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MASFERRER, Rojas, Rolando

Rolando Masferrer, Cuban Senator from the Province of Oriente and vice-president and Senate leader of the Partido Unión Radical (PUR), is an ambitious, dynamic, and ruthless politician with a notably strong will to power. He has been described as one of the most "unsavory characters" now on the Cuban political scene, and is said to have no ethics, no morals, and no fixed loyalties. A member of the Cuban Communist Party for 12 years, he is now the head of the Movimiento Socialista Revolucionario (MSR), an allegedly anti-Communist political organization which has a greater reputation for its terrorist, gangster-type activities than as a political movement. Masferrer is, nevertheless, a cultured, intelligent, able, and intensely nationalistic individual, whose possible future importance in Cuban politics can not be discounted. Although he is not greatly esteemed by President Fulgencio Batista (see biography), it is reported that he enjoys the President's support because Batista would rather have him and his reported gangster following in ^{the Batista} his camp than against ^{it} him.

Born in Holguín, Province of Oriente, on January 12, 1918,

Masferrer studied law at the University of Habana and later taught school, worked as a newspaperman, and practiced law. He joined the Cuban Communist Party (Partido Socialista Popular--PSP) in 1933 and for some time, worked for Hoy (Today), the Communist daily. In 1937 he went to Spain and fought with the International Brigade, returning to Cuba in 1939. He became assistant editor of Hoy upon his return and held that position until he was expelled from the PSP on August 22, 1945. The immediate reason for his dismissal was his difference with the Hoy editor, Anibal Escalante, presumably over the latter's following of U.S. Communist Earl Browder's line of rapprochement with capitalism.

Following his expulsion from the PSP, Masferrer founded Tiempo en Cuba (Time in Cuba), a weekly news magazine patterned on the ^{U.S.} ~~American~~ news magazine Time. This publication still exists in the form of a daily newspaper with a pro-Batista, anti-Communist and anti-U.S. orientation; its circulation has been variously estimated at between 4,000 and 10,000. It has been described as the worst paper published in Cuba, corrupt, irresponsible, dedicated to yellow journalism, and completely without prestige

or standing. Masferrer is presently director of Tiempo en Cuba and is an active writer, displaying considerable journalistic ability.

After leaving the PSP in 1945, Masferrer formed the MSR and has repeatedly used this organization to further his own political ends. Masferrer and the MSR were active in the abortive ^{invasion} attempted staged against the Dominican Republic from Cayo Confites in 1947. He has since been consistently against the regime of Generalissimo Rafael Trujillo, the latest episode being Masferrer's "exposé" in 1956 of the Dominican Ambassador's bribe to induce him to forego his anti-Dominican campaign and enlist him, instead, in a campaign to remove Batista.

Masferrer was first elected to office in the 1948 presidential campaign as a representative from Oriente Province, when Tiempo en Cuba backed the Auténtico Party campaign, reportedly for a large sum of money. He was quite close to President Ramón Grau San Martín (see biography) during the latter's administration (1944-48), but this did not deter Masferrer from transferring his support to President Carlos Prío Socarrás (see biography) and to President Batista when their respective terms in office began. He was elected

to the Senate in November 1954 and in September 1955 formed the

Movimiento Sindicalista Radical^{as} a labor movement designed to

increase his influence and to enlist the support of Cuban workers.

The main target of his abuse during this time, presumably with the

tacit approval of Batista, was Eusebio Mujal (see biography),

president of the Cuban Confederation of Labor, whom Masferrer was

trying to supplant. However, Masferrer's movement has not gained

much strength, and he is now involved in an attempt to organize an

anti-Communist congress, sponsored by his organization, with the

blessing of Santiago Rey, Minister of the Interior. His attempts

has thus far have been frustrated by the opposition of Mujal, who

apparently completely distrusts Masferrer's intentions. Most

recently, according to reports, Masferrer had charge of enforcing

order at the progovernment Santiago de Cuba rally held on June 30,

1957 in the Province of Oriente. This he did with characteristic

vehemence.

A violent man who believes in direct action, involving at times the use of submachine guns, he has personally participated in several gun battles and is heavily guarded at all times. He reportedly has

a private army of about 80 men, who, presumably, form the nucleus of the MSR. A story is told that in 1950 the police found him standing, submachinegun in hand, over two frightened men who were actually digging their own graves. He was not arrested at the time since he was entitled to congressional immunity.

Masferrer has been found ineligible to receive a U.S. visa under the section of the Immigration and Nationality Act which excludes Communists and former Communists. However, he has made several official visits to the U.S. under diplomatic visa. He is considered generally unfriendly to the United States and has made many virulent attacks against this country; he does make, however, extensive use of United States Information Service anti-Communist material and has expressed a desire to have his sons educated in the United States. He is now vehemently anti-Communist although he still considers himself a Marxian Socialist. He is friendly with Yugoslavia's President Tito, whom he visited in 1956, and was notably favorable to the Perón regime in Argentina for a number of years. He was also favorable to the Arbenz regime, although critical of its tolerance of Communist infiltration into Guatemala. *in Guatemala* *That country*

Masferrer was married to Licila Montero Zambrano, whom he reportedly divorced in 1943, and has two sons. He speaks fluent English and was named professor of English at Marianao High School in 1946, although this has generally been considered to be a sinecure.