

CUBANS RID PLAZA OF HATED STATUE

Monument to Ferdinand VII, Who Imposed Inquisition, Banished by Havana

Special to The New York Times.

HAVANA, Feb. 22—The statue of Ferdinand VII of Spain, one of Cuba's most unpopular historical figures, finally has been removed from the Plaza de Armas in front of the Havana City Hall.

The big statue, which has been the center of controversy at various times since the establishment of the Republic in 1902, was banished to the patio of the nearby City Museum. Had the

public been consulted, Ferdinand probably would have been dropped into the sea off Moro Castle.

Ferdinand VII is remembered in Cuba as the Spanish ruler who abolished all the liberties won at such effort from the Spanish colonial government and who established the inquisition in the island. Many years ago, Jose Maria Heredia, the Cuban poet expressed the sentiment of the Cuban people in a scathing denunciation of Ferdinand.

Cuban historians are a little vague as to why the statue was erected and just who was responsible, since Ferdinand was so highly unpopular even in his own country. But since 1835 the monument has stood in the Plaza de Armas, the first public square laid out by the founders of Havana in 1513.

Back in 1921 the Havana City Council, yielding to public pressure, adopted a resolution to remove the statue and put in its

place one of Dr. Carlos Manuel de Cespedes, president of the first Cuban Republic proclaimed in 1869 during the Ten Years War with Spain. The Council even changed the name of the plaza to Carlos Manuel de Cespedes Park, but the original name stood.

At that time the Island was deep in the depression caused by the collapse of the sugar market several months before and the statue of Dr. de Cespedes was forgotten.

Later came the revolutionary days of the 1930's. In 1933 Dr. Guillermo Belt, then Mayor of Havana, restored the badly run down Plaza de Armas and Ferdinand VII remained on his pedestal. Then came World War II with its wave of prosperity and in 1952 the military coup that brought Gen. Fulgencio Batista power again.

Last year the controversy over Ferdinand VII was revived. Several weeks ago Ferdinand

was taken down from the high pedestal in the Plaza and the marble figure of Dr. de Cespedes, the work of Sergio Lopez Mesa, a Cuban sculptor, put in its place.

Now, as constitutional government is restored in Cuba with the inauguration of President Batista, the statue of Dr. de Cespedes is scheduled to be unveiled Sunday.



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