And meanwhile the revolution sweeps on in many directions. Pro-Batista labor leaders have been ousted from the unions and democratic elections have been promised the rank-and-file. The judges of Batista’s Emergency Court have been jailed pending trial. These are days of great promises and great hopes.

CASTRO’s prolonged Messianic resistance against the military tyrant enjoying military aid (except for the

January 17, 1959
last few months) from the United States has inflamed the hearts not only of his own people, but of people all around the globe. Not since Sandino resisted the American Marines for six years in the Nicaraguan mountains, has any Latin American figure so caught the imagination of the world as Fidel Castro. Sandino's revolt, marking the beginning of the end of an imperialistic era, gave courage to national independence movements everywhere, revitalized Latin American solidarity, and brought about important changes in our relations with the rest of the hemisphere, eventually putting an end to armed interventions. Castro's success is also likely to alter our relations with the countries to the south and to usher in a new phase of fuller Latin American independence. The pronouncements of the July 26 Movement make little reference to the United States, beyond indicating that treaties harmful to Cuba must be abrogated; but the Castro program stresses at great length future relations with Latin America: elimination of dictatorship, increased economic and cultural interchange, the achievement of true democratic Latin American solidarity, and a more effective role for Latin America in the United Nations and international affairs.

ALREADY the echoes. On January 2, The New York Times editorialized: "Americans should not delude themselves. The policy followed by the State Department, the Pentagon, the American Embassy in Havana, and a large part of the American business community has built up an antagonism that will make the situation difficult." Two days after Batista fled, Dr. Milton Eisenhower came out favoring a tougher policy toward dictators to the south: no more medals and warm embraces. He could well have added: Give them less money and fewer arms, for our so-called "defense policy," which has intruded the military everywhere, has set democratic evolution back many decades in Latin America. Dr. Eisenhower does stress that serious consideration be given to various Latin American demands made repeatedly, and in vain, ever since World War II.

Only a few years ago, this country broke up an effort by Argentina, Brazil and Chile to set up a common market area, in spite of our earlier agreement that trade and travel barriers should be lowered. Dr. Eisenhower now advocates such a plan for Panama and Central America "as a pilot model for other Latin American regions."

All this smacks a bit of locking the stable door too late. The Cuban rebels doubt that our reiterations of neutrality in their civil war were sincere. Our military men were advisers and trainers of the Cuban Army, which was fighting the people with modern methods and with arms supplied by the United States. Our commanders in the area decorated the worst killers of the Cuban Army. Diplomatic and army banquets with the dictator were frequent and lavish. When we did belatedly declare an arms embargo (but did not remove our military men from the scene), England rushed in to fill the gap. Cubans simply do not believe that England would have suddenly meddled in Cuban affairs by sending weapons to the dictator except at the behest of our State Department. They recall similar subterfuges on our part in the shipment of arms to North Africa and the Middle East.

American big business has been exceedingly close to Batista, partly because it had no other choice, but frequently because of the rich concessions—and outright cash—he had been handing out, obtained by skyrocketing the Cuban debt to unprecedented levels. Batista has close business contacts, particularly in Florida, where he owns a great mansion in Daytona Beach and has made heavy investments with money appropriated from the Cuban people. Nor has it been merely Batista and his henchmen who are partners with American underworld gangsters in running the world's greatest gambling enterprises.

Cuban resentment also runs deep because of our harassment of refugees from Batista's tyranny who have sought asylum in the United States—probably some 50,000 in Miami alone. The new Castro consul in Miami, Oscar Ramírez, has publicly charged that "The [Miami] police and immigration and customs people for the United States did whatever he [the Batista consul] asked." Cubans particularly resent the way in which outstanding leaders of the July 26 Movement, such as heads of the student organizations and exiled labor leaders, and even ex-President Prio, have been badgered by U. S. authorities and thrown into jail. Fidel Castro's own sister was deported to Havana.

FOR SOME months now, the State Department knew that Batista was doomed, but apparently it did not relish Castro and the July 26 Movement as his successor. U. S. Ambassador Smith plugged for free elections—something quite impossible under existing conditions: army and police terror, censorship, press suppression and civil war. All opposition parties by that time had been wiped out, except for small, splinter factions willing to play it Batista's way. Opposition leaders were in jail, in exile or had been killed. Besides, a new law had been rushed through which would make Batista head of the army under any new government. Naturally, Batista's enemies considered Ambassador Smith's efforts as constituting flagrant meddling in behalf of Batista's tyranny.

At the fall of Machado in September, 1933, as a result of Batista's quick shower-bath coup, Ambassador Sumner Welles tried to set up the De Céspedes provisional government. It lasted ten days. The recent attempt to undercut the Castro victory by installing Supreme Court Judge Carlos Piedra as President did not even get off the ground. Cubans now charge that this effort emanated from the American Embassy. "We have been betrayed," Castro has announced. "Now the revolution begins." Apparently the "betrayal" was of a secret arrangement made between Castro himself and the Batista General, Eulogio Castillo, to set up a temporary military junta and prevent the escape of Batista and his top military and cabinet officials. General Castillo is now behind bars. The fate of Cuba is now in Castro's hands. He enters as the conquering hero at the head of a fanati-
cally loyal following. The new President, Dr. Manuel Urrutia, is Castro’s choice, picked and installed by him alone. Urrutia won this high honor because, as a Santiago judge, he refused to convict captured July 26 attackers of the Santiago Moncada barracks on the grounds that the Batista Government had seized power by force in violation of the Constitution. Urrutia had to flee the country with his family. He returned in November, joining Castro in Oriente Province. He is a man of great learning and probity. But Castro’s youth recklessly willing to face torture and death, who have fought in the streets of every city and hamlet in Cuba for six long years. He comes in at the head of a student movement which has seen Cuba’s schools closed for years, which lost leader after leader to Batista’s police. He comes in at a time when every professional and civic group in Cuba—from sports clubs to the Rotary clubs—had broken with Batista. He comes in with the good will of a large sector of the Church hierarchy and certainly with the active backing of the Catholic Youth movement, the two leaders of which were recently taken out of their homes, brutally tortured and killed. He takes over a war-scarred country that yearns for peace, in which tens of thousands of homes have lost loved ones or seen them driven into exile.

All in all, those who might have made serious trouble for Castro in his hour of victory have fled the country in utter panic because of the hatred and bitterness they had created. The head of Batista’s murderous strong-arm squads, the top bureaucrats, the heads of his police and the army leaders—all have fled: Probably never in history have so many generals taken such precipitate and ignominious flight from their commands.

Thus, the vaunted Batista army has been drastically purged and will be further purged. Its prestige has been destroyed; it was beaten not by a soldier, but by a civilian making no claims to military ability, a civilian who rallied other civilians. The arm-bands of the July 26 Movement are now the ruling force of the country. Here is the hard core of Castro’s strength—ideologically as well as militarily. For this has been a civil war, not a mere military coup such as those of Batista in overthrowing Machado and, later, Prio. It has been a civilian war against a well-trained military force enjoying the latest arms, tanks, machine-guns, some of the fastest war planes available anywhere, and with plenty of money. Yet it went down; it crumbled away before the moral fact of a people willing to die for freedom. We hailed the fighters for freedom in Hungary. Can we do less toward the fighters for freedom in Cuba, a fight more prolonged and quite as savage?

THERE IS one gap in the general picture of support for Castro—and it is a serious gap. Organized labor did not participate in the struggle; it has not debated the issues. Yet Cuba’s General Confederation of Labor is two million strong—large for a country of six million.

This passivity is a new phenomenon in Cuba; heretofore, labor was active in political events. It played a heroic part in the overthrow of dictator Gerardo Machado two decades ago. It was then betrayed by Batista—its leaders jailed or killed, its strikes put down by the army. Yet it kept on fighting valiantly during the bloody terror imposed by Carlos Mendieta and Batista.

Subsequently Batista, looking ahead to the day when he might be elected President, began making his peace with labor and even wooed Communist support. During his administration in 1944-48, an uncommonly prosperous period, he made extensive concessions to labor. But in his attempt to return to power in 1952, he received little labor support, and when he realized he wouldn’t be elected and staged his coup against Prio, he was opposed and denounced by union leaders. But he managed to patch up a truce with Eusebio Mujol, one of the most treacherous and self-seeking labor chiefs, and from then on he worked to gain full control over the confederation. Its leaders were given lush concessions and became his partners in gambling, hotel and public-works enterprises. The few honest and recalcitrant leaders were killed off or run out of the country and their places taken by men chosen through army-run elections. Except for its corrupt pro-Batista leaders, the voice of labor was thus silenced. By terrorism and pork-barrel corruption, Batista took away labor’s independence, its dignity and its moral fiber.

THE failure of Castro’s appeal for labor support and, in particular, labor’s refusal to go along with his plea, some months ago, for a general strike against Batista, may have been due in part to rank-and-file suspicion of Castro’s labor aims, and in part to Batista’s threats of the firing squad. A striker is somewhat more vulnerable than a rebel in the hills. The Castro labor program has included the right to strike, social security, democratic unionism, a progressive increase of present wages, a 30 per cent profit-sharing package, and new industry to provide more jobs and better living standards. It calls for labor-capital cooperation to achieve these ends.

Once Castro was victorious, he
was able to secure an effective general strike “to clean up the anarchy left by Batista.” But labor’s initiative in this display is somewhat doubtful. Obedience was imposed by the roving armed July 26 brigades and by employers. It merely proved that Castro is the new master of labor, not that labor has retaken its place as a moral factor in political and economic life.

IN matters of land reform, Castro at one time advocated the expropriation of foreign-owned holdings — a position from which he has receded. But as late as 1957 he stated, as reported in a bulletin published by his July 26 Movement in Costa Rica: “More than half of our best arable land is in foreign hands; in Oriente, the most extensive province of Cuba, the lands of the United Fruit Company and the West Indies Fruit Company stretch unbroken from the north to the south shores.”

[A full translation of Castro’s statement was carried in The Nation of November 30, 1957.] He has called for re-examination of all land titles, a guaranteed minimum acreage to all farmers, restriction of the size of individual holdings. In some areas his forces took over during the civil war, land was distributed to the peasants.

But beyond all other Cuban problems is the plight of the agricultural worker, especially in the sweat-shop sugar industry, the main source of Cuban wealth. Here low wages, poor housing and short-term employment create a restless, semi-starved Lumpenproletariat living at close to cookie standards. Cuba has become greatly diversified compared to a few decades ago, but it is still a one-crop land, hence exposed to a one-crop type of government-dictatorship.

Hence the formality of free elections, as promised by Castro, will not in itself remove the basic evils and corruption so long entrenched under the dictatorship. The basis for Cuban democracy scarcely exists. Education, health, improved earning power, sufficient industry to take up the off-season slack in the sugar industry, a degree of economic security for the people — in short, far-reaching social and economic reforms are urgently needed if the freedom won on New Year’s Day is to have any meaning. Some of these basic reforms are going to seem unpleasant to absentee capital, and it may be necessary to revise the whole status of foreign capital in the country so that proper living conditions can be guaranteed.

Much of the course of events in the near future will depend upon the official American attitude toward Castro. Will our government be as lavishly helpful with him as it was with Batista? That has never happened before in similar circumstances. Maybe this time it will be different. And will Castro himself measure up to the great tasks that await him?

Unlike previous upheavals in Cuba, largely determined by military elements, the prolonged struggle to get rid of Batista has awakened the people and released deep and violent social forces. A revolution has been set in motion and there is little likelihood that it can be stopped short of its objectives either by outside interference or by incompetent or recalcitrant leadership. Thus far Castro has shown the finest qualities of true leadership: self-sacrifice, dedication, patience, confidence and ready pliability in meeting the most difficult situations. He may indeed come to rank with that other great Cuban, José Martí, who carved out the shape of Cuban independence.

THE KISSING CASE... by George L. Weissman

Monroe, North Carolina

IN THIS seat of Union County, during the late afternoon of October 28, last year, a searching police car finally spotted its quarry—two Negro boys on a bicycle: James Hanover Thompson, nine, and David “Fuzzy” Simpson, eight. The boys were put in the county jail and held incomunicado for six days. Then on November 4, the boys’ mothers—515-a-week domestic workers and the sole supports of large families—were told by the police to get down to the courthouse where their sons were to go on trial in a half-hour.

The women sent word to Robert

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F. Williams, president of the Union County branch of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, to join them in court, as they needed his help. But when he arrived at the courthouse, a few minutes after proceedings had begun, he was not admitted to the courtroom.

The two boys were charged with assault upon three white females, ages six and seven. Juvenile Court Judge J. Hampton Price outlined the facts of the case as he had obtained them, earlier in the day, from the white girls and their parents, none of whom was in the courtroom during any part of the trial. The judge said that the two young defendants had gone into a white neighborhood, climbed down uninvited into a culvert ditch where three little white girls were playing, and set a kiss from each of the girls as the price of getting out. Two of the girls got out without paying the price, but the third, a seven-year-old, had kissed Hanover Thompson. There being no defense counsel, and the defendants proving too frightened to talk much, the proceedings were brief. Judge Price found the boys guilty and committed them to indeterminate terms in reform school with the admonition that if they behaved well they might be released before they reached twenty-one.

The boys’ version of what had happened was not learned till more than a month later, when the writer