

'BLACK CONDOR' STARRED IN ACT AT ELLIS ISLE

Venezuelan Dictator Gave Immigration Officials Vexing Problem.

This fifth of six articles on Ellis Island by A. J. Liebling deals with many of the famous characters who spent time there.

BY A. J. LIEBLING
Times Special Writer

ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER BYRON H. UHL has served the government on Ellis Island since the immigration station moved there from Castle Garden, which is now the Aquarium, in 1892. Before that immigration inspection was in the hand of the state authorities.

When the federal government took over the function the state refused to yield the disused fortress which for half a century had served as incoming Europe's first point of contact with America, Byron Uhl went to the island as a clerk and remained there, as is the fashion of civil service employees, through the regimes of twelve commissioners, until today he is the senior nonappointive officer at the station.

An outwardly dour Indiana American, he is, in particular, a connoisseur of personalities. If you ask him what he thinks of Prince Mike Romanoff he will snort and answer, "Bah—a cheap little faker!"

Cowards to Him Or of Alexander Berkman and Emma Goldman, "All their lives they had been talking of revolution, but in their hearts they didn't want to go back and face it."

Then if you press him further and ask him, "Who was the most remarkable person ever detained on the island?" he will answer, "Old General Castro, the Black Condor of the Andes."

Most interrogators hesitate at that point and then say vaguely, "Oh, yes, that fellow from Venezuela."

This pains Assistant Commissioner Uhl, for he knows it would have pleased Cipriano the Bloodthirsty and Magnificent, whose boast it was that he was "the same height as Napoleon, to a fraction of an inch."

Castro Stole Millions Castro stole back millions from all the foreign concessionaires to whom his predecessors had sold Venezuelan resources.

Newspapers stated when he left his dominions for a German spa (where he drank seven bottles of cognac a day, by way of hastening a cure) that he took with him \$60,000,000.

The state department alleged against him the assassination of a few thousand paltry political enemies. And after seven years of riotous rule, during which his ports were bombarded by foreign fleets, to his great amusement, he blithely departed for Europe, leaving Vice President Juan Vicente Gomez in charge.

On the last day of 1912 the steamship La Touraine, of the French Line, brought to quarantine a passenger at first listed as "L. Ruiz" but subsequently in his own bold handwriting, as Gen. Cipriano Castro.

Refuses to Answer In those days arrivals at the island were inspected, zone by zone, by specialists. The head, the chest, each region of the body came in for a going-over.

Hopefully the physicians inspected the general. He was in excellent health. Next Commissioner William Williams, after telephonic communication with the state department in Washington, said that the Porcupine-Hornet would be excluded as an alien criminal because he had murdered General Antonio Paredes. He refused to answer questions.

The island authorities interpreted this as an admission of guilt. Conviction or admission of a crime involving moral turpitude debar an alien from the country.

George Gordon Battle, H. Snowden Marshall and Harold Content secured a writ of habeas corpus. A judge denied it. The Black Condor appealed to the secretary of labor.

The secretary appointed a board of three inspectors to hear the appeal. They denied the appeal. There was another writ. Judge Ward ruled that silence was not an admission. Followed by cheering crowds General Castro visited Mayor Gaynor.

Departure Was Mistake Judge Ward ruled that silence was not an admission. Followed by cheering crowds General Castro visited Mayor Gaynor.

Castro's first mistake was to leave Venezuela. His second was to deposit the remainder of his booty, \$10,000,000 in gold, in German banks.

When he next visited New York harbor, in 1916, he had no money for batteries of lawyers. The imperial government forcibly had borrowed his gold.

Mr. Uhl was acting commissioner in charge of the island. Castro, protesting that all this had been settled, was taken from his ship. "What it mean?" he demanded. "What you want?"

About 'Moral Turpitude' "Did you order the execution of General Paredes?" demanded the persistent Mr. Uhl.

"No," howled the general. "No. Ten thousandth descendant of an anonymous capabary, no."

"All right," replied the imperturbable Yankee, "that's all we can do about it."

And so the Black Condor was admitted. He died in Porto Rico in 1924.

Next—Loveliness on the island

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