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MANUEL RAY ANSWERS
TEN QUESTIONS FROM "BOHEMIA LIBRE"

Editor's Note:

Midway through 1957 the struggle against Batista's dictatorship suffered several serious setbacks. Frank Pais was murdered in Santiago. The strike that started in Oriente and spread throughout the Island never got off the ground. The underground movement was badly in need of organization. General disenchantment was settling in all opposition sectors.

There had to be a new beginning and a complete reorganization of the underground. To undertake this mission in Havana came forth a figure little known then in his country, the young civil engineer, Manuel Ray Rivero. Voluntarily sacrificing a well paid position, and risking his personal safety, Ray gave himself completely to the cause. For 13 months as head of the Civil Resistance Movement, he lived in the underground, was sought continuously by Batista's reprisal forces, changing residences two and even three times a day, always facing all possible dangers. But from the underground he organized a civil resistance movement that was a very important contributing factor in overthrowing the Batista Regime.

When Batista fled, Ray was named Minister of Public Works in the first cabinet. He showed right away that not only was he an effective revolutionary, but a competent administrator and highly-skilled technician. During the 11 months that he headed the Ministry of Public Works he worked out a vast plan of national reconstruction, placing highly qualified technicians in the Ministry. But his disagreements with the policies of the Regime forced him to quit the Castro Government. Convinced that there was no turning back from the path the Revolution was taking, he once more decided to fight for freedom for his country.

This time, like in the Batista era, he gave himself completely to the cause. Once again he went underground and organized a resistance movement to overthrow the tyranny that today strangles his country. Thus the MRP (Revolutionary Movement of the People) was founded. Having organized this movement, Ray slipped past Castro's guards and is now in exile, coordinating his activities with the MRP Committee in Exile. "Bohemia Libre" interviewed him in Tampa, Florida.

Question 1 -- Why did you leave the Fidel Castro Government in November of last year (1959)?

Answer -- I had disagreed several months before because of determined government actions while I was Minister of Public Works in the Government. Repeatedly I objected to several measures that in my opinion were pushing Cuba towards a totalitarian state. In May 1959, for instance, several of my friends in the Cabinet and myself -- they have also since left the Castro Regime -- objected to a law that established the right of confiscation of property of anyone accused of "counter-revolutionary infractions." The law was not promulgated then. However, ten days after we left the Cabinet, the measure became law.

The Major Hubert Matos case was the final blow that caused us to leave the Government. At a meeting of the Council of Ministers I said that I considered the treatment Matos was receiving unjust and scurrilous. I said that we should analyze the case and find out why the rebel major acted like he did.

"If Hubert Matos says that there is a powerful communist infiltration in the army," I said, "we must find out so that we can then act accordingly."

At another time I suggested the necessity for the "26 of July Movement" to keep its structure and organization since it had mobilized all the moral reserves of the nation. I argued that the "26 of July" was the proper instrument by which to further the ideals of the Revolution. Raul Castro answered that the "26 of July" had served its purpose during the period of the fight against Batista, and that it no longer had a reason for existence. By then, in accordance with the secret objectives of the Regime to destroy the "26 of July Movement," 80 per cent of the leadership had been purged, and communists had replaced them. Because of these circumstances, and others, I decided it was impossible for me to stay any longer in the Government. It seemed that every time I turned around I was meeting the plans of the Regime head-on. So on November 26, 1959, Osmani Cienfuegos replaced me as Public Works Minister.

Question 2 -- How long have you been in the underground?
Why did you decide to go underground?

Answer -- Although I left the Government, I had hopes even then that Fidel and his Regime would rectify their errors. I found it extremely difficult to convince myself that the beautiful ideals for which we had fought were being betrayed in such a way as to take the country on the path to a totalitarian state at the service of international communism. When I was convinced that there would be no rectification on Fidel's part, I decided once more to fight to free my country. From the very beginning of this year (1960) I started

to make contact with those persons who had fought Batista in the underground, and who like me felt betrayed by the inconceivable direction that the revolutionary process was taking. In May (1960) with a rather large group of genuine revolutionaries we started to organize a movement that within Cuba would direct a popular struggle against the Castro Regime based on the principles that inspired the original Revolution, that has since been betrayed by Fidel and his group.

For a while I was able to move with quite a bit of freedom. But soon the Government became suspicious of me, and I was continuously followed. And so the moment arrived -- like it did under Batista -- when I had to go underground in order to operate more effectively. I have been working underground, organizing, for the past four months.

I decided to go underground, as so many other Cubans already have done, because I was absolutely convinced that the people had to be mobilized as soon as possible -- regardless of the sacrifices or risks involved -- to overthrow the tyrannical Regime that oppresses them today. This will save Cuba from a long period of misery and prolonged terror in every walk of Cuban life.

Possibly the worst and saddest thing about the system that has been implanted in Cuba is the type of society it plans to create: a society based on the ruination of all morality; destructive of all human freedoms, in which the individual must lower himself to the level of a slave at the service of a master who owns him if he wants to succeed or be somebody. All this is becoming a reality in Cuba. Just to have any kind of economic security, you have to submit yourself to everybody and everything, you must accept everything, you must get rid of all personal initiative.

The communists brag about how moral their societies are because they have eliminated the profit motive, which they say is the source of all ambitions and immoralities. But the truth is that a communist society is necessarily an immoral society and ethically inferior. It is founded on abjectness and servileness that foment the lowest and weakest of sentiments. We must avoid at all costs that this type of society be permanently established in Cuba, since it is capable of morally corrupting our people. That's why we are fighting. And that's why we have gone underground, fully aware of the risks and dangers of our decision to do so.

Question 3 -- How is the underground organized in Cuba?

Are the people cooperating with it?

What have you done up till now?

Answer -- The MRP (Revolutionary Movement of the People) has been organized in the 126 municipalities of Cuba. The underground is made up of cells and can rely on an extensive net of communication that is actively functioning throughout the Island.

We have begun systematic and organized sabotage in the six provinces that has destroyed the myth that Fidel is backed by the overwhelming majority of the people. The Castro Regime has not been able to stop the sabotage to date. It should be pointed out that just about everybody, from all levels of society, are actively cooperating with the underground movement. They contribute financially, distribute our propaganda, hide in their homes members of the underground who are being pursued by the secret police, and in general they carry out instructions of the movement.

During the four months that I was continuously underground, I had no trouble at all with the persons who hid me, or in some cases with the house help -- everybody cooperated. Not once did anybody inform on me. In these homes (and I slept in a different one every night) I had constant meetings with directors of the underground movement, with other persons who provided invaluable contacts, and with Rebel Army officers who, being disgusted with the Castro Regime, are also conspiring within their own ranks to overthrow the Regime.

The MRP managed to get arms into Morro Castle to the Hubert Matos officers who used them to escape recently. We then kept them hidden until they got to Miami safely. This shows that regardless of how close the Regime watches us and regardless of their reprisal threats, nothing can stop the people when they are willing to sacrifice everything. I was able to leave Cuba when I thought it appropriate, even though Fidel had said on TV that I was the leader of the underground movement, and had given special orders to all his investigatory agencies to get me.

I left Cuba to coordinate on activities with the Committee in Exile of the MRP. The MRP is well organized and functioning well inside Cuba. Therefore it is not absolutely necessary that I remain in Cuba for the time being. This doesn't mean, however, that I will not return. But it was necessary to have direct contact with our movement in exile. I will enter and leave Cuba as the times and circumstances dictate.

Question 4 -- What are the ideological, economic, political, and social beliefs of the Revolutionary Movement of the People? Will the MRP become a political party when the Castro Regime is overthrown?

Answer -- The Revolutionary Movement of the People was organized to fight the Fidel Castro communist tyranny and to establish a society based on the recognition of human rights, democratic and civil principles, and based on a genuine social justice. Which is to say, that we are fighting to achieve the ideals that we fought for before. We must achieve an economic system that will be capable of developing all the potentials of individual initiative that will be put to use for the good of all the people. We want to stimulate the efficiency of the Cuban people so that they will produce up to the maximum of their capacity. We want a system that will be ever watchful of a correct

and just distribution of the social production, that will aim to redeem the humble class of our country. The MRP respects the right to private property that is conscious of its role in the social order. Equally, the MRP believes that private enterprise should contribute strongly to the social and economic progress of the country, aimed at the common good.

The MRP has absolute faith in the efficiency of the democratic process, and in the participation of the citizenry, by means of the ballot in the elections of their government. We believe that 18 months after the overthrow of Fidel's tyranny elections should be held in Cuba. Of course, the MRP aspires to become a political party to be able to contribute from its position to the great task of national transformation.

The transitional period will be difficult, but full of intensive and constructive work. We will have to overcome the deep economic, political, and social crisis that we will inherit from "fidelismo." MRP also believes that it will not be possible, either, to return to the corrupt political past, of malfeasances, and of crimes that characterize past moments of Cuban public life. All those thieving politicians, the ones who misapplied so much money, or criminals, who were booted out by the Revolution, should not return to have any force in Cuban public life. This would only add to discrediting the democratic system. There are many persons now who want Cuba to return to a "batistianismo" without Batista -- this cannot be possible.

Our type of war is not the same kind of war that those persons who were thrown out of office January 1, 1959 want to wage. You should not forget that if the Revolution in the early days of victory was backed by 95 per cent of the Cuban people, it was so, in great part, because the Revolution had removed from public life all the undesirable elements that no longer have anything to say or offer our people.

Question 5 -- Do you think Castro still has the majority of the people with him?

Answer -- Fidel Castro doesn't even have 20 per cent of the people behind him. Of course, if you took a "poll" many persons would say that they back the Government. But what else can these people say in a Regime of terror and moral coercion in which just a simple political disagreement is punishable by loss of all rights, and the person is then condemned to hunger and misery? Many, many Cuban workers go to Castro's rallies merely because not to do so would be to be threatened with loss of jobs. There is, of course, a well indoctrinated and fanatical minority that are responsible for the shouting, yelling, and name-calling aimed at giving the impression of a "popular" backing that in reality does not exist in Cuba today. Fidel has actually lost the support of the lower classes. The peasants and the workers are fully aware that they have been taken for a ride.

Question 6 -- Do you believe that Cubans themselves will be able to overthrow Fidel?

Answer -- Cubans have in the past, by themselves, overthrown bloody and dreadful tyrannies. They will also, by themselves, overthrow Castro and his Regime. But in this struggle -- which is at the same time an ideological struggle between communism and democracy -- we need the spirit of solidarity from all the democratic peoples in the world, especially from the peoples of "our Americas."

Question 7 -- Has Castro's Regime managed to wipe out the groups who have gone to the mountains?

Answer -- The "battle reports" given out by Fidel Castro's Regime appear to be written by the same person who wrote Batista's "battle reports." The idealistic revolutionaries who are fighting the tyranny are again called "bandits," "outlaws," and "misguided persons." Many persons who have been actually murdered in jail are listed as killed in battle. And many of the rebels who were actually captured in their own homes are listed as "prisoners" taken in combat. The overwhelming majority of those persons who were tried recently -- and several were sentenced to death -- because of the Sierra del Escambray uprisings, were not taken as prisoners in combat, as was falsely announced, but actually arrested in their own homes, or at secret meetings in villages, towns and cities throughout the Island. The army did not go up to the hills to fight. They were somewhat lucky in discovering a meeting of officers who later were assassinated under trumped-up charges during a phony trial. However, the main strength of the rebel forces remains intact in the mountains fighting the Regime.

Question 8 -- Do you think that the step towards communism that the Revolution took was planned in the Sierra Maestra's, or did communism infiltrate the Revolution after Batista fled?

Results now show that the swing the Revolution took towards communism followed a plan, step by step, drawn up in Mexico when Fidel made contacts with Che Guevarra and other agents of international communism. Of course, this plan was kept in absolute secrecy. During the fight against Batista, communists were kept away from the movement so as not to arouse suspicions. The plan has been carried out in stages. But, at last, they have removed all their masks.

I can say, for sure and in a responsible manner, that more than 6,000 foreign communists -- Russians, Chinese, Czechs -- are actively working in Cuba as technicians, spies and officials of the repressive organizations like G-2, etc. Every day Russian ships deliver war armament to Cuba. Cuba is in actuality nothing but a Soviet base.

Question 9 -- What do you personally think of Fidel, Raul, Che Guevarra?

Answer -- Fidel is, above all, an irresponsible adventurer. Of course, he has communist convictions, but he is a communist primarily because the totalitarian communistic system serves his dictatorial ambitions. Raul is a cruel person, completely devoid of a conscience. Che is the brains of the Regime, an international agent whose mission is to convert Cuba into a communist state.

Question 10 -- What strategy is the MRP pursuing in its fight against Castro?

Answer -- The MRP is fighting in all fronts. First, organizing a civic resistance underground movement throughout the country; second, getting people to join the uprisings in the mountains, and encouraging subversion within the Rebel Army ranks; third, creating a favorable climate for a general uprising throughout the entire Island; fourth, carrying on intensive sabotage aimed at weakening the Castro Regime; fifth, getting and organizing material aid outside of Cuba for the movement, and also informing the world, especially the countries of the Americas, about the tragic realities that our country is living.

Our people have suffered much, and they continue to suffer. But they have a never-ending capacity to continue the struggle. Fidel Castro's Regime will not be able to stop that capacity for fighting that has always proven to be superior to all obstacles that have been put in its way. We have great faith in our people. And we are confident that soon they will free themselves of the shameful, bloody and treasonable Regime that today oppresses them.

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Other members of the MRP are: Felipe Pazos, founder of the National Bank of Cuba under the Prio-Socarras government that was ousted by Batista March 10, 1952. He was president of the Bank in the Revolutionary Government until November 1959 when he resigned to accept a post as roving ambassabor in Europe. He resigned this post and actively opposed the Castro Regime when the MRP was formed in exile in 1960.

Col. Ramon Barquin, professional career man of the Cuban armed forces. He was jailed in April 1956 by Batista after an unsuccessful attempt to overthrow Batista. Barquin was released from the Isle of Pines Jail January 1, 1959, the day Batista fled Cuba. Col. Barquin was military attache in France and Spain for the Revolutionary government. He joined the MRP in Exile in 1960.

Raul Chibas, prominent leader of the Orthodox Party of Cuba, one of the first to join Castro in the Sierra Maestra mountains. He accepted the post to re-organize the railroads when the Revolutionary government took over Cuba. He fled Cuba in a sail-boat and joined the MRP steering committee in exile in 1960.

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