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## GRAHAM GREENE AND CUBA: OUR MAN IN HAVANA?

Graham Greene's novel *Our Man in Havana* was published on October 6, 1958. Seven days later Greene arrived in Havana with Carol Reed to arrange for the filming of the script of the novel, on which they had both been working. Meanwhile, after his defeat of the summer offensive mounted by the Cuban dictator, Fulgencio Batista, in the mountains of eastern Cuba, just south of Bayamo, Fidel Castro had recently taken the military initiative: the day after Greene and Reed's arrival on the island, Che Guevara reached Las Villas, moving westwards towards Havana. Six weeks later, on January 1, 1959, after Batista had fled the island, Castro and his Cuban Revolution took power. In April 1959 Greene and Reed were back in Havana with a film crew to film *Our Man in Havana*. The film was released in January 1960. A note at the beginning of the film says that it is "set before the recent revolution." In terms of timing, *Our Man in Havana* could therefore hardly be more closely associated with the triumph of the Cuban Revolution. But is that association merely accidental, or does it involve any deeper implications? On the fiftieth anniversary of novel, film, and Revolution, that seems a question worth investigating, not with a view to turning *Our Man in Havana* into a serious political novel, but rather to exploring the complexities of the genre of comedy thriller and to bringing back into view some of the local contexts which might be less visible now than they were when the novel was published and the film released.

At the time of his death in 1991 Graham Greene was probably the best-known British novelist, one of the few who had managed to combine critical and popular success over a long career. In 1958 he was at the height of his powers. Early work had included novels such as *Brighton Rock* (1938) and *The Power and the Glory* (1940). After the war he had published *The End of the Affair* (1951) and *The Quiet American* (1955). After *Our Man in Havana* was to come *The Comedians* (1966) and *The Honorary Consul* (1973). Some of these novels had domestic settings and focused on personal relationships or matters of religion, but many were set abroad and engaged

seriously with the politics of decolonization: *The Quiet American* is set in Vietnam, *The Comedians* deals with Haiti in the 1960s under the notoriously brutal regime of François Duvalier. Greene was a steadfast supporter of radical and anticolonial movements: through a personal friendship with Omar Torrijos, the president of Panama, he became closely involved in the return of the Panama Canal to Panama, a process begun in 1977 though not completed until 1999. He was also solidly – if not uncritically – supportive of the Cuban Revolution, as is seen in the two essays he wrote in 1963 and 1966 for the archconservative British newspaper, *The Daily Telegraph*, and in his admiring 1966 portrait of Fidel Castro.<sup>1</sup>

At first glance, however, *Our Man in Havana* might not look as if it has much in the way of political implications. In generic terms it appears like a parody of a spy novel. The true popularity of spy fiction followed *Our Man in Havana* with the novels of John Le Carré and Len Deighton, and the films that were made from them, starting in the 1960s, though the one immediate candidate for parody in 1958 was Ian Fleming, whose deeply racist *Dr No* had been published in 1957 – set in the Caribbean and concerning attacks on U.S. missiles. Greene himself categorized *Our Man in Havana* as merely one of his “entertainments.” Asked once whether he wished he had written a book like *The Quiet American* “which would have carried more weight” than an “entertainment,” Greene replied: “Not in the least. I think that *Our Man in Havana* is a good comic novel. The object was not to talk about Cuba but to make fun of the Secret Service. Havana was merely the background, an accident – it had nothing to do with my sympathy for Fidel.”<sup>2</sup> The film version of *Our Man in Havana* seems to go further in this direction by removing almost all the brief references in the novel to rebel activity and by highlighting the already rich comedic possibilities inherent in the idea of the British Secret Intelligence Service (MI6) through the acting talents of Alec Guinness, Noel Coward, and Ralph Richardson.

In a note at the beginning of the novel Greene goes out of his way to play down the local context. He calls the book a “fairy-story,” specifically denying that the characters of the Havana police chief Captain Segura, the

1. See “Return to Cuba” (1963) and “Shadow and Sunlight in Cuba” (1966), both in Greene 1990:213-20 and 245-52; and “The Marxist Heretic” (1966) in Greene 1969:405-13.

2. Allain (1983:59). Greene’s own judgment has generally been accepted by critics, although Judith Adamson notes that while “Greene says his novel is only a light-hearted comedy, ... it has a dark and philosophical background which lends it substance and contains many of his recurring themes” (1990:141). It is also true that, writing in defense of Sidney Gilliat’s libretto for Malcolm Williamson’s opera of *Our Man in Havana*, Greene stated: “I admired the great skill with which the libretto had compressed the action and yet brought out every political point” (Letter to *The Times*, July 4, 1963, in Greene 1995:573). Cf. Williamson 1963.

British ambassador, and the chief of the Secret Service have any connection at all with living people, and removing the novel from its time of publication by saying that it is “set at some indeterminate date in the future.” Not that indeterminate, it turns out; which offers a first clue as to the novel’s political undercurrents. When the protagonist Jim Wormold is arrested in Santiago during his annual sales trip to eastern Cuba, he tells a policeman that he is forty-five years old, and he later tells his new assistant Beatrice that he was born on December 6, 1914. That means that the novel is set just a year after it was published, between December 6, 1959 and the December 5, 1960. The dates themselves are not important, since Greene could not have known that the Revolution would triumph so soon after the publication of his novel – though the novel does have the current Cuban president’s regime “creaking dangerously towards its end” (Greene 1958:24). The point is that Greene undermines his own supposed indeterminacy. In addition, the fact that the three characters he names are definitely *based* on living people hints at Greene’s characteristically playful obliquity, just as it begins to suggest the rather specific political connotations of both novel and film. Overtaken by events, the film could hardly follow the novel in claiming that it was set at some indeterminate future date: that note at the beginning saying that it is “set before the recent revolution” would place it in the last three months of 1958, in other words the last three months of the Batista dictatorship.

In *Our Man in Havana*, Jim Wormold is a Phastkleaners vacuum-cleaner salesman living in Havana with his beautiful seventeen-year-old daughter, Milly – whose real name, Seraphina, Greene may well have taken from the Cuban beauty in the Conrad/Ford novel, *Romance*.<sup>3</sup> Wormold is recruited in rather slapdash fashion into the British Secret Service, the induction taking place in the room of his contact, Henry Hawthorne, in the Sevilla-Biltmore Hotel. Completely uninterested in politics or spying, Wormold spots the opportunity to make enough money to ease the financial problems largely caused by his indulgence towards his daughter. Fictitious agents, their names chosen at random from a list of Country Club members, are recruited and expenses claimed for them, and increasingly fantastic stories woven to provide a patina of plausibility.

Twenty years later, Greene explained the background to the writing of the book (Greene 1980:238-51). He himself had worked for the British Secret Service in Freetown in the 1940s. Returning to London he had been appointed to the subsection dealing with counter-espionage in the Iberian peninsula, where he had learned about agents in Portugal sending back to Germany completely fictitious reports which garnered them expenses and

3. Greene was a great admirer of Ford and editor of the *Bodley Head Ford Madox Ford*. He called *Romance* “that underrated novel” (Greene 1969:163).

bonuses to add to their basic salary. Asked for a film script in 1946 Greene had written an outline for a story set in Estonia just before the beginning of the Second World War which made gentle fun of the Secret Service. The film was never made, and the idea changed course when Greene realized that Havana – which he had visited several times in the early 1950s – would be a much better setting, the absurdities of the cold war being more appropriate for a comedy than the dark European shadows of 1938.<sup>4</sup>

Most of the novel takes place on the edge of Old Havana, controlled by the malicious police chief, Captain Segura, who has his eye on Wormold's daughter, Milly: most scenes are set in Wormold's shop on Calle Lamparilla, in his apartment above the shop, or in local bars. However, every year Wormold would make a trip to the eastern province of Oriente, as far as Santiago, to visit the company's retailers. On this occasion he reckons that he might as well let MI6 finance the trip and so cables his contact: "On pretext of visiting sub-agents for vacuums propose to investigate possibilities for recruitment port of Matanzas, industrial centre Santa Clara, naval headquarters Cienfuegos and dissident centre Santiago, calculate expenses of journey fifty dollars a day" (Greene 1958:74).

Wormold's experiences on his eastern journey shock him into action, precipitating the book's major plot development. "What was the good of playing a game with half a heart?" he says to himself: "At least let him give them something they would enjoy for their money" (Greene 1958:89). So he concocts an elaborate report about big military installations under construction in the mountains of Oriente, too extensive to be aimed at small rebel bands. Stories of widespread forest clearance under cover of forest fires and of peasants being impressed to carry loads of stone provide supporting context. To round things off, he is inspired by the name of Phastkleaners' latest model, the Atomic Pile, to sketch its innards, claiming that one of his agents had made the drawings of strange machinery being transported into the forest near the military H.Q. at Bayamo, on the other side of the Sierra Maestra from Santiago. In London nobody except Hawthorne, who alone knows that Wormold sells vacuum cleaners, doubts the report or the sketches. To help Wormold, who is by now their most valued agent in the Caribbean, the Secret Service sends him a secretary, Beatrice Severn, and a communications officer.

At this point, however, Wormold's web begins to unravel. The "agents" he has invented start getting killed in mysterious circumstances and his old friend, Dr. Hasselbacher, also involved in the murky world of espionage, is gunned

4. "One could hardly sympathise with the main character if he was to be involved with the Hitler war. I already knew Cuba and my sympathies were with the Fidelistas in the mountains" (Letter to Ian Thomson, August 18, 1988, in Greene 2007:403). When *Our Man in Havana* was published, MI5 rang up the head of MI6 (according to Greene) to suggest that he should be prosecuted under the Official Secrets Act: "The head of MI6 laughed" (Letter to Marie-Françoise Allain, January 1, 1990, in Greene 2007:413).

down in one of the bars where they used to drink together. Hasselbacher had been blackmailed into spying on Wormold, then honorably changed his mind because of his friendship with Wormold, so the enemy agent Carter kills him. Captain Segura says: "Of course we shall say it was the rebels from Oriente. It will be useful in influencing foreign opinion. Perhaps it was the rebels" (Greene 1958:228). Then London discovers that the other side (it is again characteristic of Greene that he never makes clear who they are) wants to kill Wormold during a trade association meeting in Havana. Wormold is summoned to Jamaica to hear the news from Hawthorne. The enemy agent, Carter, masquerading as a salesman for the rival firm, Nucleaners, attempts to poison Wormold but is foiled when Wormold recognizes the stutter he has heard on tape in Segura's office and deliberately spills the poisoned whisky. Then, after getting Segura drunk in a game of draughts, Wormold takes Segura's gun and kills Carter. Wormold's deception is finally uncovered, but rather than admit that they were all taken in by his invented sketch, the Secret Service big wigs offer Wormold a job in London and recommend an OBE. Milly graciously allows her father and Beatrice to get married.

Greene had long been interested in film, having been *The Spectator's* film critic during the 1930s. Like most novelists, he had not been very happy with other people's film versions of his novels and so after the Second World War he had jumped at the opportunity to work closely with the director Carol Reed, first in developing for the screen his short story, *The Fallen Idol* (1948), then writing a screenplay which became *The Third Man* (1949), a dark political thriller starring Orson Welles, which had a huge impact in 1949 and was voted in a British Film Institute poll at the end of the century as the greatest British film ever made. *Our Man in Havana* was Reed and Greene's third and final film together.<sup>5</sup>

Greene and Reed spent the best part of three months together working on the script, though strictly speaking this was an adaptation since the novel had already been completed (Ginna 1959:31). It was Batista's government that had given permission for *Our Man in Havana* to be filmed in Cuba but the new Revolutionary government confirmed the arrangement, ensuring an authentic atmosphere. Indeed, according to a contemporary *Time* article, the new Cuban Interior Ministry was hurt that Reed even thought he needed to ask for permission.<sup>6</sup> *Our Man in Havana* was filmed using a Cuban sub-director, Cuban stand-by technicians, and a lot of Cuban extras. It might be assumed that Reed would have had considerable control over the British casting – Guinness, Coward, Richardson – but perhaps less so over the U.S.

5. Dir. Carol Reed, 1959. See Adamson 1984. A good analysis of the film is in Evans 2005:105-17.

6. "His Men in Havana," *Time*, April 27, 1959.

casting, necessary for the financing of the film (jointly made with Columbia Pictures). Reed and Greene had displayed considerable independence in making *The Third Man*, protected by their producer Alexander Korda, which ensured they kept complete control over the script despite David O. Selznick's best efforts to change it, but Korda had died in 1956, probably leaving Reed rather more exposed. In fact, Columbia seems to have left the script of *Our Man in Havana* to Greene and Reed – indeed in places the screenplay incorporates actual pages from the novel pasted onto type sheets (Adamson 1984:94), but the actors were another matter and the “entertainment” element of the film was certainly strengthened by the inclusion of the popular U.S. figures Burl Ives and Ernie Kovacs, as well as the Irish American actress, Maureen O’Hara, and the young starlet, Jo Morrow. Burl Ives had just starred in the film of Tennessee Williams’s *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof* and had won an Academy Award for his part in William Wyler’s *The Big Country*. He had also testified for Joseph McCarthy’s House Committee on Un-American Activities, naming several of his fellow singers and actors as possible Communists, which gives an interesting edge to his role in this film as Dr. Hasselbacher, Wormold’s friend, who first betrays him and then is killed for trying to warn him of the betrayal. Jo Morrow, nineteen when she played Milly, “just couldn’t act,” according to Greene, which seems fair comment.<sup>7</sup> She was also far too old for the part and turns a spoiled adolescent into a flirtatious and manipulative young woman. Kovacs was best known as a TV comedian, which would inevitably color perception of his role as Havana’s police chief, though he surprised critics with the assurance of his performance.

Greene reports that Cuba’s Revolutionary government did not really approve of the novel (Greene 1980:249). For them, it minimized the brutality of Batista’s dictatorship, particularly in what they saw as the softening of the character of the infamous police captain, Esteban Ventura Novo, into the cynical but not absolutely unsympathetic Captain Segura. Ventura Novo (1913-2001) had been responsible for much of the torture and murder in Havana that marked Batista’s repression in the years 1956 to 1958. Greene tells the story of how Ventura was going to be left behind by Batista but forced his way onto the departing dictator’s plane at gunpoint. He eventually settled in Miami, as in the novel Segura suggests he himself would do if the regime fell – another indication of Greene’s prescience.<sup>8</sup>

7. Graham Greene in an interview with Judith Adamson, June 21, 1982, in Adamson 1984:98.

8. Greene 1980:249-50. On Ventura Novo’s death the exiled Cuban journalist and historian, Octavio R. Costa, opined that Ventura was an effective enforcer against civil uprisings: “He did his job, and he did it in a way that responded to the circumstances of that era,” *Miami Herald*, May 23, 2001.

In April 1959 a member of the Film Division of the Cuban Ministry of the Interior, Clara Martínez, was assigned to the production team to represent the interests of the new Cuban government.<sup>9</sup> On their behalf she requested a number of changes in two main areas. She wanted the character of Captain Segura to become more villainous, in order to correspond more closely to his model, and in the various nightclub scenes she wanted the strippers to take off fewer clothes than Reed and Greene wanted them to take off, which was already considerably fewer than they would have taken off before the Revolution, which was all of them. (After the Revolution, the only prerevolutionary cabaret left untouched was the Tropicana – where the characters go in the novel and the film for Milly’s seventeenth birthday party – which had a chorus line but no strippers.) So in one respect the new Revolutionary government wanted more realism, in another respect less realism.

Ironically, Greene’s own early visits to Havana had been for exactly those aspects of the city that motivated Revolutionary distaste: the brothels, the high living, the drugs, the gambling, and the obscene cabarets. After his first visit, in 1954, Greene wrote: “Havana has been a fascinating city, quite the most vicious I have ever been in.”<sup>10</sup> Under Batista’s dictatorship the Mafia controlled Havana’s huge gambling industry.<sup>11</sup> The Mafia’s role in Havana had originally been developed by Charlie “Lucky” Luciano (born Salvatore Lucania), who had been serving thirty to fifty in a U.S. penitentiary in 1943 when he appealed for a reduction of sentence in return for services rendered to the nation. Luciano had cooperated with the U.S. authorities to catch German spies on the east coast dockyards, which he still controlled from prison. He may also have eased the path to the U.S. invasion of Sicily. One of his deputies in New York, Vito Genovese, one of the major drug traffickers of his day, certainly ended up as official interpreter and advisor to the U.S. military governor in Naples. The U.S. army originally worked with the Mafia in Sicily because the Mafia hated Mussolini who had cracked down on their activities. But after the War, the Mafia turned out also to be impeccably anticommunist, so the relationship with the U.S. intelligence services continued.<sup>12</sup> It was eventually a Mafia boss in Havana, Santo Trafficante, Jr., who was involved in a CIA plot to assassinate Fidel Castro in 1960.<sup>13</sup>

9. See “His Men in Havana,” *Time*, April 27, 1959; and Ginna 1959. According to “His Men in Havana,” the Cuban Interior Minister, Luis Orlando Rodríguez, had a copy of the script translated into Spanish and then suggested changes to Reed and Greene.

10. Letter to Natasha and Peter Brook, September 6, 1954, in Greene 2007:211; and see Adamson 1984:93-94.

11. See in general Enrique Cirules’s two books, 2004 and 2006; Lacey 1991, chapters 13 and 14; Schwartz 1997, chapters 9 to 12; and English 2008.

12. See Robb 1999:32-33.

13. See “Santo Trafficante, Reputed Mafia Chief, Dies at 72,” *New York Times*, March 19, 1987.

Luciano had been released in 1946 but he was not allowed to stay in the United States. Havana was as close as he could get, but the U.S. authorities lent on Batista to get him back to Italy, possibly with the connivance of his friend Meyer Lansky, who was the person who eventually lost most financially through the success of the Cuban Revolution. Lansky is a very interesting if still rather shadowy figure, the most important Mafia boss without an Italian background. He had had contacts in Havana since the 1920s, when Cuba became a conduit for bootlegging during Prohibition, and had spent the winter months of 1939 and 1940 there; but he moved into the city in a serious way only in 1952 when Batista called on his services to develop Havana into a major gambling center. Lansky appears in fictionalized form in a number of films and in Mayra Montero's fine novel about this period, *Son de almendra*.<sup>14</sup>

In late 1957 – at exactly the moment when Greene started to write *Our Man in Havana* – there was a major fight in the Mafia over the distribution of the massive profits emanating from Cuba. Since Lansky did not have to worry about government interference, with Batista being paid a handsome cut, he and his associates had free rein to establish a string of casinos which produced cast-iron profits. In early 1957 the U.S. family headed by Alberto Anastasia complained about the small size of their share of this sumptuous cake. With Anastasia's truculence perceived as threatening, Lansky had him assassinated in classic style in a barber's chair in midtown Manhattan.<sup>15</sup> To deal with the resulting crisis, the families convoked an urgent peace conference on November 14, 1957 at Joseph Barbara's house near Apalachin in New York state, attended by sixty Mafia bosses from all over the country. It was probably the biggest meeting of the Mafia ever to take place and it was a complete disaster because the FBI raided it – often regarded as their biggest ever victory against organized crime (Sondern 1959:3-17). And, of course, the meeting was pointless because the prize of Havana, over which they were squabbling, was about to be taken away from them all.

The Mafia-run Cuban leisure industry plays a significant part in *Our Man in Havana*. When in Havana Greene himself used to stay at the Sevilla-Biltmore Hotel, close to the Presidential Palace, run by Amletto Battisti and famous for the easy availability of cocaine and female company. That is also where Hawthorne stays in the novel, although in the film he stays at the Capri, a new hotel owned by mobster Santo Trafficante, Jr., which opened in November 1957, featuring a luxurious casino overseen by Mafia asset and

14. Lansky has been played by Lee Strasberg (as Hyman Roth) in *The Godfather Part II* (dir. Francis Ford Coppola, 1974); Mark Rydell in *Havana* (dir. Sydney Pollack, 1990); Ben Kingsley in *Bugsy* (dir. Barry Levinson, 1991), Richard Dreyfuss in *Lansky* (dir. David Mamet, 1999); and Dustin Hoffman in *The Lost City* (dir. Andy Garcia, 2005). Mayra Montero, *Son de almendra* (2005), translated 2008.

15. Anastasia's murder was not officially solved, so its connection with Lansky and Havana remains speculative: English (2008:224-34) furnishes a strong case for the connection.



ex-film star, George Raft. All the film principals on *Our Man in Havana* also stayed at the Capri, and it is the Capri's rooftop swimming pool which features in the film's opening shots (Figure 1).<sup>16</sup>



Figure 1. The opening scene, shot on the rooftop of Hotel Capri

Greene's choice of Cuba as the setting for his novel was presumably influenced by the island's recent irruption onto the world stage. In December 1956, eighty-two rebels had landed on Cuban's southeastern coast. After a few days only around a quarter were left. These survivors slowly gained a foothold in the mountains of the Sierra Maestra and started to win some small military successes, but they were under severe pressure because a peasant traitor was giving directions to Cuban fighter planes that were strafing the rebel camps. It was at this difficult moment that Fidel Castro decided to organize a visit from a foreign press correspondent, calculating that clear news of his survival in the mountains would put Batista on the back foot both in Cuba and internationally. The man chosen for the interview was Herbert Matthews, foreign editor for the *New York Times*.

Supposedly on holiday, Matthews and his wife drove undercover, with Cuban minders, from Havana into the foothills of the Sierra Maestra, and Matthews walked into the mountains to meet Castro. Castro gave the journalist the story of the landing, an analysis of the military situation, and an explanation of the ideals of the Revolution. Matthews and his wife then trav-

16. Lansky started at the Montmartre Club, a place for high rollers, and in 1955 he got the contract to run the new casino at the Hotel Nacional; but his big project was the Hotel Riviera, which opened on December 10, 1957.

eled on to Santiago, from where they flew back to Havana. After a brief visit to their old friend Ernest Hemingway, the couple returned to New York with Matthews's notes hidden in his wife's girdle. Confident that no one else had the story, the *New York Times* waited until the next Sunday, February 24, 1957, to print the first part of Matthews's scoop, while running trailers during the week about revolution in Cuba to raise interest and expectation. When Matthews had returned from Cuba, one trailer said, "with a story that's sure to startle the world" (quoted in DePalma 2006:98). Then on the Sunday, under the headline "Cuban Rebel Is Visited in Hideout," and subhead "Castro Is Still Alive and Still Fighting in Mountains," and alongside a large photograph of Castro holding a rifle with a telescopic sight, Matthews's historic report opened like this: "Fidel Castro, the rebel leader of Cuba's youth, is alive and fighting hard and successfully in the rugged, almost impenetrable fastnesses of the Sierra Maestra, at the southern tip of the island."<sup>17</sup> It was one of the biggest journalistic scoops of all time. The Cuban government responded by calling Matthews's story a "chapter in a fantastic novel." It noted that there was no photograph of Matthews with Castro; asserted that, whether Castro was dead or alive, he certainly had no supporting forces; and claimed that the interview could not have taken place because the Sierra Maestra was enclosed by a ring of steel. The following day the *New York Times* published a photograph of Matthews sitting next to Castro, both smoking cigars. The Cuban government declared it a fake, making Batista look even more foolish (Matthews 1961:45-50).

One aspect of Matthews's scoop is particularly relevant to *Our Man in Havana*. The main reason that Castro's survival had not been reported is that most of the international journalists and diplomats were in Havana, 600 miles west of the Sierra Maestra. To get the story, Matthews had to be prepared for a long journey east to the province of Oriente, which had always been the center of revolutionary activity in Cuba. When he started to work on his novel in November 1957, just nine months after Matthews's journalistic scoop, Greene decided that he needed to find something out about the rest of the country and so he followed Matthews's footsteps: "I set about curing a little of my ignorance. I made Cuban friends, I took a car and travelled with a driver around the country" (Greene 1980:241). He was unable to get to Santiago by car, but not for the mechanical reasons which give Wormold a similar problem in the novel: "There were military roadblocks all round the capital of Oriente and every foreigner arriving by private car was suspect." So Greene flew in by plane: "An unofficial curfew began at nine p.m. dangerous to ignore, there were arbitrary arrests, and often when day broke a man's body would be found hanging from a lamp-post" (Greene 1980:243). There were no tourists and a general atmosphere of suspicion pervaded the city. Between Matthews's visit to Santiago in February and Greene's in November, the city had indeed

17. *New York Times*, February 24, 1957, 1 and 34.

been in turmoil. On July 30, the leader of the rebels in Oriente, Frank País, had been murdered on the street in a police ambush. By chance, the new U.S. ambassador, Earl E.T. Smith (a businessman and Republican Party fundraiser without diplomatic experience), arrived in Santiago two days later. Herbert Matthews had told Smith “that Havana was not Cuba and that the atmosphere in the rest of the country was very different, and I suggested that he travel around and see things for himself” (Matthews 1961:71). Smith arrived to find a large group of women demonstrating against Batista and being beaten up by the police. Asked for an immediate public comment Smith said “Any sort of excessive police action is abhorrent to me.” Opposition forces were heartened to hear a U.S. ambassador seeming to protest on their behalf while Batista was outraged and threatened to make Smith *persona non grata*. Smith himself was highly annoyed that he had been encouraged to go to Santiago where he was clearly out of his depth. He did not make the same mistake again and soon repaired his bridges with Batista.<sup>18</sup> While Greene was there, three sisters, aged between eight and ten, were seized from their home in the middle of the night by soldiers to be used as hostages against their father, who had joined Castro in the Sierra. The following day a mass demonstration by children forced the release of the girls.

Just before leaving Havana for Santiago, Greene had been to a party where he met a *fidelist*a courier who was going to be traveling on the same plane as him. She asked him to take sweaters and socks needed by the men in the mountains in his suitcase because it was easier for a foreigner to explain winter clothes. In Santiago Greene experienced what he calls a comedy of errors as absurd as anything described in *Our Man in Havana*. He was accompanied to Santiago by the correspondent of *Time* magazine, hoping for a story. Greene thought he ought to warn the courier about the correspondent, and his host from the previous evening told him to await her phone call in his hotel, the Casa Granda in Plaza de Céspedes. Inevitably the *Time* correspondent showed up the next morning just as the phone call was expected, accompanied by a man claiming to be Castro’s public relations man in Santiago – though Greene thought him too old and too smartly dressed. Managing with some difficulty to get his visitors to leave, Greene took the call and was asked to go to a house in Calle San Francisco. Afraid even to consult the desk clerk, Greene took a taxi, did a tour of the sights, and then asked the taxi driver to take him to the old church of San Francisco, assuming that if such a church existed it would be in Calle San Francisco. Clearly all that work for the Secret Service

18. See Earl Smith’s own self-serving, defensive, and hysterically anti-Castro account (1991). Greene recalled this incident in *Ways of Escape* (1980:243-44), noting that Smith had been rebuked by John Foster Dulles: “In the eyes of the United States Government terror was not terror unless it came from the left.” Wayne Smith, a junior officer in the Embassy from 1957, saw Earl Smith and Gardner (his predecessor) as “entirely out of their depth” (1987:18).

had not gone to waste.<sup>19</sup> Telling the taxi driver he wanted to pray and would then walk back to the hotel, Greene set off up Calle San Francisco only to be approached by a car carrying the *Time* correspondent and Mr. X, who was indeed who he claimed to be and had now been told about the rendezvous. All three arrived together at the house of assignation, where they met the courier and her mother, a priest, and a young couple who turned out to be Haydée Santamaría and her husband Armando Hart who had just made a dramatic escape from the law courts in Havana where he was being taken under military escort for trial, and who was now in the process of having his hair dyed as part of a new disguise. Greene recalls that Santamaría had been taken by the police to see the blinded and castrated corpse of her former fiancé (Boris Luís Santa Coloma) after his torture and murder for taking part in the attack on the Moncada barracks in 1953. (Her brother Abel had been tortured and murdered at the same time.) Greene notes quietly: “I remembered that story when the wife of the Spanish Ambassador spoke to me of Batista’s social charm.”<sup>20</sup>

It quickly turned out that the reason the Cubans wanted to talk to Greene was to ask him to intercede with the British government, which was preparing to sell planes to Batista – which would obviously be used against the rebels. Greene subsequently got a friendly Labour MP, Hugh Delargy, to ask a question in the House of Commons, to which the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, Ian Harvey, replied that no arms had been sold to Batista – though, as it happened, negotiations were already taking place to do so.<sup>21</sup> Earlier, Cuba had been almost entirely dependent on the United States for arms, but the latter started to get queasy during 1957 since Batista was using U.S. B-26 aircraft and tanks to stamp out internal revolt, thereby associating the United States with a repressive government and violating the terms under which the arms were sold, which forbade their use for internal security. These considerations were not actually strong enough to prevent the continued sale of U.S. arms to Cuba, but the U.S. government did begin to defer the sale of arms as a lever to try to modify Batista’s behavior, particularly by getting him to commit to holding elections in June 1958. Batista’s response was to seek weapons from the United Kingdom and from Canada.<sup>22</sup> (*Our Man in*

19. The CIA certainly kept an eye on Greene during the filming in Havana in April 1959 (Sherry 2005:142-43), so they might well have been following him in 1957, unless they shared the British unwillingness to stray too far from Havana.

20. Greene 1980:248; cf. Santamaría 1980 and Hart Dávalos 2004. Greene met Haydée Santamaría again when he returned to Cuba in 1966: see his letter to Catherine Walston, October 3, 1966, in Greene 2007:285-86.

21. See Greene’s letter of October 23, 1958 to Delargy, asking him to raise some opposition to the sale of British planes to Batista, in Greene 2007:232-33; and *Parliamentary Debates*, Commons, 1958/59, vol. 584, 888, March 17, 1958.

22. This and the following paragraphs draw extensively on Phythian & Jardine 1999 and on Hull 2007.

*Havana's* passing reference to U.S. attitudes comes when the U.S. consul speaks at the lunch where Wormold is nearly murdered: "He spoke of the spiritual links between the democracies— he seemed to number Cuba among the democracies" [p. 217]).

In August 1958 – after the completion of Greene's novel but before its publication – the United Kingdom agreed to sell Comet tanks and Sea Fury aircraft to Batista on the back of a matchless Foreign Office assessment that the "chances are now remote ... of Fidel Castro coming to power and our consequently finding ourselves in the embarrassing position of having supplied Batista with arms."<sup>23</sup> Twelve of the seventeen aircraft ordered reached Cuba by December 1958, just in time to be used against the guerrillas in the last days before Batista's departure. A parliamentary row over the export of the Comet tanks was caused by a question asked on November 19, 1958 by Greene's friend, Hugh Delargy, this time of Foreign Secretary Selwyn Lloyd. Would it not be better not to supply arms to either side, Delargy enquired, given that a civil war is raging? Lloyd refused to recognize that there was civil war: "There is a good deal of disagreement as to what is taking place in Cuba today," he said. But he did agree that the situation had changed since the deal was made and said he would inform the House of Commons before any further weapons were sent.<sup>24</sup> Lloyd's capitulation on this point was deplored by the Cuban ambassador in London, who pointed out that Cuba had supported Britain in the United Nations over Suez (the only Latin American country to do so), and so expected support in return against its own rebels (Hull 2007:601). Any embarrassment was short-lived because of Batista's fall from power, and the potential future embarrassment of previous U.K. support for Batista when faced by his replacement was avoided by the new Cuban government's gratitude for having come into possession of recently delivered heavy arms with which to defend the Revolution. So, when Castro's army finally rolled into Havana on January 8, 1959, it did so atop an array of military hardware which included fifteen British tanks. Greene's immediate response was to write a letter to *The Times* which began: "The welcome success of Dr. Fidel Castro in overthrowing the dictatorship of Batista reminds us again of the extraordinary ignorance of Cuban affairs shown by the British Government" and goes on to ask: "What kind of information ... was the Foreign Office receiving from its representatives in Cuba?"<sup>25</sup>

In June 1959 the new Cuban government upped the ante by saying that they would like to swap their Sea Furies (five of them still undelivered) for more powerful Hawker Hunter jets. Selwyn Lloyd was rather inclined to

23. Memorandum from H.A.A. Hankey, August 6, 1958 (PRO: FO371/132175/ak1192/6), quoted in Phythian & Jardine 1999:35.

24. *Parliamentary Debates*, Commons, 1958/59, vol. 595, 1133-34, November 19, 1958.

25. *The Times*, January 3, 1959, in Greene 1989:74-75. That comment inevitably reflects on the failings of Sir Stanley Fordham, British ambassador to Cuba between 1956 and 1960.

agree, but the U.S. government in turn increased the pressure, notably in a series of memoranda from the Secretary of State, Christian Herter, who suggested that Cuba's new government might use the planes "for purposes hostile to the principles for which the Free World stands," conceivably postponing "the inevitable day when Castro will have to face judgement."<sup>26</sup>

Lloyd's reply was skeptical about Herter's assessment, but of course Lloyd did not know – because he was not told – that Herter could be upbeat about Castro's imminent encounter with judgment because the CIA was already plotting with Cuban dissidents in Florida to engineer his downfall. The real reason that the United States did not want Great Britain to sell arms to Cuba was that it knew that any new weapons would be used to resist the U.S.-backed invasion which was already being planned, and which would soon get approval from the outgoing U.S. president, Dwight D. Eisenhower. So the British government decided against selling more planes to Cuba, or replacing the Sea Furies with Hunters. The Cabinet was told that the decision had been taken because of U.S. pressure: "although our trade interests in Cuba might suffer if we refused the [Cuban] request, a failure to support the U.S. where their strategic interests were involved might have even more harmful effects on our economy." However, it would be desirable to publically relate the decision to the continuation of tension in the Caribbean rather than to U.S. pressure.<sup>27</sup>

As a result of this British decision, Cuba had a very small airforce in April 1961 at the time of the Bay of Pigs invasion: just 13 planes, five of which were put out of commission in a bombing raid two days before the invasion. However the remaining British Sea Furies proved extremely effective, disabling the freighter *Houston* and preventing it landing equipment, and hitting the CIA command vessel, the *Barbara J.*, forcing it to withdraw. As a result, a British Sea Fury has pride of place on the forecourt of the Museo de la Revolución in Havana.

Though not fully aware of all these machinations in late 1958 and early 1959, Greene surmised enough to conclude that the Foreign Service and the Secret Service amply merited the gentle ridicule of *Our Man in Havana* (Greene 1980:249). As Greene noted, any tourist to Santiago (as he had been in November 1957) could have told Selwyn Lloyd that the conflict in Cuba did amount to a civil war – with the unspoken implication that the British ambassador and any members of the Secret Service in Cuba never bothered to leave Havana to find out what was happening.

The only two additions to the film of *Our Man in Havana* with a political dimension come in the Wonder Bar scenes where Wormold and Hasselbacher

26. Washington telegram no. 2335 to Foreign Office, Herter to Selwyn Lloyd, November 4, 1959 (PRO: FO 371/139474/AK1223/88), quoted in Phythian & Jardine 1999:50.

27. November 26, 1959 (PRO: CAB 128/36 C60 (59) 4), quoted in Phythian & Jardine 1999:54.

meet to drink and chat. On one occasion the headline in the newspaper on the bar reads: "Latin America in Need of Dollars Not Arms." Then, when Wormold is explaining to Hasselbacher why he wants to take Milly away from Cuba, he says "Civil war, men like Segura." That reference to "civil war" is Greene's very pointed comment at the ignorance of the British government and its intelligence services about events in Cuba as revealed by the Foreign Secretary in that short period between the publication of novel and the making of the film.

The most significant difference between novel and film is the absence from the film of the episode with greatest resonance for the Cuban political situation as Greene experienced it in late 1957: Wormold's trip east to Santiago.<sup>28</sup> Wormold always travels in his old Hillman, but when it breaks down in Santa Clara he decides to go to Santiago by coach: "Perhaps in any case it was quicker and safer that way, for in the Oriente province, where the usual rebels held the mountains and Government troops the roads and cities, blocks were frequent and buses less liable to delay than private cars" (Greene 1958:77). The phrase "the usual rebels" perhaps echoes *Casablanca's* "the usual suspects" and is entirely characteristic of Greene's careful prevarication. It could certainly be Wormold's own phrase, the slightly cynical expression of an English expatriate in a Latin American country, always hearing about rebels in the mountains. But just as the original phrase was used by Captain Renault to camouflage Rick's involvement in the killing of Nazi officer Major Strasser, so "the usual rebels" might equally well obscure Greene's knowledge that the rebels were by no means "usual." Any such echo would, in any case, suggest an equivalence between the French resistance and the struggle against Batista, something that the new Revolutionary government might have had in mind when allowing the film of the novel to be made in Havana. In a delicious twist, the chief of the Service Service in London has a hunch that these rebels do not even exist, that they are just an excuse fabricated by the Cuban government to shut down a censorship over the area, a neat joke of Greene's given his awareness of Batista's attempts to suggest that the rebels did *not* in fact exist.

The tone of the novel darkens considerably during this Oriente episode. The evening hours in Santiago are described as "the empty dangerous hours of the unofficial curfew" (Greene 1958:77). The shops are closed, the streets almost deserted, the greenery hangs dark and heavy. Everyone treats Wormold with suspicion. On his way back from an inconsequential meeting with his retailer ("Trade was bad" [Greene 1958:78]), he is stopped by two policemen who want to know what he is doing out so late. It was ten o'clock. There is no curfew, as Wormold unwisely points out:

28. Quentin Falk suggests that the film of *Our Man in Havana* follows the book faithfully with "merely a handful of incidental scenes omitted" (Falk 2000:105), but this Santiago sequence is far from incidental.

Suddenly, without warning, one of the policemen slapped his face. He felt shock rather than anger. He belonged to the law-abiding class; the police were his natural protectors. He put his hand to his cheek and said: "What in God's name do you think ...?" The other policeman with a blow in the back sent him stumbling along the pavement. His hat fell off into the filth of the gutter. He said, "Give me my hat," and felt himself pushed again. He began to say something about the British Consul and they swung him sideways across the road and sent him reeling. (Greene 1958:79)

This sudden violence changes the tone of the novel dramatically. Not for the first time – and just as it had done for Greene himself – a trip from Havana to Santiago has provided an education in how matters really stand in Cuba. The rumors of repression and brutality no longer seem quite so much in the background. Since Wormold focalizes the novel, this almost random violence visited on him in Santiago at the hands of the police is quite startling. It also compromises Wormold morally. When he is threatened with further violence he invokes the name of Captain Segura: "He is a friend of my daughter ... I don't think Captain Segura would be pleased" (Greene 1958:82), which serves to frighten the policemen into releasing him.

*Casablanca*<sup>29</sup> set a template for postwar political thrillers which it was almost impossible to escape, and the film provides an interesting lens through which to read *Our Man in Havana*. There are some obvious and fairly general similarities between the two: a Third-World setting, a moment of political transition, an individualistic hero caught up in a larger war, a woman who flies in and disrupts the hero's life. But most significant is the similarity between Segura and Renault, the two police officers whose ambiguously shifting loyalties lie at the center of the respective works. Both are womanizers, though – unlike Renault – Segura operates entirely properly and Greene is careful not to suggest that Milly is in any imminent sexual danger even though she is a wholly innocent sixteen-year-old when the novel opens, only just within the age of consent. Segura is in fact rather touchingly committed to convincing Wormold that he would make a suitable husband for Milly. He is obsessed by doing things correctly, and his lack of realization as to how little chance of success he has increases his vulnerability, and therefore makes him more sympathetic to readers than he would otherwise be. Renault – though superficially a more engaging character with his ready wit and devil-may-care attitude – is in fact sexually voracious, selling exit visas to desperate women in exchange for sex, an aspect of *Casablanca* which only narrowly got past the censors and which the film rather glosses over in its rush to the "start of a beautiful friendship" ending, with its homoerotic undertones, once Ilsa Lund has, to her evident dismay, been ushered on to the plane to spend the rest of her life with Victor Laszlo.<sup>30</sup>

29. Dir. Michael Curtiz, 1942.

30. The Production Code Administration objected to the suggestion that Renault seduced women in exchange for exit visas, see Harnetz 1993:162-64.



Even more pertinently, both Renault and Segura cover up the murders committed by the works' respective protagonists. Both culminating scenes take place in airports, where Renault protects Rick from the consequences of him killing Strasser, while Segura, taking his failure to marry Milly with eminently good grace, lets Wormold leave, while giving him the bullet that killed Carter to show that he knows that Wormold is getting away with murder (Figure 2).



Figure 2. Segura with Wormold and Milly at the airport

Greene offers no physical description of Wormold, but conveys an impression of a diffident middle-aged man who is not exactly physically active: “anxious and criss-crossed, and fortyish” (Greene 1958:4). Alec Guinness, forty-five – exactly Wormold’s age – when he played the part in the film, provides a handy enough image. Wormold is a difficult character to read – as Greene no doubt intended. In one sense he is the hero of a comedy and therefore his role is preordained: he will survive all difficulties and get the girl at the end. The problem comes in reconciling the diffidence necessary to get him into trouble in the first place – the badly paid job in a Caribbean outpost, the broken marriage, the daughter out of control – with the activity necessary to get him out of the trouble he has got himself into – killing the enemy agent who has been sent to murder him. In some ways Greene seems to have looked inwards for this reconciliation: Wormold is often read as something close to a self-portrait and his creation of an imaginary spy network and missile system is presented as the work of a would-be novelist of some considerable imagination. At one point Wormold tells Milly he is becoming “an imaginative writer.” His characters – the invented agents – “grew in the dark without his knowledge.” “You talk like a novelist,” Beatrice says to him (Greene 1958:91, 127, 133). Norman Sherry (2005:133) reckons that Wormold’s inventiveness makes him “closer to



Figure 3. Wormold and Beatrice in the Shanghai nightclub

Greene than any other created character in the author's repertoire." Wormold is even given a hint of Greene's own difficult schooldays when Greene was, as he recalled, "tortured" by a boy called, inevitably, Carter.<sup>31</sup> Even more intriguingly, the novel clearly suggests that Wormold has the kind of detailed knowledge of Havana nightlife that Greene himself possessed. When Milly suggests going to the Shanghai nightclub for her birthday, Wormold is startled that she has even heard of it; but he knows it well – it is where, as he later notes, three pornographic films were shown nightly between nude dances.<sup>32</sup> When

31. "For there was a boy at my school called Carter who perfected during my fourteenth and fifteenth years a system of mental torture based on my difficult situation. Carter had an adult imagination – he could conceive the conflict of loyalties, loyalties to my age-group, loyalty to my father and brother. The sneering nicknames were inserted like splinters under the nails. I think in time I might have coped with Carter – there was an element of reluctant admiration, I believe, on both sides. I admired his ruthlessness, and in an odd way he admired what he wounded in me. Between the torturer and the tortured arises a kind of relationship. So long as the torture continues the torturer has failed, and he recognizes an equality in his victim" (Greene 1971:79-80).

32. Before the Revolution the Shanghai was infamous for its live sex shows featuring Superman and numerous female companions. In the novel Superman is actually referred

Wormold and Beatrice have to warn Teresa, one of his supposed agents working at the Shanghai, Wormold knows that the second performance will not yet be over (Figure 3). And to Carter's question about where Wormold plans to take him, Wormold replies "Any one of a dozen whore-houses. They are all the same ... About a dozen girls to choose from. They'll do an exhibition for you" (Greene 1958:246). Wormold clearly knows his way round the seamy side of Havana. The importance of all this only becomes apparent when Wormold is preparing to kill Carter. Carter has murdered Hasselbacher and tried to kill Wormold and will no doubt try again. So, strictly speaking, Wormold needs no further motivation. But it is apparent that his author feels the need for a different kind of motivation for Carter's killing: Carter has to be humiliated before he is killed.



Figure 4. Carter failing to undress the stripper

By this point in both novel and film, Wormold has gained considerably in status. His wife had left him, he remembers, because he just stands there, as she had put it. But his pseudo-spying activities have given him a new lease of life. He has attracted Beatrice, played in the film by Maureen O'Hara, then nearly 40 (Beatrice is 31 in the novel), but still a very beautiful woman who had recently played opposite John Wayne in *Rio Grande* and *The Quiet Man*,

to as performing at the San Francisco brothel, but Greene had seen him at the Shanghai, just as he had seen a lesbian show at the Blue Moon, where Wormold takes Carter in the film (Greene 1980:241). Apparently Greene spent quite some time during the filming of *Our Man in Havana* trying to track down Superman, who had gone underground after the Revolution. For a contemporary account of the Shanghai, see Roberts 1953:226-29.

lending Wormold by association an image of masculinity that his demeanor hardly suggests. He has outdrunk Captain Segura and taken his gun, a symbolic unmanning which requires little interpretation. Just in case we fail to get the point, in the first nightclub they stop at Carter is approached by a stripper to unhook her black lace corsets. (From the front in the film, and they are a lighter color; Figure 4). Carter fumbles and blushes, clearly unfamiliar with the finer points of women's underwear, and Wormold offers to help him. Then, when they approach a brothel, Carter gets even more flustered and lurches into a pathetic confession that he tries to want women but "It doesn't work, Wormold. I can't do what they want" (Greene 1958:250). So throughout all these scenes Wormold becomes more and more like his author, with a kind of worldly assurance, and Carter becomes more and more pathetic. Carter tries to argue with Wormold that they are both foot soldiers in some great political struggle and should therefore have some fellow feeling, but Greene has ensured a deep character division as embodied in differential sexual adequacy, as if to drain any possible empathy in his readers towards Carter. But then, characteristically, Greene pulls back from the division he has just created because Carter's humiliating confession makes it *less* easy for Wormold to kill him: "I have to do it, Wormold thought, before he confesses any more to me. With every second the man was becoming human, a creature like oneself whom one might pity or console, not kill" (Greene 1958:250). Nonetheless, kill him he does, Greene protecting his hero by having him shoot *back* as Carter tries to kill him (Figure 5).



Figure 5. Wormold shooting Carter

The figure of Segura is certainly the key to the novel's relationship with Cuban realities. Greene did not keep up the pretence that Segura was not based on a real person: in *Ways of Escape* he openly discussed Ventura Novo,

while noting that he had “changed a savage Captain Ventura into a cynical Captain Segura.”<sup>33</sup> Greene was clearly not interested in simply writing a novel about Batista’s Cuba. But the connections between Ventura Novo and Segura are certainly there, most significantly perhaps in the references to torture. Whenever Greene wrote about pre-Revolutionary Cuba, he stressed its reliance on torture. In the letter he wrote to *The Times* immediately after Castro’s overthrow of Batista, berating the British government for the intelligence failures which had led to it supplying arms to Batista, Greene highlighted “the mutilations and torture practised by leading police officers.”<sup>34</sup> Three years later, in a further letter to *The Times*, he broadened the claim, recalling that “President Batista’s police state, addicted like most police states to the practice of torture, was supported not only by the American Government of the time, not only by the more influential racketeers of Las Vegas, who controlled the gambling concessions and brothels of Havana, but also, in a blinkered way by the present British Government” (Greene 1989:109).

Segura’s reputation as a torturer therefore provides one unbreakable connection to Ventura Novo: Hasselbacher notes that Segura “specialises in torture and mutilation” (Greene 1958:39) and it is well known that he carries a cigarette case made of human skin. But Greene did not want to make Segura a simple copy of his despicable model, partly for generic reasons – a comedy thriller cannot have a genuinely evil villain, and partly for intellectual reasons – Greene never created black or white characters: the relationship between Segura and Wormold works because of the way Greene complicates our sympathies and expectations.

So Segura is given some real complexity as a character. Making Segura a suitor to Wormold’s young daughter immediately puts the two characters into an archetypally tense personal relationship, particularly since the two men belong to the same generation: Segura’s age is not mentioned in the novel, but Kovacs was forty when the film was made, just five years younger than Wormold (and Guinness).

Segura is also allowed a philosophical outlook which could be seen as responding to his island’s position within the world order: he is, quite literally, more worldly-wise than the Englishman. His description of the distinction between the torturable and the untorturable is undeniably cynical: “One never tortures except by a kind of mutual agreement” (Greene

33. Greene 1980:249. He also owns up to Stewart Menzies, head of MI6 during the War, as a model for aspects of the Secret Service chief, and Baron Schacht, whom he had known in Capri, for Hasselbacher (Greene 1980:250). The unsympathetic British ambassador would have been based on Stanley Fordham.

34. “Cuba’s Civil War,” *The Times*, January 3, 1959, in Greene 1989:74-75. He recalled the same incident in a further letter to *The Times* supportive of the Cuban Revolution on February 21, 1962 (Greene 1989:109-10).

1958:189); but it is followed by a sharply observant account of just who belongs to the “torturable class”:

The poor in my own country, in any Latin American country. The poor of Central Europe and the Orient. Of course in your welfare states you have no poor, so you are untorturable. In Cuba the police can deal as harshly as they like with émigrés from Latin America and the Baltic States, but not with visitors from your country or Scandinavia. (Greene 1958:189)

Greene had a good eye for postcolonial realities. As with Vietnam in *The Quiet American*, he saw how Third-World countries could become merely the setting for cold-war hostilities with which the global players would prefer not to sully their own territories. In *Our Man in Havana* Captain Segura is allowed a measure of respect, both because ultimately he is a nationalist and because Greene senses that the greater evils are elsewhere. Indeed Segura voices Greene’s own analysis, a remarkably prescient one for 1958:

Of course we are only a small country, but we lie very close to the American coast. And we point at your own Jamaica base. If a country is surrounded, as Russia is, it will try to punch a hole through from inside. (Greene 1958:188)

Oriente never did see the establishment of those large weapons which looked like the insides of a vacuum cleaner, but something not dissimilar happened in 1962 when Khrushchev sent nuclear weapons to be stationed on Cuba (actually in the west, in Pinar del Río).<sup>35</sup>

Segura is even allowed to explain away the cigarette case made of human skin: the skin belonged to a police officer who had tortured Segura’s father to death.<sup>36</sup> So this was an individual gesture of revenge which serves at least partially to deflect the stories of police brutality and torture. Wormold’s final judgment on Segura in the novel is: “All the same, he wasn’t a bad chap” (Greene 1958:262).<sup>37</sup> Admittedly, when Wormold passes this judgment he is in Segura’s debt and has committed a murder, so it is not entirely obvious that

35. Greene even managed to parody a *future* novel about the Cuban missile crisis, Leon Uris’s mammoth cold-war tome, *Topaz* (1967), which was later turned into probably the worst film he ever made by Alfred Hitchcock. Hitchcock had offered £50,000 to buy the film rights to *Our Man in Havana*, but Greene had never admired Hitchcock, and wanted Reed to direct the film (Greene 1995:559). On the “secret kinship” between Greene and Hitchcock, see Sinyard 2003:96-108.

36. “Even Captain Segura is allowed a father who was tortured to death by a previous generation of policemen, a personal fate which removes him from the gallery of wax figures inhabited by the believers in thrones and powers. His cruelty has a basis in his personal life while theirs belongs to a bland placing of institutions before people” (Smith 1986:143).

37. In the film, slightly less ringingly, “he’s not without humor,” perhaps a knowing reference to Kovacs’s TV career as a comedian.

we should concur, but the remark further blurs any clear divisions readers might want to make between these two characters, one supposedly associated with torture and brutality, the other an upstanding Englishman who knows little about politics but would kill to avenge his friend's murder. Judith Adamson (1984:99) suggests that Segura is treated mildly despite being responsible for the book's violence: "The far less sadistic Harry Lime [in *The Third Man*] received a much harsher sentence." But Lime is guilty of killing and maiming scores of children through his penicillin racket. Although Segura is hated by *habaneros* and has a reputation for violence, he does not commit any violent acts in the novel. Despite Wormold originally suspecting Segura of Hasselbacher's murder, the killer turns out to be Carter, whom Wormold had initially been so pleased to see because Carter stood for "the English midlands, English snobbery, English vulgarity, all the sense of kinship and security the word England implied to him" (Greene 1958:210). Wormold felt safe with Carter – who had come to Cuba to murder him. All the killings we see in the novel and film are actually done by Englishmen: Carter kills the pilot and Hasselbacher; Wormold kills Carter. So much for English kinship and security, notions that Greene was very keen to puncture.

In November 1964 Graham Greene wrote a deeply sarcastic letter to *The Daily Telegraph* contrasting the U.S.-supported Vietnamese army's triumphalist photographs of their torture of Vietcong prisoners with the good old days in which "hypocrisy paid a tribute to virtue by hushing up the torture inflicted by its own soldiers and condemning the torture inflicted by the other side" (Greene 1989:114-15). Then in November 1971 he berated the British Home Secretary, Reginald Maudling, for his defense of what he called the "deep interrogation" of IRA suspects – long hours of enforced standing, hooding, permanent noise, sleep deprivation. Nobody has ever suffered permanent injury from these techniques, Maudling said, foreshadowing Donald Rumsfeld's breezy dismissal of exactly the same techniques at the Guantánamo Bay Naval Base. When applied by communists or fascists, Greene noted, we call it "torture," but when applied by the British we downgrade it to ill treatment (Greene 1989:154-56). The CIA calls it "enhanced interrogation."<sup>38</sup> That, fifty years on from *Our Man in Havana*, torture is still at the forefront of debates about how to combat terrorism, and that those debates should still focus on Cuba, but now on a U.S. base situated within the island – one suspects that none of this would have come as much of a surprise to Graham Greene.

38. See "Leave No Marks: 'Enhanced' Interrogation Techniques and the Risk of Criminality," A Report by Human Rights First and Physicians for Human Rights, August 2007, <http://www.humanrightsfirst.info/pdf/07801-etn-leave-no-marks.pdf>, and McCoy 2006.

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