

War Time Boom Leaves Cuban Middle Class Broke

By HAL BOYLE

HAVANA, March 5 (AP)—Inflationary boom times are enriching Cuba's big sugar planters and creating a delirious heyday for its happy-go-lucky "obrero"—laborers—but its small middle class is being squeezed dry by rising costs.

From the fifteenth-century arrival of the gold-seeking Spaniards Cuba has been a country of fantastic contrasts between extreme wealth and bare poverty.

Members of the slowly evolving middle class in Cuba feel their nation's war-created sugar prosperity is grinding them back down toward the level of mass indigence.

"An obrero before the war made only about \$1 a day," complained one office worker. "Now he gets \$5. He has more money in his pockets than he knows what to do with. He lives in the same house he did before, and all he needs to wear is an old shirt and a pair of trousers."

"We of the middle class, however, must dress better. Yet our wages have risen much more slowly than those of the field workers. To buy a good pair of American shoes that cost me \$8 before the war I now must pay \$18. Government clerks got \$60 a month five years ago. Now they get only \$75 to \$80—not nearly enough to make up for the rise in prices."

In Cuba, as in the United States, the one-time prestige of the white collar is being outweighed by the financial advantages of overalls.

The warborne wealth is reflected in intense building activity along Havana's famed Quinta Avenida which passes through the exclusive Miramar residential district to Marianao beach.

House Cost
Hundreds of spacious plaster-covered brick villas costing \$50,000 or more are going up. For \$10,000 you get something that looks like a glorified chicken coop with windows.

The city boasts of its facilities for the care of indigents—forty per cent of the national lottery goes to charity—but children and old women beg in the streets. At night tattered figures sleep huddled in midtown doorways, just as in China and in India.

Life always wears more of a hurdy-gurdy air in Latin countries than elsewhere. The temperament of the people mirrors the climate—sunny with intermittent angry squalls.

Havana is noisy, flamboyant, neighborly and courteously cynical. Every driver approaches a blind intersection in the incurable faith that if he honks his horn the roadway will remain clear. Street sounds are so loud that a wise tourist begs for an inside room—the only way to get any sleep.

Cubans are strangers to the unbiased attitude. They have deep and violent opinions on every subject and express them with an eloquent language of the hands.

They are thoroughgoing partisans. If their favorite baseball team wins, the fans like to show their enthusiasm by tying a banner to a motorcycle and speeding through the narrow streets, cheering happily as they disembowl friend or foe.

Baseball madness has swept the island with the virulence of an epidemic. America's national pastime has completely eclipsed jai alai, which is most popular among the betting public.

But baseball is winning out strictly on its merits as a game. The professional teams play in the winter season and draw crowds of 30,000 at big games. The amateurs and semi-pros take the field during the hot summer months.

Almost every spare patch of ground, however, has a rudely marked diamond where ragged youths play with no equipment but a ball and bat. Scores of youngsters hang around the stadium where the Americans—the Brooklyn Dodgers—are holding spring practice.

Observers long have noted

that the chief interests of Havana's man-in-the-street are politics, love and the national lottery.

"Baseball is the first thing that ever made them forget politics," a native said.

City Delivery Service, Ph. 8417.

Oregon To Get Refugee Group

PORTLAND, March 5 (AP)—The Oregon emigre committee was told yesterday that Oregon must be prepared to help find a place for 500 political refugees

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Joseph E. Beck, executive director of the United Service for New Americans, revealed that Portland assimilated about 400 refugees of Nazi persecution before the war.

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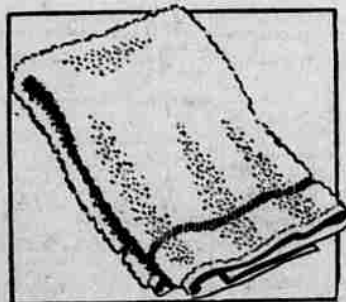
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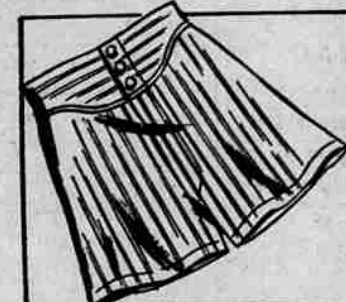
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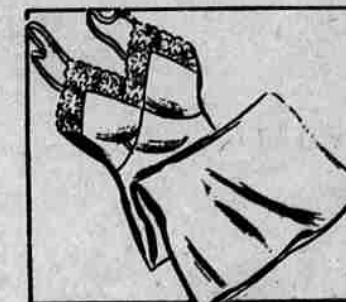
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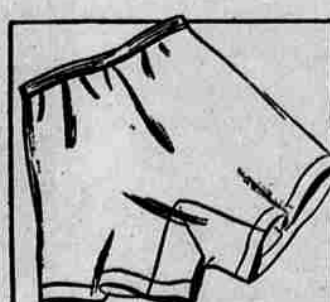
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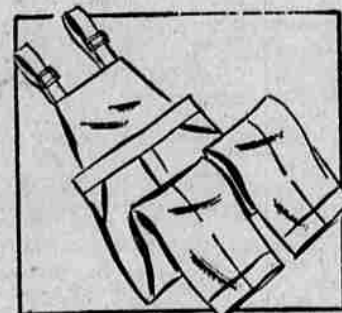
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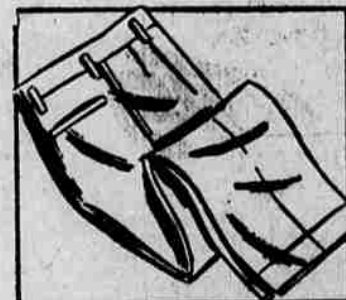
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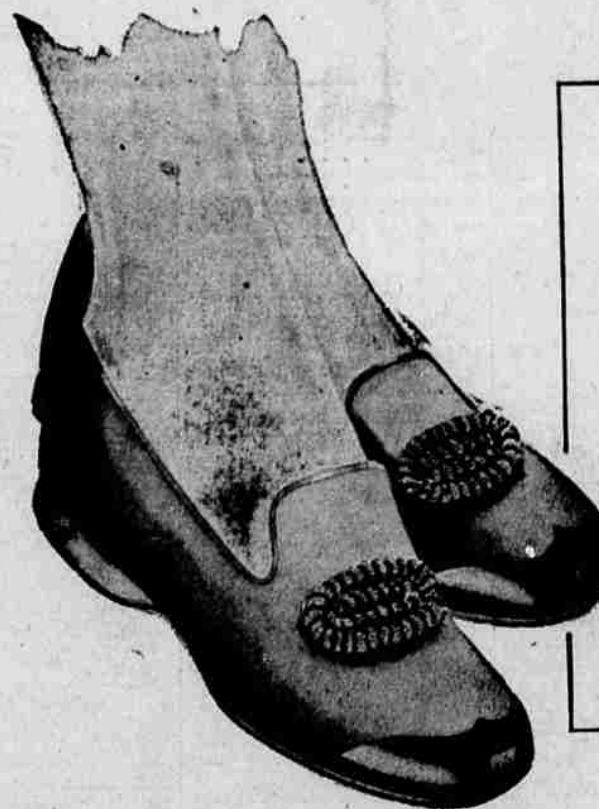
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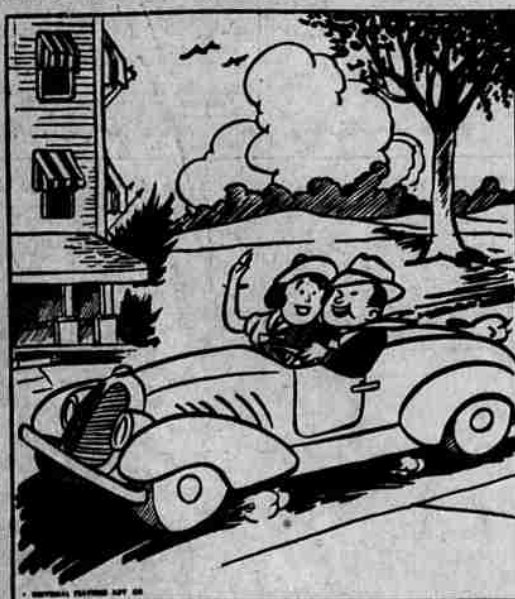
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