



The women of Cuba are being taught to use firearms. Citizens are fed with the obsessive fear that the U.S. will invade their land. Below, a rebel stands guard.



An American Family Flees from Cuba HAVANA WAS OUR HOME

ANONYMOUS

They left behind a lifetime of work, love, and friendship to start life anew in the U.S.; Their crime? They were the hated "Yanquis"

● This is the personal account of an American-born wife and mother who spent most of her adult life in Cuba. Months before diplomatic relations between Cuba and the U.S. were broken and virtually all Americans ousted, her family was forced to flee their adopted land. She has requested that her name be withheld because of possible reprisals against friends still under the Castro regime.

AFTER 18 YEARS, we left Cuba with only what we could carry and five carefully hoarded U.S. dollars apiece.

Havana had been home for my family since 1942, a home we loved. Now we were leaving for good, forced to head northward and begin all over again by hard, rigid economic fact, by pent-up nerves, by made-in-Moscow propaganda programs. The day we left, we carried all our remaining possessions in 17 suitcases—and we carried fear, too.

The Cuban revolutionary government practices the scare tactic of leaving you alone until you prepare to leave. Then, as you enter the preboarding room at the Rancho Boyeros Airport and show your exit permit, ticket, and passport, and after you've waved goodbye to family and friends and are irrevocably shut off by locked and guarded doors—then they act.

There's a tap on your shoulder, and you turn to face a long-haired, bearded rebel soldier who herds you into a small room and orders you to undress. There you undergo a humiliating surface-to-skin search. At best, you'll miss your plane; at worst, you'll be subjected to four or more days detainment in the mansion-turned-prison of the Army Intelligence Service in suburban Miramar.

I took two nerve pills before we left for the



Bombings in Havana have become commonplace.

airport and stowed a whole bottle in my purse in case of detainment. The planeload of Cuban and American travelers—many of them were leaving for good but not admitting it to the authorities—passed the preboarding scrutiny safely and were permitted to get on the plane.

There was a tenseness among all of us as the engines were started, for there was still another hurdle to be passed. Time after time, unkempt *barbudo* soldiers, shouldering arms against sweat-stained olive-drab shirts, will climb aboard, walk down the narrow aisle, and order passengers off. Even after the plane is airborne you cannot relax; there is still a chance to be ordered back by the control tower.

We were lucky. We made it. We were flying to the freedom of Miami, just 55 air minutes away from a once-happy land that had wel-