

# Tale Of Caribbean Piracy, Revolt Bared To Probers

## Cuba Protests Seizure Of Vessel By Trujillo

WASHINGTON, Dec. 15—(AP)—A fantastic Caribbean story of piracy, spying, a phantom ship, kidnaping and a cargo of avocado plants is being unfolded here before the inter-American peace committee.

A central figure in the current Caribbean drama is the highly controversial president of the Dominican Republic, Rafael Leonidas Trujillo.

Trujillo's enemies, particularly the Dominican exile, Gen. Angel Ramirez, hate him with a tropical passion and work and wait for the day when he can be overthrown.

Trujillo has the best army, navy and air force in the area. He prefers to be left alone, but he's ready if they dare tackle him.

Right now the five-nation inter-American peace committee is hearing the weird story of the latest dispute—between Cuba and the Dominican Republic. The committee is made up of the United States, Brazil, Argentina, Mexico and Cuba. It has power only to suggest methods for settling disputes.

Cuba, in bringing the case before the committee, alleged that the Dominican Republic has closed off direct negotiations over the Dominican sentencing of five Cuban crew-members of the Guatemalan ship, Quetzal. The Guatemalan and two Dominican crewmembers of the same ship were also sentenced. They were all given 30 years at hard labor on charges of conspiring against the security of the Dominican Republic.

**HERE ARE THE FACTS** in the case—strange enough to baffle the most avid whodunit fan:

On July 20, 1951, a former U.S. infantry landing craft named the Quetzal, flying the Guatemalan flag and carrying a cargo of avocado plants, left a Cuban port bound for Livingston, Guatemala.

The ship was under the command of Capt. Alfredo Brito. The Quetzal had been used in an abortive attempt in 1947 to invade the Dominican Republic and overthrow Trujillo from a Cuban base at Cayo Confites—the highly informal group of plotters there being known as the "Caribbean legion."

Ramirez, owner of the Quetzal and now in Guatemala, was one of the top leaders of that plot. So too was Brito as captain of one of the small ships in the invasion force. At that time the Quetzal was named the Maximo Gomez but was known among the revolutionaries as the Phantom, because of her daring escapades.

**FROM HERE ON** out the facts are in dispute.

The Cubans say the 400-ton ship was overtaken by Dominican warships about 50 to 60 miles off the extreme western tip of Cuba and towed under force to the Dominican Republic. The last message from the Quetzal was an intercepted and unfinished radiogram stating Dominican warships were chasing her.

The crew was arrested, imprisoned and held incommunicado for almost four months.

Last Aug. 23, however, Brito held a press conference in Ciudad Trujillo. Dressed in the flashy uniform of a captain in the Dominican navy and not in jail, he said he had turned over the ship to Dominican authorities because he was tired of working for the Communists in the Caribbean.

But the real shocker in his story was that during the past two years he had been doing "special services abroad" for the Dominican government. He said his captaincy in the Dominican navy was simply a reinvestment.

**THIS MEANT** that during the past two years he had been a Dominican spy working with Ramirez and other top legionnaires. He had been out of the Dominican Republic for a number of years before that.

But on Nov. 24 Brito and the crew members were brought to trial, charged with conspiring against Dominican national security. Brito switched his story and said that he had really been a revolutionary but while on the

high seas he became repentant and decided to give himself up along with the ship. Thereupon he sailed into Dominican waters and signaled a Dominican warship to take him and the ship under custody.

Brito was sentenced to 30 years at hard labor, as were the crew members. So too were Ramirez and other top Dominican exiles in absentia. Brito, however, has appealed.

**THE CUBANS SAY** Brito changed his version because the spy statement laid the Dominican government open to the charge of espionage in a friendly country in time of peace.

Last Monday, however, Brito reiterated before the appeals court that he had been a foreign agent for the Dominican government.

This statement was confirmed by the Dominican navy chief of staff, Comdr. Cesar de Windt. He told the court Brito sent detailed information on the Quetzal through a cousin, a crewmember, and agreed beforehand to change the Quetzal's route so she could be turned over to Dominican warships.

The court freed Brito and his cousin, apparently accepting their testimony and saying they had not acted with "criminal intent". The sentences of the Cuban and Guatemalan crew members were reduced from 30 to 20 years.

Cuban foreign minister, Aureliano Sanchez Arango, told a press conference recently, that the Cuban crewmembers, when interviewed in jail early in November, said the ship was boarded by a Dominican warship on the high seas.

**HE CHARGED THE** action amounted to piracy of the ship, kidnaping of the crew, and violation of freedom of the seas.

If, in fact, the Quetzal had been boarded and seized, it was the first time she had lost a race at sea. Rogelio Caparros, self-described commander of the Quetzal during the Cayo Confites conspiracy, wrote in the Cuban magazine, Bohemia, that the ship was the fastest and had the most colorful career of any on the revolutionaries' invasion fleet.

Writing in the melancholy tones of any navy man who had lost his ship, Caparros expressed belief Brito had been tortured and his family threatened. He gave this account of the ship:

The Quetzal was a surplus U. S. LCI bought in 1947 by Dominican revolutionaries in New York with funds supplied by Ramirez. It was named the Maximo Gomez. It was detained in Jacksonville by American authorities for investigation. Hidden below was a large cargo of aviation and infantry supplies for Cayo Confites.

**SHE ESCAPED WITH** the cargo and hid out at Mariel, Cuba. On her way to Cayo Confites she was intercepted by Cuban warships. Two PT boats escorting her were captured, but again

## Dioramas Depict Jewish History

Thirty five dioramas, depicting Jewish history from Biblical times to the present, will be featured at the Israel Cavalcade, opening at Miami Beach Dec. 23 and continuing through March 15.

The dioramas, which cost \$100,000, have been shown in private exhibitions at museums in New York and Boston, but this will mark their first public display.

The cavalcade is under sponsorship of the Harry Levine Foundation, B'nai B'rith, Hadasah and the Zionist Organization of America. Miriam Jackson will be director of the event.



**RAFAEL TRUJILLO POINTS TO CUBA**  
Charges It Harbors Revolutionaries

she escaped, arriving at the revolutionary base on Sept. 8, 1947. She was promptly dubbed the Phantom.

As the Phantom, she captured by assault the Dominican ship La Angelita when the little craft was bobbing along the Caribbean on her way to Miami to have her bottom scraped. The captured craft was impressed into the Cayo Confites invasion force.

Later, with 25 select crew members, the Phantom tried the most daring exploit of all. She tried to capture the newly purchased Cuban frigate Jose Marti on the pretext of getting water for her tanks from the Marti. Caparros said this failed because of "only one small thing"—the captain never let the Phantom get anywhere near the Jose Marti.

**THE PHANTOM'S** raiding career was ended on Oct. 1, 1947, when the Marti returned the compliment and captured her while sailing off Baracoa, Cuba. The crew was detained and disarmed.

She was held in Cuban ports until Ramirez recently got a court judgment returning the ship to him. He renamed her the Quetzal and changed her registry to the Guatemalan flag. Her first trip under her new auspices was her last.

Brito had been put in command of this ship for the first

time on the disputed voyage to Guatemala. A short, swarthy man of about 45, Brito was based in Guatemala during the Cayo Confites plot as captain of a small ship.

Brito in 1949 described himself to inter-American investigators of the Cayo Confites plot as a man of peace who was realizing a life-long ambition of running a small naval academy in Guatemala. The investigators found, however, that all the "students" were Cuban veterans of Cayo Confites.

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