

THE CUBAN DILEMMA OF THE UNITED STATES

JON S. BERTRAND

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PREFACE

The United States and Cuba have had a long and often tempestuous relationship. Decades before the Spanish-American War, Americans looked at Cuba with great covetousness. The island has variously been envisioned as a natural and proper addition to the United States, as a vast sugar factory with unlimited potential for markets and profits and as a strategic bastion which held the key to the security of the Caribbean, Gulf of Mexico and indeed, the southern flank of the United States. Manifest destiny, democratic idealism and a strong belief that peace and prosperity followed the Yankee trader all played their roles in shaping the relations between Cuba and its northern neighbor.

In 1898, the United States eagerly went to war to free Cuba from the yoke of Spanish tyranny. The Teller Amendment proclaimed to the world that the United States' aims were not to exercise sovereignty or control over Cuba but to bring peace to the strife torn island and leave the task of government to the Cubans.¹

The Treaty of Paris concluded the war, granted independence to Cuba and in 1902, Cuba became a republic. Cuban acceptance of the Platt Amendment guaranteed the United States' right to intervene in Cuban affairs in order to preserve Cuban independence, government and liberty.² Thus, the island nation came under the paternal wing of the United States.

The interregnum between American ascendancy in 1898 and Castro's revolution over sixty years later has been called "the prelude to

¹S. E. Morison and H. S. Commager, The Growth of the American Republic (Oxford, 1950), II, p. 331.

²Ibid., p. 334.

tragedy."³ American policy in regard to Cuba during these sixty years has assumed many forms ranging from military intervention, economic egoism and internal political meddling to sincere, humanitarian efforts to provide stable democratic government in an atmosphere of general economic prosperity.

President Roosevelt, in his inaugural address of 1933, announced the Good Neighbor Policy with the avowed purpose of establishing a climate of peace and prosperity between all nations. The policy was early interpreted as an attempt to strengthen the bonds between the United States and Latin America within a framework of friendship, mutual respect and hemispheric solidarity. The Good Neighbor Policy marked a dramatic change in regard to relations with Cuba and signalled the beginning of the end of intervention as an instrument of United States foreign policy.

For the following 25 years, the Good Neighbor Policy formed the substance of the United State's relations with Cuba and all of Latin America. Within Cuba, the dictator Batista maintained an atmosphere of relative stability within which investments could prosper and he was strongly supported by the United States. A great seething of unrest, however, lay just below the surface and after 3 years of civil war, Fidel Castro emerged in 1959 as the new leader of Cuba. Subsequent anti-American activities and membership in the Soviet bloc eventually led to the termination of diplomatic relations between the two countries. Thus, relations with Cuba have come full circle--oppressed island ruled by a less than friendly foreign power, war, protective custody and guidance by the United States, civil war and finally, a government unfriendly to the United States whose political ideology tends toward that of our cold war enemies.

³Robert F. Smith, The United States and Cuba (New York, 1960), p. 7.

We shall, later in this paper, examine some of the events from 1898 to the present which have led to the current impasse. Specifically, we will examine from a political, economic and strategic perspective the major historical events which have had cause and effect relationships to the formulation and application of United States policies toward Cuba.

Cuba, of course, is an integral part of the Caribbean and of Latin America by virtue of geography and to some extent, language. To isolate Cuba and its relations to the United States is admittedly somewhat artificial even though cultural, racial and political differences do exist. Many policies applied to Cuba, however, such as armed intervention and economic dominance have been employed in many other nations of Latin America. Further, Cuba's history of unstable government, strong-man rule, economic dependence on one crop and appalling inequality of wealth distribution is not much different than many other nations all over the world. Because so many parallels may be found between Cuba and other nations of Latin America, it becomes practical and useful for ease of discussion to isolate Cuba. This treatise, however, will where necessary, provide the Caribbean and Latin America perspective required for a proper understanding of American policies and goals.

There is yet another, more important reason for focusing our discussions upon Cuba rather than the Caribbean or Latin American areas as a whole. From the very outset, United States' policy toward Cuba was separate and distinct from the policies applied to the remainder of Latin America. Regardless of the many similarities which may be found with other nations, Cuba has almost always received special consideration.

While the United States, in the early 19th century, advocated independence for other Latin American nations, it steadfastly supported Spanish rule

over Cuba. At the same time, it pressured Spain to open the lucrative Cuban ports to free trade.⁴ Opposition to Cuban independence was based on two prime motives. First was the fear that an independent Cuba would fall prey to a slave uprising as occurred in Haiti in 1804. The thought of an independent black nation in close proximity to the slave holding South and the possible social and economic effects was too unsettling to be seriously considered. The second and even greater fear was that Great Britain, which had large economic interests in the Caribbean, would dominate or even occupy an independent Cuba.⁵ The United States had no intention of allowing the Royal Navy a base just 90 miles from its shores nor British development of the rich Cuban markets.

Cuba in the hands of a weak Spain was far more tolerable than racial chaos or the presence of a powerful foreign nation. Thus, a paradox of great importance in the history of United States-Latin American-Cuban relations was formed. The Monroe Doctrine of 1823 stated the United States' opposition to any European powers making further attempts to colonize Latin America or to reconquer former Spanish colonies which had revolted. On the other hand, the Cuban policy of the United States supported the colonial rule of Spain in order to preserve its commercial and strategic interests.⁶ Cuban stability through preservation of the status quo was a far more practical goal than philosophic consideration of extending the American commitment to independence and freedom.

⁴Lester D. Langley, The Cuban Policy of the United States (New York, 1968) p. 5.

⁵Ibid., pp. 5-6.

⁶Ibid., p. 14.

The strategic location of Cuba was then, early recognized by Americans as a possible threat and that realization, coupled with large commercial interests, has dominated Cuban-American relations throughout history. The missile crisis of 1962 brought the question of United States' national security into vivid focus where it remains to this day.

We can now pose a second question to be discussed within the confines of this paper: What threat does Castro pose to the United States and what alternatives are available for dealing with him?

CHRONOLOGY OF EVENTS

- 1848 - President Polk attempts purchase of Cuba.
- 1854 - Ostend Manifesto.
- 1868 - Beginning of Ten Years War.
- 1873 - "Viginus" episode.
- 1878 - Treaty of Zanjon ending Ten Year's War.
- 1890 - McKinley Tariff.
- 1898 - Spanish-American War.
- 1902 - Cuban Republic established under terms of Platt Amendment.
 - Reciprocity Treaty.
- 1905 - Magoon appointed military governor by President Roosevelt-
Unites States Marines landed.
- 1909 - United States Marines landed to protect U.S. citizens.
- 1917 - United States Marines landed to restore tranquility under
President Menocal.
 - President Wilson inaugurates "preventive policy."
- 1924 - Machado elected president.
- 1933 - President Roosevelt announces "Good Neighbor Policy."
- 1934 - Fulgencio Batista emerges as strong man of Cuban politics.
 - Platt Amendment abrogated.
 - United States reduces tariff on Cuban sugar and establishes
sugar quota.
- 1940 - Batista elected president.
 - Liberal constitution adopted.
- 1944 - Batista defeated by Grau San Martín.
- 1952 - Batista stages coup and returns to power.
- 1953 - Castro raids Moncado Barracks.

1959 - Batista flees and Castro assumes power.

1960 - The United States and Cuba terminate diplomatic relations.

1961 - Bay of Pigs invasion.

1962 - Cuban Missile Crisis.

CHAPTER I

PROLOGUE

Following the administration of President John Tyler, American support for continued Spanish rule of Cuba slowly eroded. Successful Spanish efforts to restrict American trade were considered grossly unfair by a nation which was just beginning to flex its economic muscle and considered free trade as one of the bulwarks of its foreign policy. With the slavery issue gaining momentum in the United States, Southern interests who previously feared a black nation in Cuba now began to see the island as an important addition to the Union as a slave state. The aggressive nature of "Manifest Destiny" was reaching its peak and after the Pacific borders of the United States were secure, thoughts turned to serious consideration of relieving Spain of the responsibility for Cuba.

James Polk in 1848, instructed the American Minister to Spain to commence negotiations with a goal of purchasing Cuba for a sum of one hundred million dollars. President Zachary Taylor withdrew this offer in order to avert the possible addition of a slave state to the Union.⁷

In 1854, as the slavery problem assumed ever greater importance, the United States' ministers to Spain, France and England joined in the "Ostend Manifesto." Their action, they felt, was required to maintain slavery in the United States and thereby preserve the Union. The manifesto urged a renewed attempt to purchase Cuba and failing that, resort to armed force.⁸

⁷Robert F. Smith, What Happened in Cuba? (New York, 1963), pp. 39-43.

⁸Ibid., pp. 64-67.

A third effort to unseat the Spanish consisted of filibusters (military expeditions) launched from the United States in support of rebel Cuban factions. These filibusters were supported by Southern interests who at best, wanted Cuba as a slave state and at least, wanted to prevent the formation of a free black nation in such close proximity. These expeditions were generally poorly planned and ill equipped and were dependent upon a general uprising of Cuban citizens for success. All failed and as we know, history repeated itself at the Bay of Pigs many years later.⁹

The Civil War absorbed American energy for several years and the national interest was focused on internal affairs rather than further expansion. Public support for invasion or annexation lagged but there existed in the South a hope that a slave society could be established in Cuba. Lincoln's administration dashed this plan by announcing that such a move would bring swift retaliation from the Union.¹⁰

The first serious challenge to Spanish rule came in 1868 when Cuba erupted in revolution led by Cuban Creoles. The Ten Years War commenced as a challenge to tyrannical Spanish rule which subjected Cubans to excessive taxation, denial of civil and religious liberties and withheld all opportunity for Cubans to participate in their own government. The war soon degenerated into a vicious, incredibly ferocious struggle which saw brutal murder and pillage as a trait common to both sides.

⁹Henry Wriston, "A Historical Perspective," in Cuba and the United States, Long Range Perspective, ed. John Plank (Washington, D.C., 1967), p. 8.

¹⁰Langley, p. 54.

Effects of the war were soon felt in the United States as American property was destroyed and American citizens were killed and injured. American sympathies were with the insurgents not only because of their struggle for freedom, which was similar to our own, but also because of stories of inhuman Spanish atrocities which leaked out of Cuba. A Cuban rebel government in exile in New York received arms and money from sympathizers and arranged for them to be smuggled to Cuba aboard American vessels. In October 1873, one of these ships, the *Virginus* was captured by the Spanish and several members of the crew and passengers were summarily executed. Many Americans called for war but the Grant administration insisted on a policy of non-intervention. A compromise was reached and Spain apologized and paid indemnities.¹¹

As the war continued, American trade and investments suffered. The United States, attempting to remain neutral in the struggle, refused to officially recognize the rebels or their cause but did propose several plans to Spain in hopes of restoring peace. An offer to purchase Cuba was rejected by Spain as were pleas for reforms in colonial rule or mediation of the dispute by the United States. Spain insisted that no negotiations of any sort could be held until a Spanish military victory had been achieved.

By 1876, the rebel forces had been reduced to small disorganized bands which no longer posed even a minimal threat to Spanish rule. In January of 1878 the rebel leaders surrendered and in the Treaty of Zanjón agreed to the sovereignty of Spain in return for Spanish guarantee of political and administrative reform.¹²

¹¹Smith, What Happened in Cuba? p. 81.

¹²Langley, p. 80.

The years 1878-1898 brought greatly increased involvement of American capital into Cuba. Within a few years, American trade with Cuba was greater than the combined trade of the rest of Latin America with the United States. The destructiveness of the Ten Years War bankrupted many Spanish and Cuban plantation owners and American investors and speculators were eager to buy up the land.¹³ Carnegie Steel, American Sugar Refinery Company and Standard Oil were among the many United States' concerns which gathered large holdings in Cuba. By 1896, United States investments in sugar and mining properties totaled fifty million dollars and American exports to Cuba were valued at \$105,000,000.¹⁴ It has been estimated that Cuban trade made up almost one fourth of the United States' entire world trade during this period.¹⁵

The spirit of Manifest Destiny was still alive in America although it had lain dormant for several years following the Civil War. A new generation of expansionists comprising such figures as Captain Alfred Thayer Mahan, Theodore Roosevelt and Henry Cabot Lodge began to see the United States as not only a continental power but as a world power with an empire equal to those held by the imperial powers of Europe. Mahan argued that the nation's strength rested upon a strong commercial and industrial base which could operate in international markets through a system of strategically positioned colonies. This far flung mercantile system was to be protected by a strong navy which could extend American influence far beyond its own

¹³ Ibid., p. 85.

¹⁴ Smith, What Happened in Cuba? p. 87.

¹⁵ Leland Jenks, Our Cuban Colony: A Study in Sugar (New York, 1928), p. 21.

shores into the Caribbean, the Pacific Ocean and the vast markets of Asia.

Cuba, to this group of men, took on vital international significance. Not only did the island provide a rich trade in sugar and tobacco in exchange for manufactured goods, but by its location, it dominated the Caribbean, and the future site of an isthmian canal. From Cuban ports, United States ships could trade with all of Latin America and through the canal into the entire Pacific.¹⁶ Senator Henry Cabot Lodge wrote

"--- In the interests of our commerce--- we should build the Nicaragua Canal and for the protection of that canal and for the sake of our commercial supremacy in the Pacific, we should control the Hawaiian Islands and maintain our influence in Samoa. England has studded the West Indies with strong places which are a standing menace to our Atlantic seaboard. We should have among those islands, at least one strong naval station, and when the Nicaragua Canal is built, the island of Cuba---will become a necessity---."17

A severe recession in the early 1890's created stagnation of the economy and lent credence to claims that only through empire could economic security be maintained. Businessmen faced with problems of over production joined the clamor for a foreign policy which would ensure energetic action to open new markets and powerful protection for existing ones.

Cuba, meanwhile, continued to suffer under Spanish rule which has changed little since the promise of Zanjón. Slavery was abolished in 1886

¹⁶Langley, p. 101.

¹⁷Morison and Commager, p. 323.

but few other political or civil reforms were instituted. Cuban exiles in the United States had never accepted Spanish rule in whatever guise and continued to plot for an independent Cuba.

In 1895, Cuba suffered a severe economic setback as the bottom fell out of the sugar market. This was caused by a complex set of tariff laws enacted by both Spain and the United States. The McKinley Tariff passed in 1890 abolished the tariff on Cuban sugar but raised duties on tobacco. This action dealt the tobacco industry a heavy blow and encouraged further expansion of sugar plantations. Between 1890 and 1894, sugar production increased 400,000 tons per year. In order to protect American sugar interests during the depression, the Wilson Tariff in 1895 placed a tax of 40 percent per ton on sugar. The resultant drop in price caused a great deal of misery and poverty.¹⁸

Within this atmosphere of political oppression and economic disaster, Cuban rebels under the leadership of José Martí launched their second attempt to overthrow Spain and gain independence. The war quickly became unbelievably savage with many atrocities committed on each side. The Spanish Governor, General Weyler became known in the press as "the Butcher."

The United States quickly became involved in the Cuban revolution. With a Cuban exile government again established in New York and military expeditions again setting out from American ports, neutrality became difficult to enforce. Individual American citizens and large businesses operating in Cuba demanded armed intervention to protect their properties and investments. Cuban nationals holding American citizenship likewise claimed protection of the United States government.

¹⁸Ibid., p. 327.

Within the United States, feelings were divided over Cuba. Many Americans were sympathetic to the suffering of the Cuban people and supported some form of United States support. A small but vocal group headed by Senator Orville H. Platt opposed any type of intervention. Senator Platt was convinced that U.S. meddling would lead to war. The senator further feared an independent Cuba would be incapable of ruling itself and would lapse into anarchy and continued strife and bloodshed.

The business community was also divided. Some favored immediate, vigorous action while others wanted only peace and stability to be reinstated as quickly as possible. At the time, continued Spanish rule seemed the fastest means to this end.

The expansionists saw their opportunity to advance their interests and called for an aggressive policy in order to advance American economic and strategic interests. They were not particularly interested in annexing or otherwise ruling Cuba but wanted Spain out of the Caribbean so that America could dominate the area and control trade and the southern approaches to the United States.

The Cleveland administration preferred not to intervene and encouraged Spain to grant meaningful reforms. Spain, at first, ignored these requests but finally in 1897 authorized a relaxation of some of its previous policies. The Cuban revolutionists were no longer satisfied by half-way measures and continued the war with their only goal as independence.

President McKinley came into office in 1897 on a platform calling for Cuban independence. McKinley moved slowly, however, and again appealed to Spain to provide a peaceful and proper solution. Next followed a series of events which destroyed any hope for a peaceful settlement and sent war

fever in the United States to a fever pitch. The New York Journal printed a private letter written by the Spanish Minister which was extremely critical of and insulting to President McKinley. This was followed shortly by the explosion of the USS Maine in Havana Harbor with a heavy loss of life.

The popular press of the day printed these stories in great detail and made repeated demands for war as the only way to salve the nation's pride. Congress caught the war fever and clamored for war. Spain, by now fearful of a war with the United States, informed the U.S. minister that hostilities would cease. McKinley, however, concerned with maintaining leadership sent a war message to Congress. To the Joint Resolution authorizing the use of armed forces, Congress added the Teller Amendment which disclaimed any imperialistic designs on Cuba.¹⁹

The "splendid little war" was enthusiastically prosecuted by Americans against superior but poorly trained and equipped Spanish forces. Within less than nine months, the war ended and the United States found itself the possessor of an empire. The battlefield glories rapidly faded with the sober realization of new and heavy responsibilities.

CHAPTER II
EMPIRE AND INTERVENTION

The Treaty of Paris concluded the war in December, 1898 and gave the United States the Phillipine Islands, Guam, Puerto Rico and the right to occupy Cuba for an indefinite period.²⁰

The treaty ending the war transferred the obligation to govern and protect life and property from Spain to the United States. No mention was made of Cuban independence nor in fact, was a Cuban representative invited to sign the document.²¹ The only legal basis upon which the United States established an occupation government, aside from the treaty with Spain, was the law of conquest, not consent of the Cuban people.

The United States set up a military government which faced the herculean task of bringing order out of the chaos left by Spain. Poverty, disease and illiteracy were rampant. The Cuban treasury was \$500 million in debt and could not pay for the most rudimentary services. Cubans with little experience in government often appeared bewildered and generally incompetent at effective organization. The military exercised autocratic and summary methods to make improvements. Sanitation laws were strictly enforced, courts and government departments were organized and established by decree, roads, schools and hospitals were rehabilitated.²² The ills of centuries were subjected to overnight cures. Many Cubans began to chafe under military rule for they soon felt, whatever the benefits, they were being denied self-determination.

²⁰Ibid., p. 105.

²¹David Healy, The United States in Cuba, 1898-1902 (Madison, Wisconsin, 1963), pp. 14-15.

²²Langley, p. 118.

The military government had been established as a means of providing a transition from colonial despotism to some form of self government for Cuba. The Teller Amendment while not specifically saying so, alluded that a Cuban republic would be established. Many Americans, including the military, had little hope that Cubans could govern themselves. This group felt annexation to be the only lasting answer and ingenious methods to circumvent the Teller Amendment were developed. Opponents of annexation argued the Teller Amendment had to be honored. Mahan, Roosevelt and others decried large scale annexation of colonies, but supported a plan to develop strategic naval bases and spheres of political and economic influence.

The result of these debates was the Platt Amendment developed by Senator Platt and Secretary of War Elihu Root. Root was especially concerned, in light of the Boxer Rebellion in China, that Cuba's government be stable and capable of protecting foreign lives and property. Inherent in the amendment was the belief that Cuba would not be able to achieve this goal without American guidance.

The Platt Amendment contained five salient features:

1. Cuba was not to sign any treaty which might impair her independence or grant special concessions to foreign powers without United States' permission.
2. The Cuban debt was to be maintained at a low level.
3. The United States would be permitted to intervene in Cuban affairs to protect independence and maintain stability.
4. Acts of the U.S. military government were to be ratified.
5. Sites for naval bases were to be sold or leased to the United States.²³

²³The Platt Amendment, 1902, U.S. Statutes at Large, XVI, pp. 897-898.

The Cuban constitutional convention rejected the intervention proposal and refused to incorporate it within the constitution. Root replied that U.S. rule would continue until such a guarantee were included but softened the blow by asserting that intervention would occur only in the event of foreign attack or in the event of anarchy. These qualifying statements were never incorporated into either Cuban or United States' laws thereby providing subsequent United States' administrations with a wide latitude of interpretation.²⁴

The Cubans were mollified, the Platt Amendment incorporated in the Cuban Constitution, elections held, and in 1902 President Tomás Estrada Palma took office and the American military occupation closed. Cuban independence was at last a reality albeit with some very strong strings attached. Perhaps the most important fact here is not that the United States maintained supervision over Cuban affairs but that independence was granted so quickly or even at all. At a time when imperialist expansion was endorsed and actively promoted by all major nations the United States, at least in part, placed freedom and self determination for Cuba ahead of empire. Whether such action was wise is an open question.

It is of interest at this point to note that United States' behavior toward each of its new possessions was different in each case. Guam was governed essentially as a military colony to provide a base for cable communications and naval operations in the Pacific. The Phillipine Islands, after the bloody insurrection which followed the American takeover, became a monument to American good works and good will and a model for colonial administration.²⁵ The Hawaiian Islands, which were annexed during the war,

²⁴ Russel H. Fitzgibbon, Cuba and the United States 1900-1935 (Menosha, Wisconsin, 1935), pp. 75-76.

²⁵ Samuel Flagg Bemis, A Diplomatic History of the United States (New York, 1965), p. 475.

were administered in a manner designed to prepare them for eventual statehood. Finally, Puerto Rico was governed by a unique arrangement by which the United States acting in concert with local leadership did away with colonial trappings and at the same time prevented rampant nationalism.

Generally speaking, these policies were successful and today these former colonies are relatively content with their political relationship to the United States. Only Cuba can be counted as a dismal failure and one cannot help but wonder if a different approach to Cuba would have brought different results. I shall not attempt to examine this question in the detail it deserves but will suggest only that the successful transplanting of democratic political institutions and their underlying philosophies require a great deal of time, patience and above all, mutual consent and cooperation. The United States gave to Cuba the form of democratic government but did not nurture the spirit. By seeing the Teller Amendment as a call for swift action, the United States gave independence to Cuba long before the new nation had assimilated the proper political and administrative skills.

In a larger sense the real question here is how does a modern, industrial nation which has major responsibility for a colony whose social, political and educational institutions do not measure up to self-government foster and develop self government? A very difficult question and even a cursory reading of the literature encompassing political administrative development will show there are precious few answers. Cultural, ethnic, social, economic and political factors all intertwine to form a complex web which serves to impede the assimilation of a foreign value system by a colony. The task is not impossible, of course; witness Puerto Rico, the

Phillipines or certain former British colonies. It would appear that various elements must be present to successfully develop an emerging nation. First among these vital factors must be the consent of the governed to establish and accept the political system in question. Second, mature, honest and vigorous political and administrative machinery must either be present or painstakingly developed. Finally, there must exist an atmosphere of close cooperation and rapport between the colony and the colonial power. On the social and economic levels there must not be condescension or financial pillage but instead there must be a sense of equal partnership toward a common goal.²⁶ Returning now to the Cuban story, we shall see that the United States made little headway in promoting any of these necessary ingredients for colonial success.

For the three decades following Cuban independence, the United States maintained close supervision over not only Cuba but the entire Caribbean. By establishing a comprehensive system of protectorates throughout the Caribbean the United States hoped to maintain its own security by denying an opportunity for European interference in Latin America. The assumption that trade and prosperity followed stability enhanced this policy. Employing economic and political pressure and occasionally military force, the United States kept peace in the Caribbean. Cuba, Panama, Nicaragua, Haiti and the Dominican Republic experienced intervention and at one time or another were American protectorates. It should be noted that in most cases when the United States intervened it was exercising a privilege granted by a formal agreement or complying with a request for aid by a Caribbean government.²⁷

²⁶For a fuller development of these concepts see Brewster C. Denny, "The United States and Puerto Rico: A Century of Success 1898-2000," Howard Law Journal, vol. 15 (Fall, 1968), pp. 70-87.

²⁷Frederico G. Gil, Latin American-United States Relations (New York, 1971), p. 89.

Intervention implies that a settlement between two factions cannot be resolved and therefore action of a third party is required. Someone then has to lose and the loser is not apt to feel friendship toward the outsider who caused his failure. By each act of intervention in Latin America, the United States regardless of its motives, developed a large bloc of anti-American sentiment.

Within Cuba, however, the problem was even more sensitive. Intervention in Cuba would be damned for its own sake but also because the United States appeared to be reneging on the spirit of 1898. The Teller Amendment committed the United States to the establishment of a free and independent Cuba; The Platt Amendment conversely not only weakened the 1898 pledge but was a statement of blatant colonialism.

From the American point of view, it could be argued the amendment was necessary to protect a small, weak nation lacking essential political skills, located in a strategic position and producing a crop valuable to many nations. The other side of the coin, however, shows over protection and smothering paternalism leads to dependence and retards development. What to Americans appeared as generous and friendly help was seen by Cubans as forced denial of their right to self government.

Cuban politicians while, almost to a man, loudly opposing American intervention, soon learned to use it to their advantage. By cautious reference to possible intervention they were often able to manipulate events to their liking. The United States was often portrayed as the villain in order to attain political advantage.²⁸

It was not long after its establishment that the Cuban republic ran into trouble. The first President, Estrada Palma was in 1905, re-elected

²⁸Wriston, p. 15.

to a second term. The opposition parties refused to recognize the election for several complex political reasons and rebelled. President Theodore Roosevelt promptly sent William Howard Taft, Secretary of War, to mediate. Negotiations were not successful and Palma resigned along with his entire cabinet. Roosevelt appointed Charles Magoon to act as military governor. He was backed by 7,600 United States Marines. Magoon attempted reorganization of the Cuban government to make it more capable of solving Cuba's many problems. His administration, however, was marked by political patronage for his supporters and corrupt profiteering.²⁹ Future Cubans would view Magoon with contempt and blame him and the United States for the tradition of corrupt politics in Cuba.

The government was returned to the Cubans in 1909 with the election of José Miguel Gomez. Shortly thereafter, a negro revolt broke out and though it was quickly squelched, United States Marines were again landed to protect American citizens.

In 1917, The Liberal Party disputed the election of President Mario Menocal after he had previously promised not to seek re-election. Charging corruption and unfair voting procedures the Liberals requested United States intervention and threatened open revolt. The United States, wishing to neutralize possible German use of Cuba to spy on American ship movements was vitally interested in maintaining Cuban cooperation. Menocal, moved swiftly to counter the Liberal's revolt and then appealed to the United States for intervention on the basis of supporting a government which protected American lives and property. The United States responded by landing 2,600 Marines which ensured Menocal's tenure in office. Menocal in turn, allowed agents

²⁹Kalman H. Silvert, "A Hemispheric Perspective," in Cuba and the United States, ed. John Plank, p. 129.

of the Departments of War, Justice and Navy to operate in Cuba in order to apprehend German agents.³⁰ Secretary of the Navy, Josephus Daniels, who is remembered in the United States Navy for other reasons, wrote in his diary that American power had put Menocal back in office when he had been rejected at the polls.³¹

Weary of Cuban election disputes and philosophically opposed to armed intervention, President Wilson upon completion of World War I, sent Enoch Crowder to Cuba to supervise the establishment of a democratic, legal and workable election procedure. This move ended military intervention and initiated the "preventive policy" which was designed to negate the need for armed force to maintain Cuban tranquility.³² Crowder installed an election system modeled after that of the United States but President Menocal quickly found loopholes which allowed him to suppress his enemies and remain in power.

In 1921, Crowder returned to Cuba as personal representative of the president and all but arranged the election of Alfredo Zayas as president. Crowder remained in Cuba as United States Ambassador and used every opportunity to lecture the new president on the need for responsible government.

Regardless of Wilson's and Crowder's attempts, Cuban politics continued to be venal, corrupt and fraudulent. Gerardo Machado's election in 1924 appeared, however, to reflect some of Crowder's efforts at reform. Unlike previous elections, the opposition abided by the results and disturbances

³⁰Langley, p. 132.

³¹E. David Cronan, ed., The Cabinet Diaries of Josephus Daniels, 1913-1921 (Lincoln, Nebraska, 1963), p. 106.

³²Langley, p. 139.

were minimal. Machado campaigned on an anti-American platform which attacked the Platt Amendment and expressed resentment toward the United States Naval Station at Guantanamo Bay. Machado quickly took firm hold of the government and for the moment he appeared to be the strong, benevolent ruler so badly needed in Cuba. Because Machado provided stability and therefore protection to American investments, his anti-American statements caused no real concern in the United States. Machado was a stockholder in several American firms and this knowledge gave security to United States businessmen. Machado's consolidation of power met with political opposition and this he crushed by brutal means. Secret police, assassinations, torture and terror were employed by Machado to retain control. Between 1930 and 1933, student riots, bombings and political assassinations threw Cuba into complete discord.³³

Since 1917, the United States had refrained from armed intervention in favor of diplomatic and economic pressures in dealing with Latin America. Wilson's "Preventive Policy" and a revival of Secretary Root's interpretation of the Platt Amendment committed the United States to non-interference. On the other hand, it appeared that only firm external force could maintain political stability in Cuba. Caught in this dilemma, the State Department took little action against Machado except to advise he moderate his methods. To oppressed Cubans who were hoping for intervention, this inaction was considered to be tacit approval of Machado by the United States.

Recently elected President Franklin D. Roosevelt in his inaugural address of 1933 briefly mentioned that America's foreign policy would henceforth be that of the "good neighbor." This phrase would shortly become

³³Ibid., pp. 145-149.

the herald of a dramatically new policy toward Cuba and all of Latin America. The Good Neighbor Policy was in effect, a public admission that intervention had not proved a successful means to maintaining peace and political stability in the Western Hemisphere. The policy became an overt attempt by the United States to regain respect, trust and friendship in Latin America.

The continuing turmoil and discord in Cuba became the first test for Roosevelt and his new policy. The strategic and especially commercial value of Cuba during the world depression was not lost on Roosevelt and he placed the value of a settlement in Cuba above any idealism regarding absolute non-intervention.

Under Secretary of State Sumner Welles was sent to Cuba as Ambassador with instructions to negotiate a commercial treaty which would bolster the Cuban economy and offer United States' mediation between the warring political factions. Welles at first, supported Machado as the only hope to regain order but became disenchanted when Machado refused to liberalize his regime. Welles decided that only Machado's departure would bring an end to the general chaos. With the weight of the United States behind him, Welles informed the dictator he must step down. Machado refused but as strikes and demonstrations continued unabated and having used the last of his political resources, he at last fled the country.³⁴

A coalition government was formed by Dr. Carlos de Cespedes but was unable to overcome opposition from various factions and soon collapsed. Welles requested United States troops be landed but Roosevelt declined on the grounds that any United States' support would appear to be approval of

³⁴Smith, What Happened in Cuba? pp. 194-195.

that government by Washington.³⁵

Grau San Martin next formed a government, but like his predecessors, could not unite the nation. Grau appealed to the United States for recognition but this was withheld on Welles' recommendation. Finally, in 1934, Juan Fulgencio Batista surfaced as the man most likely to placate the various political groups and bring strong, stable government to Cuba.

Welles informed Batista that the United States had no partiality in the contest for power but would welcome any government which could establish order and safeguard life and property. Following this statement, Batista backed by the army, compelled Grau to resign. Carlos Mendieta was installed as President with Batista's blessing and within five days, the United States recognized the Cuban government.³⁶ Batista would dominate the Cuban scene for the next 25 years whether in office or out. Years later, lack of United States' intervention would be credited with paving the way for Batistas' dictatorship.

With a viable government finally in control, the Roosevelt administration began to dismantle the old interventionist policy. In May, 1934, came a new treaty which abolished the Platt Amendment. The only legacy from the days of empire was an agreement to continue the naval base at Guantanamo.³⁷

Intervention and the Platt Amendment are blamed for many contemporary problems the United States now faces in Latin America. Several opinions exist which seek to explain why the United States followed such a policy of interference in another nation's internal affairs. One argument holds that the American government sought to insure easy access for private capital into the island, another explanation stresses the vital necessity of protecting the Panama Canal and to prevent European powers from gaining a colonial

³⁵ Ibid., p. 201.

³⁶ Langley, p. 159.

foothold in the weak republics of the Caribbean.

The historian and Latin American expert Dana G. Munro, suggests that although many unwise decisions were made, the United States' policies were grounded in a sincere and honest desire to promote political and economic conditions that would prevent discord and anarchy and thus protect America's interests. He notes that with the exception of Cuba, little American money followed the flag into the "banana republics."³⁸

For a nation to interfere in another's affairs presupposes three important points. The first being that the intervenor has the necessary power to make its desires obeyed. The second is the assumption that might makes right and the intervening nation has superior knowledge and ability lacking in its victim. Third, the intervenor feels it knows what is right for the other. By being big enough to impose its will, the United States rationalized that it knew better than Cuba or other Caribbean nations what was best for them.

Power, of course, cannot stifle resentment and anger, and will most likely foster them. Nations of the Caribbean, as they shook off the years of Spanish colonialism and began to develop national identities, bitterly denounced the United States for not allowing them to gain political maturity according to their own precepts.

The Platt Amendment may have been conceived as an altruistic device to aid and protect an impoverished and inexperienced Cuba. The amendment may also have been necessary to protect the national security of the United States in 1903. Regardless of its virtues, however, it soon became a hated symbol of American paternalism and a yoke about the necks of both Cuba and the United

³⁸Dana G. Munro, Intervention and Dollar Diplomacy (Princeton, 1964), pp. 530-546.

States. Assuming the amendment was required, it would have been an easier pill to swallow had a time limit been established. Cubans would then have known when their "tutelage" would end. Perhaps, rather than relying on American help when things went awry, the Cubans would have made more serious, honest attempts to establish governmental institutions responsive to the nation's needs.

By abrogation of the Platt Amendment the United States gained a great deal of good will in Latin America. Roosevelt would become more highly esteemed than any other American in the Southern Hemisphere due to his policy of "hands off" the affairs of other nations.

CHAPTER III

COMMERCE

The political record is only a part of Cuba's history. Intertwined with the political turmoil is a long, complex story of commercial and economic events. Parallel to the rise of intervention was the economic involvement of United States capital in Cuba. In 1910, the American Minister in Cuba wrote

"Americans generally are not liked in Cuba because most of those who come here (tourists excepted) wish to make money and to develop the country on American lines..."³⁹

The search for Cuban markets constituted an important part of American policy in the nineteenth century. Businessmen and farmers cursed the stifling Spanish regulations which prevented the importation of American goods into Cuba. Investors sought to speculate in the sugar industry and policy makers stressed the value of free trade between Cuba and the United States as a means to economic and political maturity. Just prior to the war of 1898, Spanish mercantile policies were bitterly attacked and blamed for the poverty and backwardness of the island. Cuba was considered to be a rich treasure chest which could only be opened by wise use of American capital. James Boyce in 1902, observed

"No better field for the expenditure of capital could be wished for. Under a wise and firm government and in the hands of an energetic race, it might attain to a very high measure of prosperity."⁴⁰

Upon assuming responsibility for Cuba's political direction, the United States also found itself faced with the task of shoring up the island's faltering economics. At the end of the Spanish-American War, Cuba's sugar

³⁹Langley, p. 132.

⁴⁰James Bryce, "Some Reflections on the State of Cuba," North American Review, vol. 174 (April, 1902), p. 453.

industry lay in shambles. Possessing no large, salable crop, the nation faced bankruptcy. A reciprocal trade treaty in 1902 reduced the United States' tariff on Cuban sugar and in return, American goods received like consideration in Cuba. The treaty was vigorously opposed by United States' beet sugar interests but President Roosevelt gave his full support and after a year of debate the treaty was ratified.⁴¹

Assured of a market, the Cuban sugar industry recovered and by 1911, the United States imported almost all its sugar from Cuba. Sugar production by World War I reached a point where the United States could no longer consume it all and the surplus caused a search for other markets. The war created an increased demand for sugar and Cuba further enlarged sugar production. When the war ended, the bubble burst and Cuba again faced disaster as the price of sugar fell. American firms such as Hershey Chocolate Company, Hires Root Beer, Loft Candy and American Refinery Company expanded their ownership of Cuban sugar refineries and plantations and soon dominated the industry.⁴²

American businessmen swarmed to the island and penetrated into all facets of the economy. American investments increased from \$220,000,000 in 1913 to \$1,590,000 in 1929. American owned sugar mills produced 48.4 percent of the crop in 1920 and by 1928, Americans controlled 70-75 percent of the industry.⁴³

Other enterprises also attracted American capital. International Telephone and Telegraph controlled the Cuban Telephone Company. The main railroads were in American hands and monopolized transportation of American imports.

⁴¹Smith, The United States and Cuba, p. 24.

⁴²Ibid., pp. 29-30.

⁴³Ibid., p. 29.

Large American banks did a brisk business in commercial loans and greatly influenced the flow of capital.⁴⁴

The American entrepreneurs formed powerful economic interest groups which greatly favored "gunboat" diplomacy as a means of ensuring peace and stability in Cuba and all of Latin America. These businessmen firmly believed that American business activity in Latin America was of vital concern to the prosperity of the United States. These concepts had great influence on American thinking and contributed to the formulation of American foreign policy. Businessmen not only embraced these views as a philosophical argument but also made every effort to make them known to the United States' government.

It was not until 1934 that Congress consented to renegotiation of the trade treaty. Until that time, Cuban trade was dependent upon the vagaries of the world sugar market and the American economic scene. Bankruptcy became a common event in Cuba and American capital began to retreat. By 1933, United States' imports of Cuban goods dropped by 20 percent from a high of 83.3 percent in 1924. After 1929, Cuban sugar exports to the United States dropped sharply both in value and quantity.⁴⁵

Franklin Roosevelt had a vested interest in getting the Cuban economy back on its feet. The 1902 Reciprocity Treaty was to economic colonialism what the Platt Amendment had been to the political scene. Also with the depression, Roosevelt was obliged to find means by which the American economy could be stimulated. Many business and manufacturing groups laid great stress on the importance of foreign trade as the keystone to recovery. Cuba appeared as a ready made opportunity to expand United States' foreign trade and simultaneously to further implement the Good Neighbor Policy.

⁴⁴ Ibid., p. 31.

⁴⁵ Ibid., pp. 32-33.

The commercial treaty of 1934 not only reduced the tariff on Cuban sugar but also established a quota system. By this device it was hoped Cuban dependence on the United States would be lessened and a stimulus to search out new markets would be provided. In return, Cuba was to lower tariffs on many American goods and reduce internal taxes on American products.⁴⁶

A further step to enhance Cuban-American relations was establishment of the Second Import-Export Bank. The purpose of the bank was two-fold: One was to provide assistance to the Cuban government to overcome its financial crises and the other to enable American exporters to acquire long term loans and thereby stimulate foreign trade.⁴⁷ American and Cuban business interests were generally happy with the New Deal's political and economic solutions. American exports to Cuba began to increase steadily and the total value of these imports rose from \$22.7 million in 1933 to \$147.1 million in 1945. By 1950, the United States provided 80.7 percent of all Cuban imports and in turn, purchased 69 percent of Cuba's exports.⁴⁸

Cuba also prospered and began some diversification of industry. Leather, shoes, textiles, fibers and paper were manufactured. Other products were fertilizer, cement, flour and cattle feed. The cattle, sheep and poultry ranches were expanded to the point where Cuba became self sufficient in these foodstuffs.⁴⁹

⁴⁶Ibid., pp. 158-159.

⁴⁷Ibid., pp. 161-162.

⁴⁸Ibid., p. 166.

⁴⁹Wriston, p. 28.

On the surface at least, Cuba became a happy, prosperous nation with great potential for developing into a modern, industrial nation. Hidden from view, however, were social and economic problems which had caused unrest before and would again when they surfaced in 1959.

One of the more glaring problems was the extreme poverty of the masses. In 1945, 7.9 percent of the "farms" occupied 71.1 percent of the land. Conversely, 69.6 percent of the farms occupied only 11.2 percent of all the farm land. Over 200,000 families were reported to own no land at all and these workers rarely worked more than three months a year. The majority of Cubans lived in poverty in a rich land where only a small minority owned the wealth. Of this minority, many were Americans and Cubans recognized this fact. Many Cubans felt their country had become once again, a colony of the United States and they began to harbor anti-American sentiment.⁵⁰

Batista in the 1930's, played the roll of "king maker." Presidents came and went at the pleasure of Batista. He remained head of the "revolution" and supreme chief of the armed forces.⁵¹ Presenting himself as a champion of political orderliness and socio-economic reforms, Batista sponsored child labor laws, a minimum wage, eight hour work days, paid vacations and the right to strike. The Constitution of 1940, enacted after Batista became president, gave further promise of social and economic reform. The minimum wage law was expanded, social security extended to more people and the principle of equal pay for equal work adopted. There were also provisions for limiting foreign ownership of land and vague reference to land reform.⁵²

⁵⁰Smith, The United States and Cuba, pp. 175-176.

⁵¹Carleton Beals, "New Machado in Cuba," Nation, vol. 141 (August 7, 1935) p. 152.

⁵²Langley, p. 162.

Batista' presence was recognized as a force for political stability by the United States. Although some of the nationalistic and reformist ideals he espoused were worrisome to United States' investors, it soon became clear that talk of land reform or expropriation of foreign holdings was meant only for local consumption. The Roosevelt administration also promised to withdraw economic aid should American investments not be properly protected.⁵³

Batista left office in 1944 after losing the election to Grau San Martin in an upset. Grau and his predecessor Prió Socarrás were not, however, able to establish effective government. Every plan seemed to fail.

In 1952, Batista staged a bloodless coup and regained the presidential palace. His return to power was generally welcomed as he was equated with political stability, prosperity and protection. American capital continued to dominate the scene although United States' ownership of the sugar industry did decrease to approximately 33 percent.

Cuba appeared as the realization of all the promise and benefits of capitalism. The nation was politically stable and offered protection to foreign investments in an expanding market. Tourism flourished and Havana night life became world famous. A Department of Commerce bulletin praised the harbors, highways and railroads and other industrial developments of Cuba and stated its people had "one of the highest standards of living in Latin America."⁵⁴

⁵³ Cuba's Constitution," Business Week (October 12, 1940), pp. 63-64.

⁵⁴ United States Department of Commerce, Investment in Cuba: Basic Information for United States Businessmen (Washington, 1956), pp. 5-6.

Beneath this glittering facade was a dissatisfied revolutionary movement that would disavow the Cuban-American relationship and seek political and social reformation. This force would be led by Fidel Castro.⁵⁵

⁵⁵ Phillip W. Bonsal, "Cuba, Castro and the United States," Foreign Affairs, XLV (January, 1967), p. 265.

CHAPTER IV

FIDEL CASTRO

Castro began his revolutionary career in 1953 with an ill planned raid on the Moncada army barracks. The scheme called for taking the post and winning popular acclaim and support to unseat Batista. The raid failed and Castro was imprisoned. During his trial, he made his famous "History Will Absolve Me" speech in which he recounted the poverty and servitude of the Cuban people and the graft and corruption of the Batista government. He condemned Batista for ignoring the reform provisions of the 1940 Constitution and promised to inaugurate land reform and profit sharing for sugar workers and to confiscate illegal land holdings.⁵⁶

In 1954, Batista, feeling his control of Cuba was complete and wishing to demonstrate that Cuba was democratic, decided to grant amnesty to political prisoners. Castro and his followers were freed and departed for Mexico. Castro returned in 1956 leading a small invasion force into Oriente Province. Batista's troops soon routed the invaders and only Castro and eleven of his men found sanctuary in the Sierra Maestras.

Castro carried out an effective, relentless guerilla campaign. Communication lines were cut, cane fields burned and government buildings bombed. Batista decided Castro was a threat and went so far as to proclaim him dead. Herbert L. Matthews of the New York Times disproved this by interviewing Castro in the Sierra Maestras. Batista now began ruthless measures to defeat the rebels. Stories of murder and mutilation committed by Batista's police became common and international sympathy for the guerrillas began to swell.

⁵⁶ Fidel Castro, History Will Absolve Me (New York, 1961), pp. 33-39.

The United States found itself embarrassed as it became obvious the millions of dollars of military aid given Batista were not being used for hemispheric defense but instead were employed against the guerrillas. In many quarters, this was considered as United States' approval of Batista's regime.

An arms embargo was declared by the United States and the U.S. Ambassador was instructed to express complete neutrality. Wary of Castro and repelled by Batista's excesses, the State Department sent a secret emissary, William D. Pawley, to Cuba. His instructions were to attempt to convince Batista to resign and in his place appoint a junta of military officers who were opposed to both Batista and Castro. The plan failed, however, because Pawley was not authorized to promise the full support of the the United States government.⁵⁷

Castro's movement gained momentum and received strong support from the middle class who had by now lost faith with Batista because of the graft and intolerance of the dictator. On January 1, 1959, Castro triumphantly entered Havana and Batista fled the country.

The United States promptly recognized the new government and prepared to do business as usual. As time progressed, however, it became apparent that this revolution was more than a typical garden variety rebellion staged by political malcontents. The Castro regime proclaimed instead, a social revolution and took immediate steps to implement widesweeping reforms.

During 1959, ten hospitals were built, hundreds of miles of roads constructed, thousands of low cost houses built and numerous schools erected.

⁵⁷ Earl T. Smith, The Fourth Floor (New York, 1962), pp. 20, 166-167.

Graft and corruption in government was routed out and a crackdown on gambling and crime in the major cities was commenced.⁵⁸

The more controversial acts of the Cuban government were its policies in regard to business and agrarian reforms. American businessmen were wary of Castro but many hoped he would make nationalistic and reformist statements, much like his predecessor, and when after his power was consolidated, revert to a more cordial and cooperative government. By June 1959, however, it was evident that Castro intended to reduce drastically economic dependence on the United States and that sweeping land reforms were coming.⁵⁹

In April of 1959, Castro journeyed to the United States. His exact reasons are not clear but there is some evidence he came seeking a loan after having been turned down by the International Monetary Fund.⁶⁰ Possibly he hoped for the Eisenhower administration to offer economic aid. In this way he could have his money yet not appear to be a petitioner subservient to the United States.

President Eisenhower was deeply suspicious of Castro's politics and refused to meet him for fear such a meeting would infer United States' approval of a government which many felt had very close ties to international communism.⁶¹ Thus rebuked, Castro nevertheless appeared before a select committee

⁵⁸ Harry B. Murkland, "Cuba: The Evolution of Revolution," Current History, vol. 38 (March, 1960), p. 130.

⁵⁹ Smith, The United States and Cuba, p. 177.

⁶⁰ William A. Williams, United States, Cuba and Castro (New York, 1962), p. 100.

⁶¹ Dwight D. Eisenhower, The White House Years: Waging Peace, 1956-1961 (Garden City, 1965), p. 523.

of the United States Congress and attempted to explain the goals and purposes of the revolution. He received little meaningful support or sympathy. It would appear now with the passage of time and in light of past events that this trip was the last opportunity for the United States and Cuba to establish some form of rapport and maintain friendly although perhaps strained relations.

The next several months saw Castro's popularity and reputation as a democratic leader of an oppressed people fade. Showcase trials of Batista's henchmen complete with jeering throngs in an atmosphere of mast-head justice disgusted Americans who were more accustomed to the orderliness of Anglo-Saxon jurisprudence. New Cuban laws nationalizing foreign owned businesses compounded United States' distrust of Castro and confirmed the worst fears that Cuba was taking an anti-American stance in the Cold War.

Cuban-American relations deteriorated rapidly from this point on. The United States government protested the expropriations on the grounds the nationalization laws violated international law. Castro replied by taking another \$5 million worth of American owned land.⁶²

Castro next struck a bargain with Moscow. The agreement to purchase Cuban sugar appeared to be the solution to Cuba's sagging economy but the Russians insisted payment would be primarily in trade rather than hard cash and the agreed price was lower than what the United States paid. This deal was received with outrage in the United States but to many Latin Americans it appeared as a sincere effort to seek new markets and end economic dependence on the United States.⁶³

⁶²Smith, The United States and Cuba, p. 178.

⁶³Maurice Zeitlin and Robert Scheer, Cuba: Tragedy in Our Hemisphere (New York, 1963), p. 184.

American owned oil companies were next seized by Castro when they refused (after consultation with the Secretary of the Treasury) to process Soviet oil. President Eisenhower retaliated by suspending the Cuban sugar quota. Castro served the United States another defeat by expropriating the American sugar mills.⁶⁴

Tit-for-tat diplomacy finally ended in early January 1960 when Castro ordered the United States embassy to reduce its size to eleven persons. Shortly thereafter, President Eisenhower announced the termination of diplomatic relations.⁶⁵

One final event remained to complete the humiliation of the United States and underscore its failure to successfully pursue its own interests in the Caribbean. Ambassador Phillip W. Bonsal writes

In April 1961, 1500 brave Cubans, selected, equipped, trained, financed, transported, misled and eventually (the survivors) ransomed by us, landed at the Bay of Pigs as the major element in an enterprise to free their 7,000,000 compatriots from Castro's military and security apparatus of something over 100,000 comparatively well prepared men and women. That fiasco, in conjunction with our replacement by Soviet Russia as Cuba's major economic partner consolidated Castro's position. After the Bay of Pigs, the regime became so strong internally that even the missile crisis of October 1962, revealing as it did, the true relative dimensions of the partners in the Castro-Khrushchev dialogue, failed to shake it.⁶⁶

Thus was Cuba lost from the sphere of American influence. William Appleman Williams states unequivocally that no true understanding of recent Cuban-American relations is possible unless we accept the fact "that Cuba was ours to lose."⁶⁷ Although the degree to which American foreign policy

⁶⁴ Bonsal, pp. 272-273.

⁶⁵ Eisenhower, pp. 613-614.

⁶⁶ Bonsal, p. 274 (Underlining mine).

⁶⁷ Williams, p. 1.

contributed to its own downfall is open to argument it is nonetheless, difficult to argue that Cuba was not, in fact, an American colony from 1895 to 1959. The Platt Amendment and the Reciprocal Trade Treaty of 1902 are fact and regardless of their good intentions, the United States did interfere in the activities of a supposedly sovereign nation. If American policies had no greater overall effect than the generation of deep resentment toward the United States, then the United States must share a certain part of the guilt for the tragedy of Cuba. By performing in such a manner so as to leave its motives open to question, the United States allowed itself to become Castro's whipping boy. Castro had but to revive all the old clichés of political and economic colonialism and point to past military intervention in order to rally the Cuban people to his cause.

The fact that Castro has joined the Communist movement or that he has established a totalitarian government in violation of his promise to restore the Constitution of 1940 and hold free elections does not absolve United States' behavior. Had United States' policy during 61 years of stewardship recognized the gross social, economic and political inequalities and made some honest effort at reform, perhaps Fidel Castro would not have had an opportunity to build his repugnant regime at our very doorstep. We must not, however, believe that if United States policies had been different there would be no present problem in Cuba. To believe so assumes omnipotence on the part of the United States. This of course, is absurd because for all our virtuosness and power we cannot change a national psyche. If the United States had acted with the wisdom of Solomon, the unwisdom of Cubans may have counteracted our efforts.



The foreign policy of the United States in regard to Cuba and indeed much of the world, has been ambivalent to change. The twentieth century has brought an awakening of nationalistic movements, demand for cultural change, quest for higher living standards and a profound desire to escape from political and economic subordination to industrialized nations. Change has been the very keystone of the century.

While professing commitment to the ideal of self determination, the United States has often tended to support the status quo. The United States has often enshrined stability in time of rapid change and as a result, Cuba and other nations of Asia, Africa and Latin America look elsewhere for support and leadership.

One of the major factors behind this status quo policy is the international business interests of the United States. Political revolutions against dictators are generally supported by the United States. In the twentieth century, however, these revolutions often encompass social and economic changes and when these changes threaten substantial economic interests the ardent support of the United States often tends to fade. Emerging nations in order to quickly end economic domination often resort to expropriation of foreign holdings. Since the advancement and protection of overseas business is a major concern of the United States government such revolutions have been eyed with a great deal of concern.

There is nothing wrong in America having overseas business interests. Such activities are vital to this nation's welfare and often provide valuable economic assistance to other nations. The problem, which is difficult to resolve, is that protection of economic interests often conflicts with the national ideal of self determination. In many instances, and Cuba

in particular, the United States has opted to protect business holdings through preservation of the political status quo. By ignoring the aspirations, needs and problems of the Cuban people, the United States not only lost their respect and friendship but also, eventually, large economic holdings. But, by far, the greatest loss has been in terms of international prestige.

Positive policies of economic aid and active support for social and economic reform provide an alternative to complete loss of economic holdings and Communist domination. There can be no guarantee that such a program would be 100 percent effective but it does appear to be a much more realistic scheme than blindly branding any movement that threatens the "way things are" as immoral or illegal. We shouldn't forget the American Revolution was not exactly legal in the eyes of the English.

Such a proposal does not mean the United States should acquiesce and submit to every disgruntled revolutionist who comes on the scene. It does mean we may have to suffer short term economic set-backs in order to retain long term friendship. Friendship is not an end in itself. The United States must determine where its strategic, economic and political interests lie and with these nations it must make every effort to gain a perfect knowledge of the problems and aspirations of its people. Armed with this information, it should be possible to formulate policies which would not only protect American interests (in the long run) but also succor that nation's desires without humiliating or denigrating the prestige of the United States.

What is so tragic in the story of Cuban-American relations is that regardless of events, the United States is not an imperialistic nation. The State Department does not want to run Cuba (the CIA may be a different matter)

nor does it have aggressive designs. If it did, Cuba could have been a commonwealth or even a state years ago. The basic problem with Cuba has not been evil intent on the part of the United States but rather a profound misunderstanding of values coupled with the smug certainty that the ideals of democracy, capitalism and progress were the cure for all ills regardless of the setting.

CHAPTER V

PROGNOSIS

Regardless of past policy failure, Communist conspiracies, Castro's xenophobia or any number of other excuses, the fact remains that Cuba is ruled by a dictatorial demagogue whose presence is an embarrassment to the United States and a potential threat to national security. The problem now is to determine where our national interests lie in relation to Cuba and then seek alternative solutions to promote those interests. The real question is how do we now deal with Castro?

Cuba is aligned with a foreign power that is dedicated to the destruction of American democracy. Soviet military personnel serve in advisory capacities to Cuba's sizeable, well trained, well equipped army. Soviet Russia has attempted to capitalize on the geographic position of the island to alter the world balance of power by neutralizing some of the strategic advantages the United States has enjoyed in overseas bases and missile strength.

Cuba's armed forces of course, regardless of their strength or ability, pose little threat to the United States. In a conventional war, Cuba could at best, provide a diversionary effort. The island could be easily neutralized but not without cost of lives and equipment. In terms of nuclear war, the island's location gives Russia the advantage of dispersal for its weapon systems. Close proximity to the United States gives an added advantage in that relatively cheap, more accurate, short range or intermediate range missiles may be effectively deployed against the United States. The missile crisis dramatically demonstrated that it is possible to secretly transport and emplace nuclear missiles. In a one shot nuclear war, such missiles could have devastating results for the United States. In this context, the island has assumed major strategic importance.

The potential military use of the island is, however, far overshadowed by the political and psychological significance of a communist bastion in the Western Hemisphere. Within Latin America, Castro has caused fear of spreading communism but at the same time, generated respect for his defiance of the United States and a healthy regard for Russian power.

There are many uses to which Cuba could be put by the Russians: Missile base, naval base, intelligence center, tracking station and base for subversion come readily to mind. Already Cuba has experimented with many of these employments. As a base for subversion, Cuba has been successful in supplying men and equipment to cause trouble in the Dominican Republic, Venezuela, Panama, Bolivia and Chile. It is in this regard that Cuba poses its greatest threat to Latin America. Any attempt at large scale military invasion of another nation could be easily thwarted by the United States but covert infiltration of propaganda, sabotage and guerrillas is almost impossible to control.

For use by the United States, Cuba has little to offer. Guantanamo Bay (Gitmo) is presently used for fleet refresher training and could easily be replaced by Roosevelt Roads, Puerto Rico. As a base for long range patrol or for staging troops and equipment for Latin America deployment, Florida or Puerto Rico offer equal facilities. The island's time honored role of protecting the Panama Canal would be meaningless in a nuclear war and very minor in conventional conflict involving aircraft carriers and submarines. The proposed sea-level canal would further obviate any need for perimeter defense.

The Cuban situation even if exploited to its fullest, could probably not effect the world balance of power. The strategic power of the United

States does not depend on what happens in Cuba. A strong Soviet military power in Cuba could, however, divert sizeable segments of United States' military forces and the island could become a political pawn in, for instance, another Berlin crisis.⁶⁸ Cuba is not necessary to the United States as a base but in order to preclude future alarms and veiled threats to United States' security, Cuba should be denied as a base to a potential enemy.

From a commercial viewpoint, Cuba has no overpowering value. After all, the United States has lived successfully for several years without benefit of Cuban trade. There is no denying that access to Cuban markets would be welcomed by United States' business, a market is a market, and businessmen and the United States' government are keenly aware that expansion is one answer to declining profits and restoration of a favorable trade balance.

Future mercantile transactions could not approach pre-Castro levels. Russian, British, French and Chinese products have been pouring into Cuba for years and it is not reasonable to believe that these goods or their spare parts could be completely replaced by United States' products. Cuban sugar has long been replaced by Latin American and United States' sources. If Cuban sugar were to again be available, the United States could not purchase amounts equal to pre-1959 levels without alienating our present suppliers. Since sugar remains the major cash product of Cuba, whoever purchases the majority of Cuban sugar will also most probably be the major supplier of commodities to Cuba.

Finally it would not seem likely that American investors would again gamble large sums in a nation with Cuba's history of expropriation and debt

⁶⁸ Hanson W. Baldwin, "A Military Perspective," in Cuba and the United States, ed. John Plank, p. 222.

repudiation. Even if American business was willing, we cannot gauge how readily Cubans would accept United States' investment after years of a "Cuba-si - Yanqui no" national philosophy.

The importance of Cuba then is not so much what it is but what it represents. Americans, unlike most Europeans, are not used to hostile neighbors. We shudder to think of an "enemy" just ninety miles away. Whether that "enemy" has any viable threat potential does not really matter. Cuba and Castro represent a foreign intrusion into an area which Americans have historically felt was their own. For this reason alone, Americans will not be quick to forgive, or seek reconciliation with Cuba.

There are too many variables to make any specific speculation about the future of Cuba a profitable exercise. An assassin's bullet would throw Cuba into chaos. Or a serious split among the government hierarchy could weaken the regime's strength to near impotence. Should the Soviet Union change its policy of supplying Cuba, Castro may be forced to renegotiate his relations with the United States and Latin America in order to survive.

Within the Caribbean, Cuba is the most viable nation state. By virtue of her geographic size, population, military strength and agricultural potential she is the only unit, with the possible exception of Puerto Rico, which makes any real sense as an independent nation. The remaining nations of the area while possessing desire, strong nationalistic tendencies and in some cases, competent leadership, simply do not have the necessary size, economic potential or population to be meaningful members of the international community. If this be true, then Cuba can be expected to eventually assert her position as a leader in the Caribbean. To some extent, this has already been tried via the active, though generally ineffective

attempts to export Cuban politics. When the euphoria of a successful revolution wears off and Cuba finally realizes she is again a colony (of the USSR) it might be expected that Cuba will make an effort to rejoin the Caribbean community in some sort of regional alliance. Some form of Caribbean "common market" or a regional political body may benefit the Caribbean nations. United action by a heterogenous collection of nations is difficult to attain but one must only look at the European Common Market to see a model of what can be done.

In a speech on March 25, 1964, Senator J. William Fulbright listed three options for dealing with Castro and Cuba: invasion, economic boycott or acceptance of Castro as a disagreeable reality.⁶⁹ None of these alternatives appear to be either practical or possible.

Unilateral armed intervention is no longer a plausible choice. Such action would be in violation of the Charter of the Organization of American States and would also be a renunciation of America's pledge not to invade Cuba. Such a pledge was given to the U.S.S.R. in return for Soviet withdrawal of offensive missiles in 1962. Moreover, such intervention would most certainly be interpreted as an aggressive act by the Latin American nations and would bring condemnation from the Afro-Asian bloc. Regardless of our military power, invasion is no longer a viable instrument of foreign policy unless it is performed with devastating finality.

Economic boycott has not proved to be effective. England, France and Canada who are numbered among our allies have continued to trade with Cuba in defiance of United States' wishes. The support of the Soviet Union, of course, has prevented disaster within Cuba and effectively nullified the

⁶⁹J. William Fulbright, "Old Myths, New Realities," Congressional Quarterly Weekly Report, vol. 22, (April 3, 1964), pp. 661-662.

United States' boycott. Fulbright's use of the word "acceptance" seems to imply some stronger action than simply recognizing that Castro exists. The implication is that America's third option is to actively and materially deal with the Cuban government. Such a policy, if initiated by the United States, would certainly be viewed in Latin America as weakness and humiliating defeat for the United States.

There is yet another policy option available to Washington's policy makers. Rapprochement with the major communist powers is currently a popular mode of foreign policy even though substantive results are not yet clear. Several factors, such as the expected gains and losses, methods of initiating rapprochement and Castro's reaction to such a move must be carefully considered before embarking upon such a course.

On the plus side of the ledger it would seem that an accord with Castro would remove a source of potential friction between the United States and the Soviet Union. Second, in terms of hemispheric solidarity, the agricultural and industrial potential of Cuba is of inestimable value to the development of some form of Caribbean trade or even political alliance. Were Cuba to rejoin the Caribbean, it would be possible to make long range economic plans which would fit Cuba's capabilities and limitations to the broader regional pattern in the interest of the greatest welfare for the whole area. Third, a relaxation of the United States' attitude toward Cuba would ease relations with our allies who have continued trade with Cuba against United States wishes. Third World nations might also become more amenable to United States overtures if they no longer viewed Cuba as a victim of U.S. aggression. Finally, an accommodation with Cuba would most probably eliminate a large part of the skyjacking problem.⁷⁰

⁷⁰ John Plank, "We Should Start Talking With Cuba," New York Times Magazine (March 30, 1969), pp. 87, 89.

On the debit side, an accommodation with Castro would carry heavy costs for the United States. The costs would not be great in terms of national security. Cuba does not pose a conventional threat and the resolution of the missile crisis has, for the most part, eliminated a strategic threat. The real costs of an accord with Cuba would be political and ideological. When the United States talks with the U.S.S.R. and China, the concerned parties all being acknowledged major world powers engage in the give and take of equals. Should the United States attempt accommodation with Cuba it would have to be prepared to treat Castro as a peer also. Such a move would certainly be interpreted at home, most of Latin America and the world, as a tacit admission of failure and defeat of the United States by a fourth rate power. The hemisphere could conceivably be split asunder as the rightist regimes of Argentina, Brazil, Paraguay, Honduras, Nicaragua, Guatemala and others cooled their relations with the United States. Leftist elements might also become mean, suspicious and mischievous if accord appears possible and they would no longer be able to gather popular support by picturing the United States as a reactionary, imperialist nation. Finally, accord would demonstrate that America's contention that Castro's ideology was alien and dangerous to the values and interests of the Western Hemisphere was false.⁷¹

Should rapprochement, even with its high cost in national prestige, be attempted the next question is how to achieve that goal without the appearance of being a petitioner at Castro's doorstep. It is impossible to forecast in what manner the process may begin, but it is safe to assume the procedure will be a long, tedious diplomatic search for an agreeable

⁷¹Ibid., pp. 89-90.

opening. Each attempt must be examined in light of its advantages to each side and each attempt will also be carefully scrutinized by the Soviet Union.

Fidel Castro's response to an American invitation to negotiation is equally difficult to foretell. So far as is known, he has shown no interest in discussing common problems with the United States, nor, with the exception of a few triumphal tours of leftist states, has he been willing to conduct serious discussion with other Latin American nations. Should Castro consider America's willingness to negotiate as a surrender he will no doubt, be less than gracious in his victory. Such behavior would probably nullify the preceding diplomatic groundwork and effectively stall any substantive agreements. Castro, also is subject to strong influences which might preclude his involvement in negotiations regardless of his personal desires. For years he has publicly expressed hatred and defiance toward the United States and its ideals. Freedom from economic and political dependence on the United States has been one of the cornerstones of his revolutionary movement and any relaxation of these attitudes might be viewed as betrayal by his followers. In view of all this, the prospects for an immediate and substantial improvement of relations are not very bright.

If this rather gloomy analysis is correct, we can expect Fidel Castro to remain defiantly on his island for a long time. It is difficult to envision, however, an elderly Fidel Castro delivering rabidly fanatic anti-American harrangues to an enthralled and worshipful nation, unless his economic reforms overcome the paralysis with which they are afflicted. It is also difficult to envision the Soviet Union continuing to pour a million dollars a day into a doddering nation which it knows the United States will never allow to be used to full military advantage.

Time appears to be on the side of the United States. One might expect Castro to eventually make a fatal mistake which would lead to his destruction or be forced to seek help from the nations of the Western Hemisphere. If such be the case, the United States is presently following the right course of action.

Bayless Manning neatly summarizes:

That policy consists of an inflexible posture vis-a-vis Guantanamo; . . . steady diplomatic and economic pressure to the extent (which will be increasingly limited) that we can persuade others to cooperate with us; the closest possible collaboration with the other countries of Latin America to forge a whole new environment in the hemisphere through the Alliance for Progress; a clear, steady signal to the Soviet Union to stay out of the Caribbean; and a stiff policy of containment against Castroite subversion in other parts of Latin America."⁷²

⁷²Bayless Manning, "An Overall Perspective," in Cuba and the United States, ed. John Plank, p. 237.

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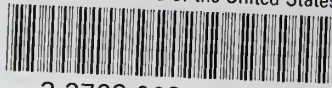
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