

KILLING THE MYTH OF DAVID: MINIMIZING THE CUBAN REVOLUTION'S  
THREAT TO U.S. HEGEMONY

A Thesis  
by  
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## **Abstract**

### **KILLING THE MYTH OF DAVID: MINIMIZING THE CUBAN REVOLUTION'S THREAT TO U.S. HEGEMONY**

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The purpose of this thesis is to examine the historical nature of the relationship of the United States and Cuba. Since 1959, the United States has employed various means to undermine the influence of the Cuban Revolution in the wider Latin American and Caribbean world. The way that this has been accomplished has evolved over time. The scope of this thesis is mainly the late 1970s and early 1980s, a period when the use of direct covert operations were no longer explicitly approved of by the U.S. government.

Instead, the main tactics used by the years covered within this study were what political scientists would term soft power. This soft power subversion included the use of mass media propaganda, diplomatic pressuring, and economic sabotage. The purpose of this thesis is to put these methods of persuasion into their proper historical and political context, and to analyze the effectiveness of these efforts in both isolating Cuba in Latin America and the Caribbean, as well as their effect on the trajectory of Cuban-U.S. relations.

## **Acknowledgments**

I would like to acknowledge Jeffrey Bortz and René Harder Horst, dedicated Latin Americanists, without whom this monumental task would have never been completed. I would also like to thank my third committee member, Edward Behrend-Martinez. Finally, thanks to the Office of Student Research, who funded my endeavors in the National Archives at College Park.

## **Dedication**

This work is dedicated to my grandfather, Charles Harney, who instilled in me a love of the past. Secondly, I would like to thank my partner Allyson Hassler, without her these efforts would not have been completed. Finally, thanks to my parents Sean and Christine who have always been beacons of encouragement.

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## Introduction

**Historiography:** In the biblical parable of David and Goliath, the mighty champion of the Philistines, Goliath, supposedly stood at an awe-inspiring nine feet nine inches tall. This giant of a man was downed by an average Israelite shepherd boy armed only with a sling and stones for projectiles. Upon bringing the severed head of the fallen giant Goliath back to Jerusalem, King Saul, baffled by the spectacle inquired as to the identity of the kingdom's hero, to which he received the reply "As surely as you live, Your Majesty, I don't know."<sup>1</sup> Much like the way that Saul was mystified by the events that transpired to bring down the Philistine's hulking champion, the Cuban Revolution has caused similar perplexity to both scholars and curious observers alike. The successful ousting of the U.S.-backed Dictator Fulgencio Batista and the subsequent survival of the revolutionary regime only ninety miles to the south of the United States has served to inspire many scholars of Latin American history.

Ultimately, the title's allusion to the allegory of David and Goliath, serves to put the topic into a wider frame of reference to those uninitiated in the history of Cuba and the Cuban Revolution. In killing the titular myth, or the attempt by the United States to undermine the Cuban Revolution and its position in Latin America, effectively obscuring the identity of David, the U.S. was upholding its hegemonic position in the region. To do so, the United States employed a wide variety of methods that ranged from diplomatic maneuvering, training disaffected Cuban exiles, and economic isolation, as well as many other tactics. Due to the monumental influence of the Cuban Revolution on the course of Latin American History during the Cold War and beyond, many have divided the history of Cuba into pre and

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<sup>1</sup> 1 Samuel 17: 1-55 (New International Version).



post-revolutionary epochs. Much like the appearance of David before King Saul, it is as if modern Cuba came barreling into existence only after the Cuban Revolution.

Part of this tendency stems from the study of revolution in general. Revolutions, especially social revolutions, are meant to represent a clean break with the past and the creation of an entirely new order to society. In function, the historical roots of culture and tradition are difficult to uproot. For this reason, it is important to stress both change and continuity in the study of the Cuban Revolution. In his work *Revolutionary Cuba*, Luis Martínez-Fernández emphasized continuity through what he termed tropes of Cuban History. For instance, he noted the socio-geographic division of the island, which created the illusion of two Cubas, one “wealthier, western, Havana-dominated, sugar-centered, slave-based Cuba, and a poorer, eastern, subsistence agriculture-based, more racially mixed Cuba.”<sup>2</sup> This distinction between east and west, city and countryside, have all been hallmarks of Cuban History.

Indeed, as Louis Pérez Jr. illustrated in *Cuba: Between Reform and Revolution*, it was the remote Oriente province on the eastern end of the island that the independence struggles of the nineteenth century originated from. The discrepancies between east and west did not end with independence from Spain, in fact, in some ways they were exacerbated by the new neocolonial relationship vis-à-vis the United States. By the late-1950s, just before the seizure of power by the 26<sup>th</sup> of July movement and its allied factions, only nine percent of rural homes had electricity and in some areas of the countryside, rates of illiteracy were as high as fifty percent.<sup>3</sup> It was under those depressed conditions that Fidel Castro and Ernesto

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<sup>2</sup> Luis Martínez-Fernández, *Revolutionary Cuba: A History* (Gainesville: University of Florida Press, 2014), 6.

<sup>3</sup> Louis Pérez Jr., *Cuba: Between Reform and Revolution*, 4th ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 229.

“Che” Guevara found fertile ground to plant the seeds of revolution in the villages of the Sierra Maestra Mountains.

Another trope of Cuban history outlined by Martínez-Fernández is the persistence of the plantation as an organizational form of labor, and the production of sugar as the driving force of the Cuban economy.<sup>4</sup> While sugar may have been an integral part of the Cuban economy prior to the eighteenth century, it was not until the late-eighteenth extending into the nineteenth century that the conditions of monoculture existed on the island. This development occurred in part in response to the Haitian Revolution, which dealt a large blow to global sugar production and opened up space for its expansion in Cuba. In his definitive text on the study of sugar monoculture in Cuba, *The Sugar Mill*, Manuel Moreno Fraginals, noted that before the nineteenth century, the forests of Cuba were protected by the colonial state. For this reason, a technician at the La Ninfa plant showed astonishment at the rate of deforestation that took place in order to fuel the process of sugar production.<sup>5</sup>

In *Sweetness and Power*, his historical-anthropological study, Sidney Mintz expressed the temporal limitations imposed by nature on sugar production. In order to limit the amount of sucrose lost in the cane juices, the sugar cane must be harvested in a timely manner. Once cut, the juice must be removed quickly so that it is not spoiled.<sup>6</sup> These limitations created the need for a high level of division of labor on sugar plantations and a work day that was highly regimented, and almost industrial in character.<sup>7</sup> Not surprisingly, production was heavily capital intensive and required access to large markets in order to

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<sup>4</sup> Martínez-Fernández, 10-11.

<sup>5</sup> Manuel Moreno Fraginals, *The Sugar Mill: The Socioeconomic Complex, 1760-1860*, translated by Cedric Belfrage (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1976), 74.

<sup>6</sup> Sidney W. Mintz, *Sweetness and Power: The Place of Sugar in Modern History* (New York: Penguin Books, 1985), 21.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, 50.

absorb the large amounts of sugar produced. It was these features of sugar production that created many of the traditional characteristics of underdevelopment in Cuba.

By the end of the nineteenth century, Cuba and Puerto Rico remained the lone bastions of Spanish Colonialism left in the Americas. In Cuba, a protracted thirty year struggle for independence culminated in a final thrust for independence from Spain in 1895. By this point, Spain was still technically the island's metropolitan authority, but its position was largely reduced to that of an upholder of the colonial social hierarchy and the privileges that went along with it, as well as a protector of private property. From the mid-nineteenth century onward the role of main economic provider of both capital and finished products was fulfilled by the United States, which also represented a massive market for the increasing production of Cuban sugar. Thus, by 1895, the United States had a vested interest in maintaining the status quo in Cuba in order to protect the interests of U.S. firms operating on the island.

In his book, *Cuba in the American Imagination: Metaphor and the Imperial Ethos*, Louis Pérez Jr. argued that 1898 served to define not just the relationship of the United States to Cuba for the entirety of the twentieth century, but served to underpin U.S. imperial ambitions throughout the rest of the world. Rather than to emphasize the interests of U.S. citizens on the island, the United States intervention into Cuba's Great War for Independence against Spain was cloaked in metaphor, which served to best persuade Americans of the necessity of their involvement. The power of the metaphor proved foundational to the American public's complicity in the support of the state's role in empire building. Those that challenged the very premise of "American altruism" were either ungrateful to the United

States, or were painted as “evil doers and mischief makers, misinformed or else malcontents given to doing bad things, and by definition deemed to be enemies of humanity.”<sup>8</sup>

Through the brokerage of Cuba’s independence by the United States, the Cuban dream of self-determination was deferred. While technically a sovereign nation, Cuba became essentially a protectorate of the United States. The Platt Amendment effectively allowed the United States to intervene in Cuban affairs, especially in the protection of U.S. business interests on the island. Until the amendment’s abrogation in 1934, in part due to an uprising from below, the United States occupied Cuba a total of three times: the first between 1906 and 1909, the second in 1912, and the third between 1917 and 1922. After the Revolution of 1933, U.S. hegemony in Cuba became more tenuous, and the alliances that upheld it all the more fragile. Writing to the headquarters of the Manati Sugar Company in 1933, Salvador Rionda noted the insurgent character of the Cuban working class. Workers took control of the company’s mill, and Rionda, highlighting the worker’s inalcitrant nature explained that they “ran the electric plant at night as they needed water but we had no intervention and they gave us lights as they pleased, distributing ice among themselves but having the rest of us without any.”<sup>9</sup>

Eventually, the intervention of the young military officer, Fulgencio Batista appeased the discontented Cuban masses. Batista served as a political powerbroker for the remainder of the 1930s, and was even elected to the presidency in 1940. Through his leadership, the delicate balance of forces that maintained U.S. hegemony continued to persist, despite fervent nationalistic calls for reform. This allowed the United States’ presence in the Cuban

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<sup>8</sup> Louis Pérez Jr., *Cuba in the American Imagination: Metaphor and the Imperial Ethos* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2008), 7.

<sup>9</sup> Salvador Rionda, “Sugar Mills and Soviets,” in *The Cuba Reader: History, Culture, Politics*, edited by Aviva Chomsky, Barry Carr & Pamela Smorkaloff (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2003), 282.

economy to continue unabated, and even to flourish. Between 1933 and 1940, the total value of North American imports to Cuba went from \$22.6 million to \$81 million. More clearly, the percentage of Cuban imports from the United States increased from 53.5% to 76.6%.<sup>10</sup>

In fact, the level of penetration that U.S. enterprise had achieved in Cuba was unprecedented. These inroads were made, in no small part due to the purchase of goods manufactured in the United States, but also consisted of those produced by Cuban subsidiaries of U.S.-owned companies. In total, 85% of goods produced by these subsidiaries were destined for local markets.<sup>11</sup> The success or failure of the Cuban Economy largely hinged on the prevailing price of sugar on the world market. For this reason, it was also prone to the fluctuations of that market.

While Cuba is technically a Latin American country, by the mid-twentieth century the island had largely been assimilated into the wider U.S. economic system. Pérez argued that it was this integration that created the unique conditions in which “Cubans enjoyed remarkably high per capita income in Latin American terms,” but contrasted that they also “lived within a North American cost-of-living index.”<sup>12</sup> Indeed, the intimate and unique relationship to the United States was in part due to the historic characteristics of the island’s independence from Spain, which had seen the forces of colonialism win out and the dream of self-determination deferred. Over the course of more than five decades of U.S. control of the island’s productive forces, a sense of economic nationalism had built up in Cuba and underpinned the struggles against Fulgencio Batista.

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<sup>10</sup> Louis Pérez Jr., *Cuba and the United States: Ties of Singular Intimacy* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1990), 205.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, 226.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, 228.

The Cuban Revolution amounted to a culmination of these dormant forces of economic nationalism. Once awoken, they were unable to be quelled. A speech given on May Day by Fidel Castro in the early 1960s perfectly embodies this desire for Cubans to determine their own destiny by seizing control of productive forces. Of the pre-revolutionary order he claimed:

They spoke to you about rights that never existed as far as you were concerned. Your children were not sure of even the right to a country school or the right to medical attention, or the right to a piece of bread; and you yourself were not sure of even the right to work!<sup>13</sup>

These material conditions created the drive to complete the mission begun in the struggle for independence, but was never completed—that is the constitution of a Cuban nation founded on the principles of social justice. Unfortunately, this goal and a continued relationship with the United States were completely at odds with one another. As Pérez noted, the same forces that fought to reconstitute the Cuban nation under the principles of economic self-determination were the same as those that called out the U.S. for the naked “self-interest” involved in its intervention into the struggle for independence. This allegation was largely to blame for the visceral reaction of the United States to the Cuban Revolution, as it shattered the very mythos that justified not only the role of the U.S. in Cuba, but its imperial projection across the globe.<sup>14</sup>

While the Cuban Revolution may have elicited a negative official response from the United States, for many in Latin America, the revolution showed that *imperialismo yanqui* could in fact be bested. Under the leadership of the revolutionary regime, inroads were made in the distribution of healthcare, education, and basic human needs such as food and shelter.

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<sup>13</sup> Fidel Castro, “A Real Democracy,” in *The Ideologies of the Developing Nations*, edited by Paul E. Sigmund (New York: Frederick A. Praeger Publishers, 1968), 318-319.

<sup>14</sup> Pérez, Jr., *Cuba in American Imagination*, 245-248.

In many cases this did not equate to economic growth, but to many living in poverty throughout Latin America, this did not matter. Indeed, as Thomas C. Wright argued in *Latin America in the Era of the Cuban Revolution*, “it was this redistribution of societal goods, not the statistics on economic performance, that made the Cuban Revolution so appealing to millions of Latin Americans.”<sup>15</sup> The revolution may have been a beacon of hope for some, but for conservatives throughout Latin America and in Washington, their worst fears were confirmed. For these elites, it showed that all movements from below would inevitably end in a Communist seizure of state power and engendered a desire to put down all such movements.<sup>16</sup>

Historian Stephen G. Rabe’s *The Killing Zone* documented this attempt to undermine the influence of the Cuban Revolution in Latin America. The initial response, the Kennedy Administration’s Alliance for Progress, was effectively an attempt at a Marshall Plan for the region that never had the same support in congress that its predecessor did. After the formation in 1970 of the Popular Unity coalition and the Salvador Allende presidency in Chile, there became more of willingness to support repressive military regimes in order to best preserve U.S. hegemony in Latin America.<sup>17</sup> While the preceding period had not seen an absence of dictatorial regimes, there was an attempt to move away from complicity with these governments by the United States. Of course, the threat to United States’ hegemonic position in Latin America made it difficult for many policymakers in Washington and their counterparts throughout the region not to support more extreme measures. As political scientist Mark Williams argued, many Latin American elites begrudgingly supported military

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<sup>15</sup> Thomas C. Wright, *Latin America in the Era of the Cuban Revolution* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 1991), 30.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, 25.

<sup>17</sup> Stephen G. Rabe, *The Killing Zone: The United States Wages Cold War in Latin America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), 84.

regimes as a means of preventing their nation “from going the way of Cuba.” Subsequent repression of the masses was meant to stem the tide of forces that “pulled powerfully in the direction of revolution.”<sup>18</sup>

Blatant human rights abuses carried out under the guise of Anti-Communism throughout Latin America are well-documented, but less focus has been given to what political scientists would call the employment of soft power by the United States in order to best protect its hegemony in the region. Essentially, this refers to the use of diplomatic engagement, economic strangulation, and circulation of propaganda through mass media among other things. This soft power subversion was used in order to best create a convergence of interests, or at the least the illusion of them, between local populations and that of the hegemonic power. In Latin America, the Cuban Revolution amounted to a threat to the U.S. as a hegemon, and for this reason, the United States employed the entirety of this aforementioned apparatus against the influence of Cuba throughout the region.

**Methodology:** In order to best convey the use of soft power by the United States, many primary sources have been utilized. For the first chapter, the majority of the primary documents implemented in the analysis were memorandums circulated through different agencies in the U.S. Department of State. Other documents included diplomatic memos between representatives of different Latin American countries and the United States. The second chapter mainly makes use of assessments done by the United States Information Agency (USIA) or academics contracted independently by the agency, related to the implementation of the mass media program, Radio Martí. Finally, the third chapter utilizes popular opinion polls conducted in various Latin American countries by the USIA. All of

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<sup>18</sup> Mark Williams, *Understanding U.S.-Latin American Relations: Theory and History* (New York: Routledge, 2012), 245.



these sources were located in the National Archives at College Park, MD near Washington D.C.<sup>19</sup>

Unfortunately the limitations on travel to Cuba and lack of funding precluded research on the island. In order to have a better sense of the United States' exercise of soft power during the Cold War from the Cuban and larger Latin America perspective these chapters make use of wide variety of sources. Other sources included *Granma Weekly Review*, an English-language newspaper published weekly by the Cuban government, as well as various speeches and writings of Latin American leaders. Another important source was the memoir of the former Chief of Mission of the U.S. Interests section in Havana, Wayne Smith. Entitled *The Closest of Enemies*, this memoir gives a unique perspective.

While Smith represented the United States' interests in Cuba, he did not always agree with the official methods of doing so, indeed, he prominently encouraged normalization between the two countries despite a combative political climate. His point of view contrasts greatly with the majority of policymakers in the United States. With the aid of these sources, a more accurate picture of the means of reducing the Cuban Revolution's influence in Latin America emerges. Another important element of this analysis is its scope. While many studies have been done on the nature of the United States' attempts to diminish the threat of the Cuban Revolution to its hegemony in Latin America, a large portion of these have emphasized the more overt applications of hard power such as the Bay of Pigs Invasion, the Cuban Missile Crisis, as well as the various acts of terror committed under the prerogative of

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<sup>19</sup> All archival sources follow the formatting guide provided by the National Archive on their website at. For access to this guide you can go to: <http://www.archives.gov/publications/general-info-leaflets/17-citing-records.pdf>

Operation Mongoose.<sup>20</sup> By engaging with U.S. foreign policy of the mid-to-late 1960s until the mid-1980s, the exercise of soft power became clearer, while the role of direct intervention became less and less of a possibility.

**Thesis:** At the height of the Cold War, the United States attempted to subvert the influence of the Cuban Revolution throughout Latin America and its threat to U.S. hegemony in the region. This attempt by Goliath to erase the story of David, or the use of soft power subversion was accomplished through a variety of methods including behind-the-scenes diplomatic pressuring of important officials. Not limited to official diplomatic channels, agencies like the USIA used mass media in order to sway public opinion in favor of the U.S. model over that of the Cuban one. Finally, programs like Radio Martí directly attempted to foment dissent in Cuba to bring about regime change. Most importantly, all of these methods represented the important place of culture and procedure in maintaining power relations. Rather than the moralistic dichotomy usually used to describe the antagonisms between Cuba and the United States, what often mattered most was who controlled and distributed information.

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<sup>20</sup> Operation Mongoose was a program created by the Central Intelligence Agency that used trained Cuban-exile operatives to attack targets on the island, of which many were civilian targets.

## **The Exile of the Cuban Revolution: Diplomacy of Dissent during the Cold War**

**Introduction:** With the recent steps taken toward normalization of relations between Cuba and the United States, it seems more important than ever to analyze the origins of the overwhelmingly tense relations between both countries and their Cold War context. Much of what has been written either stresses the authoritarian nature of the revolutionary regime and the presence of Fidel Castro as pushing the United States toward more direct intervention in Cuban, and Latin American affairs in general. On the other hand, there is just as much scholarship that focuses on the United States as imposing its will upon Latin America in regard to Cuba. That narrative also works under the assumption that Western Europe and Canada, in their working relationship with the United States to preserve the hegemonic order of capitalism around the world, willingly and without question followed the line pursued by Washington. This view gives little agency to Latin America and downplays the amount of increasing resistance among traditional allies of the United States to perceived slights against their sovereignty.

In recent years, much of the work conducted by scholars relating to Cuba has been done in order to remedy this hole in the study of Cuban-U.S. relations. One such study, *The Cuban Revolution (1959-2009): Relations with Spain, the European Union, and the United States* by Joaquín Roy, offered an analysis of the historical relationships between Cuba and each of respective titular countries or collection of nations in the period following the Cuban Revolution. While Roy certainly provided a compelling look at geopolitics in the Cold War era, his historical narrative was heavily predicated upon the official documents and the legal framework for both the continuation of the U.S. embargo on Cuba and the independent line charted by the European Union. Unfortunately, when Roy looked at behind-the-scenes

diplomacy between countries, the documents he used were largely viewed through the lens of secondary sources.<sup>21</sup> Another similar account is Salim Lamrani's *The Economic War Against Cuba*, which largely made use of similar sources. Lamrani analyzed the historical foundation of the U.S. blockade against Cuba, but focused more on the contemporary resistance to extraterritorial nature of the embargo and legislation that keeps it in place.<sup>22</sup> Thus, there is still room to analyze historical trends in Cuban-U.S. relations within the context of diplomacy between the United States and other countries and their own respective stance on the Cuban Revolution. From this perspective, Latin Americans are afforded a degree of agency, and allows for the questioning of the traditional narrative of Western consensus during the Cold War era.

**Thesis:**

In this sense, it would be far too simple to say that U.S. interests prevailed in Latin America in the aftermath of the Cuban Revolution. By the early 1970s, Cuba had been expelled from the OAS, isolated diplomatically by most countries in the Western Hemisphere, and was economically deprived due to the blockade put in place by the United States. While this traditional narrative may be one way to perceive these conditions, as has been shown above, often when the United States got its way in Latin America, it was due to a convergence of interests between the U.S. and its allies among local elites. These policies represent a convergence of interests, and thus, a relationship of reciprocity.

This Washington line was also influenced by Cuban forces within the U.S., and represented, in a sense, the agenda of the exile elite who had fled to Miami as the first signs of an inclination toward socialism among the revolutionary leadership. Through an analysis

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<sup>21</sup> Joaquín Roy, *The Cuban Revolution (1959-2009): Relations with Spain, the European Union, and the United States* (New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009)

<sup>22</sup> Salim Lamrani, *The Economic War Against Cuba* (New York, NY: Monthly Review Press, 2013)

of intra-departmental memorandums of various government agencies and working within the framework outlined above, the relative merits and success of the United States' policy toward Cuba can be accessed in a way that acknowledges the agency of Latin American countries more so than much of the existing scholarship does. While it is true that the U.S cut off Cuba from its immediate surroundings and minimized much needed trade with the island, on the other hand, there were nations such as Canada and France that balked at the extraterritorial legislation on trade, while other countries like Mexico and Spain, not only supported, but fought for the recognition of Cuba in the Americas after 1959.

### **Historiography:**

On April 17<sup>th</sup>, 1961, Fidel Castro gave a speech to commemorate the success of the newly-founded Revolutionary Armed Forces (Fuerza Armadas Revolucionarios) in routing American-trained exiles at Playa Girón. He declared to Cuban “compañeros, workers, and peasants: This is a socialist and democratic revolution of the humble, by the humble, and for the humble.”<sup>23</sup> With this utterance, a new set of relations between the United States and Cuba was solidified. The words themselves largely had no bearing on the direction that U.S.-Cuban relations took, but instead represented a culmination of events that eventually led to the dissolution of the two countries' traditionally close relationship. While the United States had formally broken diplomatic relations with the Cuban Revolution in January of the same year, this declaration made clear the realignment of Cuba with the Soviet Union rather than its traditional trade partner, the U.S.

Whether this was for ideological reasons, or out of a sense of pragmatism, this new partnership placed Cuba in a unique position. In her analysis of Cuba within the context of

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<sup>23</sup> Fidel Castro, “The Bay of Pigs Invasion and the Proclamation of the Socialist Character of the Revolution” (April 16<sup>th</sup>, 1961), in *Fidel Castro Reader*, eds. David Deutschmann and Deborah Shnookal (New York, NY: Ocean Press, 2007), 211.

the larger Marxist project of building a flourishing socialist democracy, *The Problem of Democracy in Cuba*, Carrolle Bengelsdorf noted that Cuba, like all other actually existing socialist countries past and present, was confronted by “a seemingly endless series of external threats in the form of military aggression, economic strangulation, or both—in short, a kind of semi-permanent state of emergency.”<sup>24</sup> Indeed, the siege mentality fostered by the U.S. Embargo and other international policies aimed at the ruling regime in Cuba, further exacerbated hostilities between the United States and Cuba.

This isolation of Marxist-Leninist regimes by the West hit Cuba especially hard. The Cuban Revolution, in many ways received popular support from the general public of Latin America and even the United States in its early stages, but the increasing radicalization and the consolidation of socialist control of means of production in Cuba alienated many of these initial supporters. The Soviet Union and the Eastern bloc countries could at least rely upon one another for aid, but Cuba, located less than 100 miles from the hegemonic power of the Western Hemisphere, had to wait for long transport times from its socialist allies or hedge its bets on non-socialist countries willing to risk ostracism from the United States.

This reliance upon Eastern Europe as its main trading partner was not ideal because the remoteness of the region from Cuba. Louis Pérez Jr., in his bench mark application of the *longue durée* to Cuban history, *Cuba: Between Reform and Revolution*, noted the inconvenience of Cuba’s newfound reliance upon Eastern Europe as its main trading partners, due to the island’s remoteness from the region. Not only was Eastern Europe a veritable world away from Cuba, but in order for Cubans to receive the incoming commodities and natural resources they “required new investment in infrastructure facilities,

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<sup>24</sup> Carrolle Bengelsdorf, *The Problem of Democracy in Cuba: Between Vision and Reality* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1994), 4.

including the expansion of port facilities to accommodate long-haul trade and the construction of new warehouses and storage facilities.”<sup>25</sup> This process of realignment of the Cuban economy toward far-flung trade with the Soviet Union and the Eastern Bloc was largely out of necessity, and not necessarily by choice.

Had Revolutionary Cuba not become a pariah within the inter-American community, the current of history may have moved in a very different direction. Unfortunately, this was not the case and the Organization of American States ousted Cuba from its rank on January 21, 1962.<sup>26</sup> This expulsion was largely emblematic of the OAS’s position in the larger American community, which consisted of Latin America, the Caribbean, and North America. Not only was Cuba’s position within the inter-American community hampered, it was largely excluded from European affairs and trade as well. In a great deal of the existing scholarship on U.S.-Cuban relations, much of the emphasis has been placed upon the U.S.’s role in creating the conditions necessary for this particular set of international relations for the Cuban Revolution. The United States role as a hegemon in Latin America, and in many respects the rest of the world, does not explain the actions of many of the nations that fell in line with the mandates of Washington.

As political scientist Mark Williams noted in *Understanding U.S.-Latin American Relations*, many observers mistakenly view hegemony and dominance as synonymous concepts of international relations. Counter to the expectations of many students of international relations, “hegemons do not always get their way in international politics.” Further, the perception that nation-states endowed with hegemonic authority are always

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<sup>25</sup> Louis A. Pérez, Jr., *Cuba: Between Reform and Revolution*, 4th edition (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2011), 264.

<sup>26</sup> The Organization of American States is an important inter-American governing body that largely bowed to U.S. hegemony, at times out of a convergence of interests, and at others because the United States’ posturing in the region, and from henceforth it will be referred to as OAS.

successful in pushing its agenda forward “can be as misleading as the notion that hegemons routinely dominate weaker states through belligerent actions.”<sup>27</sup> Many times throughout the Cold War, the United States did not get what it wanted, and indeed in respect to Cuba, many countries did resist the imposition of Washington within their political sphere. Oftentimes in Latin America, when the U.S. did get its way it was not due to Yankee bullying but because of shared interests.

While The Cuban Revolution was isolated by the “official” forces of many countries, it appealed to the toiling masses of Latin American society, and showed that the authority of Washington could indeed be bucked, in the United States’ traditional sphere of influence no less. Also of appeal to many in Latin America was the redistribution of the societal wealth that occurred in Cuba and the inroads made in the areas of healthcare and education. Unfortunately, for the very same reasons that the Cuban Revolution drew supporters, it also had many detractors among civilian and military elites in Latin America.

Latin American elites may have not fallen prey to the intense Soviet-induced paranoia, which fueled much of the U.S.’s Cold War fears in Latin America, these elites certainly feared the example of the Cuban Revolution and sought the support of the United States so they could prevent their own governments from being “overthrown and communized from within.”<sup>28</sup> Any vague call for social reform throughout Latin America was met with not just the external fear of the United States, but that of local elites as well. It was in this way that the Cuban Revolution simultaneously spurred on those inclined toward revolutionary tendencies, as well as repression from those protecting traditional Latin American social structures. Elites with an interest in the status quo often reacted to

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<sup>27</sup> Mark Williams, *Understanding U.S.-Latin American Relations: Theory and History* (New York, NY: Routledge, 2011), 216.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, 244.



revolutionary movements in their own country with “violent security measures that were both systematic and indiscriminate,” due to the belief that, “they were preventing their country from going the way of Cuba.”<sup>29</sup>

One element central to the U.S. opposition to the revolutionary government of Cuba was its traditional ties to the island that were more apparent in the years prior to the movement of opposition to Batista. From the nineteenth century onward, the United States represented a large portion of Cuba’s international trade. In the post-war period conditions conducive to increasing the intimacy of this traditional relationship compounded so that prior to the revolution Cubans were not just buying U.S. goods, but subsidiaries of American companies in Cuba had large presence in local manufacture. In these years, “fully 85 percent of North American production in Cuba was sold on the local market.”<sup>30</sup> It was the Cubans who benefited the most from this relationship with the United States that feared the assault upon the status quo. Part of the origins of the Cuban Revolution became an inextricable drive for sovereignty and self-determination, and for this reason, a need to firmly reject the role of U.S. hegemony in Cuba.

Since the U.S. intervention in the Cuban Great War for Independence, Cuban elites had long acted as intermediaries to aid in maintaining the United States’ hegemony on the island. In the political sphere, that meant promoting candidates and policies that continued to accept the massive presence of U.S. investments on the island. It was these Cuban elites that were first to flee during the Cuban Revolution, especially as Pérez argued, when “Washington lost the capacity to protect and promote the interests of those social groups that

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<sup>29</sup> Ibid., 245.

<sup>30</sup> Louis A. Pérez Jr., *Cuba and the United States: Ties of Singular Intimacy* (Athens, GA: The University of Georgia Press, 1990), 226.

had long been both agents and beneficiaries of North American hegemony.”<sup>31</sup> The group was also first to immigrate to the United States as 26<sup>th</sup> of July Movement and its leaders consolidated their hold upon the island, and these same forces that fled eventually played a large part in the establishment of the Cuban diaspora community in southern Florida.

### **Disavowal of Guerilla Interventionism: The Death of Che:**

As sociologist Lisandro Pérez, whose work has analyzed the effect of the Cuban diaspora lobby on U.S. foreign policy argued, this first wave disproportionately represented the elite strata of Cuban society. While later waves of immigration more evenly exemplified each sector of Cuban society, that initial wave held “a lasting political and economic hegemony with Miami’s Cuban American community.”<sup>32</sup> In many ways this relationship between the exile leadership and the U.S. government has been a marriage of convenience, and while the reasons for their opposition to the Communist government in Havana may differ it has served as the basis for U.S. foreign policy since 1959. With their ability to move seamlessly between North American and Latin American society, these Cuban expatriates were another tool in the toolbox of U.S. hegemony, while also simultaneously influencing the policy of the United States.

For example, this transcultural adaption of many exiles gave them the unique ability to be the eyes and ears of U.S. imperialism. A Department of State Memorandum from March 20, 1970, explained that a Cuban exile leader residing in San Juan, Puerto Rico had received intelligence that there would be a possible attempt by Cuba to export revolution to other islands of the Caribbean. Manuel Ray, the Minister of Public Works after the initial success of the revolutionaries in 1959, quickly became disillusioned with the increasing

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<sup>31</sup> Ibid., 240.

<sup>32</sup> Lisandro Pérez “Cuban Americans and US Cuba Policy,” in *Diaspora Lobbies and the US Government*, eds. Josh Dewind and Renata Segura (New York, NY: New York University Press, 2014), 137.

Communist influence in the revolutionary government and was forced to choose between imprisonment and exile. Ray came upon the information about the Cuban government's subversive activity in the course of his own political activity directed at the Castro regime.

Like many political activists in the exile community, it is clear from the memo that Ray was able to keep in contact with dissidents on the island. According to the report, he had received news of a Cuban military officer training Haitian and Dominican troops to foment revolution in Haiti and if successful a subsequent invasion of the Dominican Republic. In a way similar to Fidel Castro, Ernesto "Che" Guevara, and the other eighty guerillas on board the leaky yacht *Granma* in 1956. Just as those men had believed that public opposition to Fulgencio Batista was enough that, if their efforts in the countryside of the Sierra Maestra were successful enough that others would quickly pick up the revolutionary gauntlet thrown down, those being trained by Cuban forces mentioned by Ray would do the same.

These alleged one-hundred and fifty Haitian and Dominican insurgents under Cuban tutelage were reportedly motivated to help spur the overthrow of the perceived weakened regime of Francois Duvalier. If this movement was successful the forces would then move to the Dominican Republic. While it is not clear whether or not these claims of "Cuban intentions to "make trouble" in Puerto Rico and the Dominican Republic prior to the carrying out of the invasion plan" were substantiated, the revolutionary regime in the 1960s were not above promoting dissent throughout the region.<sup>33</sup> Following the success of the Cuban Revolution, Che, as one of the main theoreticians among the triumphant guerillas of the Sierra Maestra, wrote a manual entitled *Guerilla Warfare: A Method*. In it he expounded

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<sup>33</sup> Manuel Ray to John Hugh Crimmins, March 20, 1970, "Department of State Memorandum concerning telephone conversation between Ray and Crimmins", CUBA Political, Identifier 2735723, Container 1, National Archives at College Park, Maryland (hereafter referred to as NACP), 1.

upon the nature of socialist revolutionaries and their role in the process of social change in Latin America. In it he claimed that:

The Cuban Revolution made three fundamental contributions to the laws of the revolutionary movement in the current situation in America. First, people's forces can win a war against the army. Second, it is not always necessary to wait for all conditions favorable to revolution to be present; the insurrection itself can create them. Third, in the underdeveloped parts of America, the battleground for armed struggle should in the main be the countryside.<sup>34</sup>

Regardless of whether or not Che was correct in this notion, the exportation of revolution in the form of guerilla warfare became the foreign policy of Cuba in the first decade of the Cuban Revolution. Never one to miss the opportunity to put theory into practice, Che took part in missions of revolutionary adventurism in both Africa and Latin America. It was on one of these missions that he met his demise at the hands of a Bolivian soldier advised by a Cuban exile in the employ the Central Intelligence Agency on October 7<sup>th</sup>, 1967.

So, while this commitment to spreading revolution could indeed add some legitimacy to Ray's claim in the form of precedent, after the tragic loss of Che there was a significant abandonment of this commitment to armed struggle among the Cuban leadership. Compounded with the fact that in 1970, Cuba was almost exclusively devoted to the task of making reality a ten-million ton harvest or *zafra* of sugar for the 1969-1970 growing season, makes Ray's claim appear just as equally unlikely. During the Cuban Revolution's attempt to make history with an unprecedented yield of sugar, the U.S. government denounced the effort as a fool's errand in a meeting of the North Atlantic Council (NAC) held February 19, 1969. Of Castro's plan, the NAC had claimed that "even if he should succeed in achieving his goal, which most unlikely, little real improvement would result for Cuba other than the

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<sup>34</sup> Ernesto "Che" Guevara, "Guerilla Warfare: A Method," in *Che Guevara Reader: Writings on Politics & Revolution*, ed. David Deutschmann (New York, NY: Ocean Press, 2005), 70.

attainment of a balanced trade with USSR,” and a “small surplus to apply to soaring Cuban debt.”<sup>35</sup>

While this assessment of the Cuban sugar harvest proved to unfold in very much the fashion predicted at this meeting, what is of far more importance is what can be gleaned about the state of U.S. hegemony in Western Europe in the 1960s and 1970s. In the same meeting the very first note concerned the state of Cuban-Western European trade. Despite the stringent embargo placed upon Cuban trade, the council found regretful the “rapidly increasing credits and exports by NATO members to Cuba,” and their “apparent disregard for Cuba’s present economic condition and balance of payment outlook.” More importantly than the United States’ outward concern for the poor investment decisions of their allies was its concern for how these trade relations gave “Castro the capability to intervene in neighboring countries and make funds available for him to carry out propagandizing and indoctrination efforts among more radical youth in Europe and elsewhere.”<sup>36</sup> Not only does this sentiment give a clear indicator of concern about the United States’ relative position in the geopolitical sphere, it hints at an acknowledgement that even the traditional allies of U.S. imperialism in the post-war era had begun to assert their own autonomy on the world stage. Of even more importance, given the context of the Cold War, fear of revolution, and especially socialist revolution was—an ever-present fear among players minor and major in the U.S. government.

The memories of 1968 were likely still fresh in the mind of most policymakers in the United States, and given the popularity of the Cuban Revolution as an alternative to the Soviet Union’s more conservative politics among Left intellectuals in the West. Not only

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<sup>35</sup> Notes on a North Atlantic Council Meeting, February 19<sup>th</sup>, 1969, “Credits by NATO countries to Cuba”, NATO ECONADAD, Identifier 2201278, Container 2, NACP, 1.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, 1.

that, but the inspiration of Fidel's example in Latin America, "a continent of ready trigger-fingers and a taste for unselfish bravery, especially in heroic postures," converged to create a climate conducive to quarantining Cuba as a means to save face given the perceived diminishing place of their role in the world community.<sup>37</sup> Another example of this fear of Cuba's role in fomenting revolution can be seen in a correspondence between the NATO Deputy Economic Officer, Arthur J. Smith, and a Department of State Representative for Europe, James Stronayer. In the memo, Smith explained his work in curtailing travel to Cuba and the relative success in monitoring the few available flight paths to Havana from Europe.

Smith described the process by which NATO intelligence heavily scrutinized and kept a watchful eye on the flights through Madrid vis-a-vis observing passenger lists, enacting different forms of visa control in Ireland and New Foundland, and later other information was passed along via airgram between Dublin and Halifax. Later, more in-depth reports were created on monthly or semi-annual basis by another government agency, what exactly this entailed was unclear from the memorandum, but likely these reports contained a more detailed profile of passengers of note, meaning those that the U.S. government considered as threat to the United States' European and Latin American interests.<sup>38</sup> This largely corroborates Joaquín Roy's assertion that the United States in many ways benefited from the continued diplomatic relationship between Spain and Cuba. While this relationship will be analyzed at another juncture, for now it will suffice to say that often the U.S. was able

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<sup>37</sup> Eric Hobsbawm, *The Age of Extremes, 1914-1991* (New York, NY: Vintage Books, 1994), 440.

<sup>38</sup> Arthur J. Smith to James Stronayer, August 9, 1968, "USNATO Memo," NATO ECONADAD Identifier 2201278, Container 2, NACP, 1-2.

to glean intelligence on Cuba and its foreign policy, as well as that of its Cold War allies the Soviet Union and the Eastern Bloc.<sup>39</sup>

From these reports, the data conferred that rather than carrying “Czechs, Soviets and Cubans,” these flights contained a wide variety of nationalities from as far-flung locales as Syria, Paraguay, and the Netherlands. According to Smith, the array of nationalities represented on these flights to Havana reflected “the use of Cuba for various international Communist training grounds,” and he asserted that many “were no doubt sponsored by the Cubans themselves in their role as self-proclaimed experts in national-liberation doctrine; and with the tacit approval of Moscow and Peking.”<sup>40</sup> Smith’s inability to distinguish the difference between Soviet and Chinese Communism aside, his view was endemic of those working within the United States government.

While this belief that the world communist movement was spearheaded by the Soviet Union was by no means unfounded, as the internationalist character of Marxist ideology was by far one of its most prominent tendencies, Smith and the Washington line that he represented were more likely being influenced by the rabid, Cold War-induced paranoia than by reality. The records do not show whether Smith was able to get documents on the breakdown of the international make-up of the flights from Prague or whether there were any reports on whether or not Cuba was really a revolutionary training ground of sorts for radical groups. Nonetheless, as noted above and by Smith in the memo, the Cuban Revolution’s early foreign policy was based upon the creation of guerilla national-liberation movements throughout the Third World. At the same time, as was mentioned previously, after the death of Che in Bolivia, the Cuban Revolution began to distance itself from its original foreign

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<sup>39</sup> Roy., 28.

<sup>40</sup> Smith., 2.

policy and fall more in line with the Soviet stance on the spread of revolution. Without the additional documentation that Smith requested, it is unclear whether his allegations held even a bit of truth, but it is also just as likely that this traffic to Cuba represented the continued trade and cultural exchange with Europe that worried the North Atlantic Council in their 1969 meeting.

### **Debating the American Blockade: Challenge to the Logic of the Embargo:**

On April 29<sup>th</sup> of that same year, Michael Blumenthal, President of Bendix International, a division of the manufacturing and engineer company the Bendix Corporation, gave a statement before the Banking and Currency Committee of the United States Senate. In this speech, Blumenthal petitioned the senate to change the existing legislation on trade with Communist countries, which were “unduly restrictive and inadequate to today’s needs,” and favored a “more liberal approach” to this trade.<sup>41</sup> The legislation in question was the Export Control Act of 1949, which Blumenthal noted was both “outmoded and anachronistic” and, recommended to Congress that it “should be replaced.”<sup>42</sup> The act in question, Blumenthal depicted as a disconnected collection of laws and regulations that restricted trade between the United States and Communist countries.<sup>43</sup>

What was pivotal to the need of the United States to adopt new economic policy toward Communist countries, according to Blumenthal, was the diminishing place of the United States in the world economy due to Western Europe’s economic resurgence. One of these reasons was that the Coordinating Committee for Multilateral Export Control (COCOM) and its list of resources that were restricted from trade with Communist countries

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<sup>41</sup> Michael Blumenthal before Banking and Currency Committee of the U.S. Senate, April 29<sup>th</sup>, 1969, East West Trade (Miscellaneous), Identifier 2735080, Container 20, NACP, 2.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid., 5.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid., 6.



was far smaller than the one that the U.S. imposed upon its businesses vis-à-vis the Export Control Act. Blumenthal complained that:

The net effect of our policy has generally not been a weakening of the Communist position but instead hurt the economy of the United States. By denying ourselves the sales and the profits which have accrued to our competitors in Western Europe and Japan, we have only damaged ourselves.<sup>44</sup>

While the final bill on reform of East/West trade did not liberalize trade in the way that Blumenthal had desired, it is important to note that the bill made special exceptions to the bill's endowment of "most-favored-nation treatment" to Communist countries. China, North Vietnam, Cuba, and East Germany were not able receive this status as the U.S. government wanted to continue to employ economic restrictions on these countries in order to create the conditions necessary for regime change.<sup>45</sup> This status was due the "battleground" nature of these countries, which each represented, at least in the eyes of Washington policymakers, a threat to U.S. hegemony.

On the other hand, another threat was the possible loss of the traditional influence in the case of Western Europe. While the devastation of World War II significantly curtailed the economic capacity of Western Europe and Japan, with the aid of U.S. assistance vis-à-vis the Marshall Plan these economies were revitalized in the following post-war decades and by the late 1960s were certainly vying with the United States in terms of new markets to exploit. What Blumenthal's analysis suggested was that the process of catch up, which characterized this period, came to fruition, and thus, without access to new markets the U.S. economy would lose its competitive edge. This disregard for a representative of the capitalist class by the U.S. congress is characteristic of the apparent contradiction between the imperialist state

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<sup>44</sup> Ibid.

<sup>45</sup> Bill S. 2283, May 27<sup>th</sup>, 1969, East West Trade (Miscellaneous), Identifier 2755080, Container, NACP, 6.

and the capitalist class as pointed out by historian and foreign policy specialist Morris Morley.

In his benchmark work on Cuban-U.S. relations in the Cold War era, *Imperial State and Revolution*, Morley posited that in the imperialist stage of capitalism there emerged “the apparent paradox that the consciousness of outward-oriented class interests is more concentrated in the imperial state than in the capitalist itself.”<sup>46</sup> Essentially, while individuals like Blumenthal were for lessening restrictions for U.S. businesses, he failed to take into account the complex set of relations that made up international trade networks and the multinational make-up of corporations by the late 1960s. While this notion does explain the actions of congress in May of 1969 in regards to trade with Communist Europe, it does not explain the continued existence of stringent restrictions upon trade with Cuba. The rigid set of laws that made up the embargo on Cuba ran counter to the position of the U.S. as an imperial power in the capitalist world economy, which was “to open, and keep open, as much of the world economy as possible in the interest of foreign capital accumulation and expansion.”<sup>47</sup>

These relations allowed a certain amount of global cooperation between countries in order to maintain the complex networks that make up the world market, even when the actions taken by nation-states did not always reflect their immediate naked self-interest. The embargo against Cuba was antithetical to this objective in that it not only restricted trade with the United States, but inhibited exchange with Cuba by foreign manufacturers who used components produced in their products as well as subsidiaries of U.S. corporations abroad. In its goal of denying Cuba access to natural resources and manufactured goods, the embargo

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<sup>46</sup> Morris Morley, *Imperial State and Revolution: the United States and Cuba, 1952-1986* (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 28.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, 4.

has been largely been successful. A 2010 estimate by the Cuban government, put the loss of trade due to the U.S. embargo at \$751 Billion, a staggering figure even if it is somewhat inflated.<sup>48</sup> While this amount only comes with the hindsight of over fifty years of continued isolation of Cuba from the world market, the success of these policies despite resistance from many traditional U.S. allies in the West was apparent even in the mid-1960s, less than a decade after their implementation. Regardless, the fact that there was any opposition gives weight to the notion that even by the-1960s the consensus around Washington leadership in Western Europe had largely eroded.

In a report from the East West Trade representative in the Department of State to Harley O. Staggers, the Chairman of the House Committee on Interstate and Foreign Commerce, the representative claimed that “free world calls at Cuban ports, which average nearly 400 annually in 1963-64, dropped to 290 in 1965 and 223 in 1966, with only 51 calls reported in the last third of the year.”<sup>49</sup> While this information certainly plays into the traditional narrative of Cuban isolation after the revolution, what is most important is that this evidence coincides with the phenomenon addressed by the North Atlantic Council only three years later. Despite calls for sequestration of the Cuban Revolution by United States, its allies still traded with Cuba. The far-reaching and extra-territorial nature of the blockade against Cuba was far more likely the reason for the decrease in trade than any moral suasion used to by the United States to compel its allies. This lack of support for the embargo can be seen in the rejection of these policies by the French and the Canadians in 1965.

In a memorandum to McGeorge Bundy, Special Assistant to the President, the text explained that economic regulations against Cuba prohibited “overseas subsidiaries of

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<sup>48</sup> Lamrani,, 74.

<sup>49</sup> East West Department of State Representative to Harley Staggers, March 3, 1967, “Congressional Draft,” NATO ECONADAD Identifier 2201278, Container 2, NACP, 2.

American companies from selling goods, including those originating in the country in which the subsidiary is situated.”<sup>50</sup> It was noted in the memo that there had been a resurgence of economic nationalism in many of these countries due to a perceived lack of control over their own economic interests. The constraints placed by the embargo limited the ability of local interests to exercise control over subsidiaries of U.S. companies located in their own country, and with this surge in nationalist sentiment many countries saw this as an “affront to their sovereignty.”<sup>51</sup> That these restrictions amounted to a perceived slight to sovereignty was enough that the U.S. State Department had received a formal diplomatic protest from both the Canadian and French governments of the extraterritorial nature for the embargo and its controls, and the application of these policies on U.S. subsidiaries in both countries.<sup>52</sup> These actions called into question the relative effectiveness of U.S. policy on Cuba, and whether this policy actually engendered the opposite effect by isolating the United States from its allies rather than Cuba.

Seemingly aware of the dormant nationalism and the revitalized economies of these important allies, the memo asserted that “it is doubtless true that to a considerable extent these expressions are but surface manifestations of much more fundamental sources of resentment.” In the case of Canada, the embargo against Cuba brought to the surface “the displeasure felt by the Canadian people at the extraordinary degree to which the Canadian economy is controlled by the United States.”<sup>53</sup> While the embargo violated the trade policies of both France and Canada, their implementation was by no means illegal, and thus, there was little in the way of official legal action that could be taken. Regardless of the legality of

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<sup>50</sup> Memorandum to McGeorge Bundy, 1965, “Interdepartmental Review of Foreign Assets and Cuban Assets Control Regulations,” NATO ECONAD Identifier 2201278, Container 2, NACP, 1.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid., 13.

the United States' action, the opposition of France and Canada reveals an amount of discontent with the U.S.'s position as a world power, as well as an eschewing of the Cold War paradigm of East/West opposition. The memo even predicted that it would be "fair to estimate that the adverse foreign relations effects of the subject controls will increase rather than decrease."

As the desire for competition and the breakdown of trade barriers between Communist countries and the West accelerated, the aforementioned controls would represent an increased point of contention for a Western consensus around the Washington line on Cold War relationships. Rather than waning, the memo anticipated an increased "militantly nationalistic attitudes evidenced by Canada and France" that would "spread to other Free World nations."<sup>54</sup> In the case of both France and Canada, the desire to placate the murmurings of the masses on the sway held by the U.S. Multinationals and their subsidiaries, coupled with the swagger of a revitalized economy, allowed them to challenge the Washington line in order to assert their own autonomy. While these may have largely been hollow gestures, it does show that even by the late 1960s the traditional allies of the United States were willing to balk at the imposition of U.S. authority on the world stage, at least on paper.

### **From Imperial Power to Intimate Ally: The Case of Spain:**

Another European ally that refused to accept the politics of coercion practiced by the United States in regard to Cuba was the island's former colonial metropolis, Spain. This support may have been due to national self-interest, as was the case of both Canada and France, but the explanation for the continuation of relations is far more complex. The intimate relationship harkens back to the traditional relationship maintained between Spain

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<sup>54</sup> Ibid., 14-15.

and Cuba, despite the island's bloody thirty year war for independence that ended with U.S. intervention in 1898. Instead, as Joaquín Roy argued in *The Cuban Revolution (1959-2009)*, there was “a systematic review of history shows, the relationship between the “official” Spain and the “official” Cuba was not broken because the “real” Spain (the people) had always maintained the link with the “real” Cuba.”<sup>55</sup>

This special relationship between Spain and Cuba can be traced to the continental independence movements of the early 19<sup>th</sup> century, which saw Cuba, Puerto Rico, and the Phillipines become the last vestiges of the once vast Spanish empire. As one of the two remaining sources of Spanish imperial authority in Latin America, Cuba witnessed a massive wave of migration of loyalists fleeing the newly emergent nation-states in the early nineteenth century. This influx of Spanish immigration was then amplified by the deployment of hundreds of thousands of Spaniards to Cuba during the wars for independence and national sovereignty. Many of these soldiers were conscripts who shirked their duty to Spain and elected to desert and settle in Cuba. Others did not initially stay in Cuba, and eventually returned to the Spain after the Spanish failure to quell the independence movement, but eventually, opted to return to Cuba as traditional emigrants. Notably, this was the route of emigration chosen by the father of two of the architects of the Cuban Revolution, Fidel and Raúl Castro.<sup>56</sup>

In the post-independence era, both before and after the abrogation of the Platt Amendment, the United States did not oppose this continued Spanish influence in Cuba, but rather welcomed it. Oftentimes, Spaniards were employed by U.S. subsidiaries, because of their knowledge of modern enterprise and their perceived effectiveness as intermediaries, due

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<sup>55</sup> Roy., xi.

<sup>56</sup> Ibid., 12.

to their experience as former colonial administrators on the island.<sup>57</sup> This immigration of the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth century solidified the Spanish portion of Cuban identity, and allowed the bond between the two countries to remain intact, despite massive ideological shifts, the rise of the Franco government, in the case of Spain, and the Cuban Revolution's embrace of Marxist-Leninism. It is interesting that this relationship between Cuba and Spain continued, given that the United States had essentially been the patron propping up the regime of Francisco Franco.

On the other hand, as Spain remained largely underdeveloped by European standards, its goods were uncompetitive on the world market and thus Cuba represented "an alternate outlet for the manufactured goods that were difficult to sell in markets dominated by the United States" for Franco's Spain<sup>58</sup> While the number of exports by European countries to Cuba largely decreased in this period as noted above, Spanish exports actually increased in volume and variation of goods.<sup>59</sup> Spain had found in Cuba a much needed market for its goods, and Cuba found a source of manufactured goods in much closer proximity than its new Soviet patron. The continued relations between Spain and Cuba during the Cold War was also the product of the perception of Spain as a repressive authoritarian regime in Latin America, which was, in part, shaped by Mexico's official opposition to the Franco regime.

#### **From the *Granma* to the Revolution in Power: The Case of Mexico**

The United States also desired to have a diplomatic channel to Cuba open through Spain, and thus, this seemingly contradictory relationship between two oppositional ideological forces was in many ways due to the United States need to prevent "a second Cuba

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<sup>57</sup> Ibid., 14.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid., 29-30.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid., 30.

and Franco would not welcome a second Mexico.”<sup>60</sup> While Mexico had long been in opposition to the government of Francisco Franco and a supporter of Left-leaning movements in official foreign policy, this stance largely served to obscure the more authoritarian state structure that had been established by the Partido Revolucionario Institucional (PRI) in the decades following the Mexican Revolution. For this reason, in the case of Cuba, the foreign policy of both Spain and Mexico converged for similar reasons, to give legitimacy to both governments. This opportunistic use of foreign policy is addressed in a letter dated September 19<sup>th</sup>, 1975 from Henry Kissinger to Secretary of Foreign Relations of Mexico, Emilio Rabasa. In the letter Kissinger chided Rabasa for the attendance of the Secretary of Organization of the PRI and the Mexican Federal Deputy, at a Conference for “Solidarity with Puerto Rican Independence.”

Most shocking to Kissinger was the apparent renegeing of Mexico on its former commitment to not attend the conference by Mexican President Luis Echeverria and Ambassador Olloqui, and even Rabasa himself who “had told Ambassador Jova that we were ‘not to worry’ about this problem.”<sup>61</sup> Kissinger characterized the meeting as “totally unwarranted interference in the domestic affairs of the United States,” and counterproductive in the development of “improving relations between the United States and Cuba.”<sup>62</sup> What was even more unfathomable, given the traditionally close relationship between the United States and Mexico, was that Kissinger could not understand why such a high-ranking member of PRI had attended the conference. The conference itself saw little attendance outside of fringe organizations of the radical Left, and such manifestation of Mexican

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<sup>60</sup> Ibid., 32-33.

<sup>61</sup> Henry Kissinger to Emilio Rabasa, September 19<sup>th</sup>, 1975, “Letter on PRI Attendance at Conference for “Solidarity with Puerto Rican Independence,”” POL Cuba 1975 Identifier 5893709, Container 30 (Old Box 16), NACP, 1.

<sup>62</sup> Ibid.



solidarity only served to legitimate Fidel Castro's anti-imperialist posturing toward the United States.<sup>63</sup> He noted that due to the nature of the PRI in Mexico that it was often difficult to distinguish the actions of a member of the political party and Mexico's foreign policy.

What was most important in this letter was Kissinger's recognition of the objective of Mexican foreign policy, which noted above was "to preempt the extreme left and 'take the banner away from them.'"<sup>64</sup> In this way, Kissinger explicitly acknowledged the nature of the foreign policy of the PRI as a means of obscuring the more repressive tendencies of the Mexican government. Ultimately, in this case, the conference apparently generated very little enthusiasm, other than from elements of the radical left in Latin America. On the other hand, despite the little attention received by the event, the principle was more important and gave credence to the claims of the Mexican government that supported the autonomy of Latin American countries. While in this instance, the representative of U.S. authority may have viewed this show of Mexican independence "a "banner-snatching" effort that has gone a little too far," the United States tolerated this continued relationship because of information gleaned from diplomatic correspondence between Cuba and Mexico. The United States publicly denounced these affronts to the U.S.' attempts to isolate Cuba, but keeping these back channels open allowed for tensions between the United States and Cuba to be eased, and permitted the clarification of any public statements made by either country about the other. Representative of these side-channels for diplomacy is an incident which occurred in December of 1973.

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<sup>63</sup> Ibid.

<sup>64</sup> Ibid.

An American journalist working outside of his institutional capacity received information from the Cuban ambassador to Mexico that hinted at a thawing of relations between the United States and Cuba. When no one elucidated upon the claim's validity, the issue was brought up to the U.S. Ambassador to Mexico. From his perspective in Mexico City, he was able to dispel the information reported by journalists as a misinterpretation of the Cuban Ambassador. The U.S. Ambassador clarified by means of a Cuban communique to the Mexican embassy which "set the record straight by spelling out once more Castro's rigorous 'conditions' for any kind of U.S.-Cuban dialogue."<sup>65</sup> This continued relationship between Cuba and Mexico characterized by transparency, benefitted the United States by giving it a small glimpse at the realities of the Cuban Revolution, and on the part of Mexico, a pragmatic personal relations stunt to give the regime legitimacy in eyes of the world by giving a more radical appearance to what was in many respects was a repressive state apparatus. Whatever the reason for this bond, it still aided Cuba by continued trade and support.

For example, it was the urging of Mexico that persuaded other Latin American nations and the United States to reconsider the expulsion of Cuba from the OAS, and that helped to rehabilitate its image and sway opinion toward re-admittance for Revolutionary Cuba for 1975. A Department of State Briefing for a bilateral discussion during the OAS General Assembly, noted that "Mexico has never observed the OAS sanctions and has long advocated a lifting of the sanctions against Cuba," and that "they had pushed to increase their trade with Cuba and pressed the subsidiaries of US companies in Mexico to export to

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<sup>65</sup> Jack B. Kubisch to Joseph John Jova, January 24<sup>th</sup>, 1974, "Letter to clarify U.S.-Cuban Relations," POL Cuba Identifier 5893547, Container 29 (Old Box 15), NACP, 1.

Cuba.”<sup>66</sup> While it was noted that the U.S. supported the notion of allowing Cuba back into the OAS, it maintained the more important line on trade. For this reason, the decision on export by subsidiaries of U.S. companies in Mexico was made on a “case by case basis.”<sup>67</sup> In practice, this resolution essentially meant that trade remained relatively restricted, but nonetheless the symbolic nature of allowing OAS members to recognize the legitimacy of the revolutionary regime in Cuba represented a large shift in position by the United States.

Another briefing for a meeting between Assistant Secretary of State for Inter-American Relations and Rabasa held the same year, the United States was more outlined position was apparent from the fact that Mexico’s campaign to readmit Cuba to the OAS received a “personal confirmation [from the Secretary] of our continued support for the meeting.”<sup>68</sup> This meeting of the OAS did not make sure of Cuba’s acceptance by the inter-American community by amending the Rio Treaty to allow Cuba back into the organization, but it would still allow countries not to recognize the legitimate government on an individual basis through “freedom of action.”<sup>69</sup> Regardless of this stipulation, the spurring of the OAS by Mexico represented a small, but important step in the reintegration of Cuba back into the Latin American community, regardless of the reasoning behind these actions was in many ways out of Mexican self-interest. These actions also represented a firm rejection of the Washington line, despite the important relationship between the U.S. and Mexico.

The relationship between Cuba and the United States has often been depicted in the light of dominance rather than a tension due to a push and pull of conflicting interests and

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<sup>66</sup> April 1975, “Bilateral Talks During OASGA Mexico—Foreign Secretary Emilio Rabasa,” Emilio O. Rabasa Identifier 5893533, Container 30 (Old Box 16), NACP, 2.

<sup>67</sup> Ibid.

<sup>68</sup> June 24<sup>th</sup>, 1975, “Briefing on meeting between William D. Rogers and Emilio O. Rabasa,” Emilio O. Rabasa Identifier 5893533, Container 30 (Old Box 16), NACP, 6.

<sup>69</sup> Ibid., 7.

objectives. In this first model, Cuba and Latin America are depicted as subjugated by the United States, and U.S. foreign policy is portrayed as only representing national self-interest. The reality of geopolitics during the Cold War confrontation between Cuba and the United States was infinitely more complex than that paradigm allows. Often times, the policy of the United States converged with the foreign policy proposed and championed by Latin American nations, rather than imposed from above by the authority of Washington. Thomas C. Wright contended in *Latin America in the Era of the Cuban Revolution*, that one of the early fears caused by the Cuban Revolution, especially among Latin American elites, “was Castro’s active support of revolution in Latin America—a policy that countered the traditional Soviet approach of working gradually to build communist parties and allies for revolution at some future time.”<sup>70</sup>

This early stance on revolution in Latin America and subsequent actions taken by Cuban nationals in places like Venezuela and Bolivia informed the opinion of many Latin American leaders, and often led them to support the U.S. stance on Cuba out of national self-interest rather than dominance or coercion on the part of the United States. In many cases, this fear of revolution became a catalyst for some of the most repressive regimes of the twentieth century, and the human rights abuses committed by these governments “constituted some of the region’s darkest Cold War experiences, and—rightly or wrongly—were officially justified on the premise that Latin America’s economic, political, and social conditions pulled powerfully in the direction of revolution.”<sup>71</sup>

**Conclusion:** Despite this early support by most Latin American countries for Cuba’s isolation from the regional community, it has been shown that even the foreign policy

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<sup>70</sup> Thomas C. Wright, *Latin America in the Era of the Cuban Revolution* (Westport, CT: Praeger Publishers, 1991), 34.

<sup>71</sup> Williams, 245.

espoused by the United States represented a complex dialectical relationship between the U.S. and Latin America, as well as forces within the country itself. For instance, the pandering of the newly-exiled Cuban elite exercised a great deal of influence on the relationship that developed between the U.S. and the revolutionary government, which reflected the elite agenda of “recovering the homeland through a policy of hostility and isolation toward the island.”<sup>72</sup> While this program of seclusion promoted by a coalition of U.S. policy makers, Cuban exiles, and Latin American governments was largely successful, this ostracism of Cuba within the world community was not without its detractors, and thus, the island continued to have somewhat of an international support system outside of their newly formed relationship with the Soviet Union and the Eastern bloc. Whether this was France or Canada, who rejected the Washington line out of a desire to assert national autonomy, or Mexico and Spain who fought for the inclusion of Cuba within the inter-American community out of either a traditional relationship of immigration and trade in the case of Spain, or a desire for the legitimation of their own political system in the case of Mexico.

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<sup>72</sup> Lisandro Pérez, 140.

## Radio Free Cuba: Sowing Discord through the Airwaves

**Introduction:** Dating back to the Cuban struggles for independence from Spain of the nineteenth century, the United States represented a place for Cuban dissidents to find safe refuge. In some cases, this meant building a new life in the U.S., while for others it meant a sanctuary for those wishing to escape persecution long enough to form a plan of attack. Indeed, it was from his base of operations in New York that José Martí helped build up the Cuban Revolutionary Party (PRC) and formulated the plan to free Cuba from colonial bondage. Cuba's unique relationship with the United States had its origins in America's early nineteenth century imperial ambitions. Cuba, for many in the United States, signified the next logical geographic space for expansion. Indeed, as Richard Henry Dana Jr., a Bostonian visiting Cuba in the mid-nineteenth century noted, "to an American, from the free states, Cuba, presents an object of singular interest."<sup>73</sup> Foreshadowing the intimate, but ultimately tumultuous relationship between the two countries, he observed of Cuba that "she has been called the key to the Gulf of Mexico. But the Gulf of Mexico cannot be locked. Whoever takes her is more likely to find in her a key to Pandora's Box."<sup>74</sup>

By the time the final push for independence began in 1895, Spain, Cuba's imperial power, had long since ceased to provide the island with a market for its raw materials and a market to purchase finished goods. Since the mid-nineteenth century, the United States fulfilled both of those roles for Cuba. In *Cuba: Between Reform and Revolution*, Louis Pérez Jr., showed that by the time of the Cuban War for Independence, Spain's hegemonic position had largely broken down. By that point, the only reason Spain's administration of the island

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<sup>73</sup> Richard Henry Dana Jr., "A Boston Yankee's Observation of Religion, Politics, and Society in the Mid-Nineteenth," in *Background to Revolution: The Development of Modern Cuba*, edited by Robert Freeman Smith (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1966), 84.

<sup>74</sup> *Ibid.*, 93.

continued to be tenable was the compliance of segments of the creole elite, i.e. *hacendados*, planters, and the middle classes. Crucial to this continued support was the defense of private property and the colonial social hierarchy founded in highly-stratified racial divisions. As rebellion spread across the island two historical tendencies that had long existed emerged to play an important role. One was the desire for reform of the Spanish administrative structure while defending the creole elite's traditional property and privilege, and the other was a populist revolutionary tendency for social justice, economic freedom, and political democracy.<sup>75</sup>

Faced with a stalemate between the Cuban insurgents and Spanish authorities, and the destruction of productive forces from both sides, creole elites were confronted with finding a new way to protect their colonial privilege while maintaining access to a military force to defend their property.<sup>76</sup> In light of all these factors, many within the creole elite began to support the possibility of U.S. military intervention and even annexation by the United States. These gestures were met with a receptive audience in the United States, which, under the aegis of the sinking of the *U.S.S. Maine*, declared war against Spain on April 25, 1898. While what became known officially as the Spanish-American War in U.S. historiography curbed some of the more imperial inclinations within the U.S. government with the implementation of the Teller Amendment, it did so only nominally. The Teller Amendment essentially claimed that Cuba would receive full self-determination once the conflict was resolved and the island pacified. This amendment allowed the United States to appropriate

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<sup>75</sup> Louis Pérez Jr., *Cuba: Between Reform and Revolution*, 4<sup>th</sup> edition (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 121.

<sup>76</sup>Ibid., 133-134.

the entire peace process, which they negotiated unilaterally with Spain. This appropriation left the Cubans' dream for independence deferred.<sup>77</sup>

Military occupation of Cuba by the United States began on January 1<sup>st</sup>, 1899, of course to those who had spent a large part of 30 years fighting for the sovereignly recognition of the Cuban nation, this state of affairs could not stand. Thus, the forces of *Cuba Libre* played a prominent role in the political sphere during the Republic period. The United States, as Cuba's new imperial power, attempted to delegitimize the former revolutionaries by painting them as precipitous hotheads not ready for self-governance. Despite this campaign to temper the Cuban people's impulse toward the *independista* movement, they still triumphed in the elections of 1900. In order to solidify the United States' position, the Platt Amendment, named after U.S. Senator Orville H. Platt, was incorporated into the Permanent Treaty of 1903, which formally granted Cuba independence. Despite this formal grant of independence, the Platt Amendment still maintained the United States' dominant position of trade and commerce with the island. It allowed the U.S. to intervene in Cuba's affairs, to broker Cuba's international relations with other countries, to maintain defense installations on the island, and the structure of the newly formed republic would maintain the same political structure it had under military occupation.<sup>78</sup>

Writing in 1919, political scientist and State Department representative in Cuba, Chester Lloyd Jones patronizingly stated that "whether the Cuban people possess or can develop the degree of self-control for self-government is still, in view of recent history, an open question." He claimed of the Cuban people:

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<sup>77</sup> Ibid., 136-137.

<sup>78</sup> Ibid., 140-144.



extravagance in expenditure and willingness to consider to consider the holding of public office as an opportunity for taking selfish advantages, rather than as a call to service, have been far too prominent characteristics of Cuban politics.<sup>79</sup>

This paternalistic view of the Cuban nation on the part of a representative of formal U.S. power in Cuba far from delineating from the norm, exemplified U.S. attitudes toward Cuba. In order to maintain their hegemonic position, the United States needed local brokers of power. These local power brokers tended to be drawn from the same echelons as those who held sway during the Spanish colonial regime. Therefore, these local intermediaries came from the ranks of the landed elite, plantation owners, and middle class. Part of understanding Cuban-U.S. relations before and after the revolution, is acknowledging the power dynamics at play between local intermediaries and their colonial patrons, as well as their domestic constituency.

By the time of the Revolution of the 1933, which brought the dictatorship of Gerardo Machado to an end, the United States had occupied Cuba a total of three times: the first time between 1906 and 1909, the second in 1912, and the third between 1917 and 1922. Dr. Ramón Grau San Martín, the president of Cuba in the aftermath of the uprising of 1933, proved a threat to U.S. interests. For that reason, Sumner Welles, the Assistant Secretary of State for Latin American of the United States, went to Cuba in May of 1933 in order to find a way to assuage the situation without further military intervention. He found it in the form of Fulgencio Batista. A young military man, Batista understood, according to Welles, that “a concentration government in which the political groups and the commercial interest of the

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<sup>79</sup> Chester Lloyd Jones, “A North American View of the Relationship of Modern Cuba to the Policies and Interests of the United States,” in *Background to Revolution: The Development of Modern Cuba*, edited by Robert Freeman Smith (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1966), 64.

country could have confidence was an absolute necessity.”<sup>80</sup> After Grau San Martín stepped down, Batista acted as a political power broker behind the scenes for the remainder of the 1930s and in 1940 he was elected President, a position he held until 1944. Following Batista’s tenure as president, a powerful movement for reform converged to create the *Ortodoxo* party. In order to prevent these forces from taking power, Batista engineered a coup that preempted the elections of 1952. This time around, as Marifeli Pérez-Stable stressed in *The Cuban Revolution: Origins, Course, and Legacy*, Batista lacked popular support and relied upon the armed forces.<sup>81</sup>

Yanna Yannakakis’ work, *The Art of Being In-Between: Native Intermediaries, Indian Identity, and Local Rule in Colonial Oaxaca*, offers an important theoretical framework for analyzing the use of local intermediaries in the project of empire. While, of course, there is a large distinction between Colonial Oaxaca of the seventeenth century and Cuba under U.S. hegemony in the twentieth century, there are important parallels to be drawn. Yannakakis noted that “in most contexts, native intermediaries had to appeal to at least two audience who were often at odds,” in the case of indigenous intermediaries that meant the Spanish and their indigenous corporate group, but for Cuban elites it meant that they were beholden to U.S. business interests and the government, as well as the Cuban people.<sup>82</sup> Similar to the native intermediaries in Colonial Oaxaca, Cuban elites used the general unwillingness of the United States to continuously intervene militarily and the

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<sup>80</sup> Summer Welles and Cordell Hull, “The United States Confronts the 1933 Revolution,” in *The Cuba Reader: History, Culture, Politics*, edited by Aviva Chomsky, Barry Carr, and Pamela Maria Smorkaloff (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2003), 286.

<sup>81</sup> Marifeli Pérez-Stable, *The Cuban Revolution: Origins, Course, and Legacy*, 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 53.

<sup>82</sup> Yanna Yannakakis, *The Art of Being In-Between: Native Intermediaries, Indian Identity, and Local Rule in Colonial Oaxaca* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2008), 13.

relative regionalism of U.S. hegemony to their advantage in order to wield “considerable political and cultural power for themselves.”<sup>83</sup>

While this relationship opened up a place for Cuban elites to maintain a certain degree of power on the island, it also meant that they felt dual pressures from above and below. Rather than a desire for complete independence, these elites desired to maintain the power structures that allowed them to preserve their traditional privileges within the colonial hierarchy. In effect, this affirmed Cuban elites to be forces of continuity or reform, not revolution.<sup>84</sup> Thus, key to understanding the Cuban diaspora after the revolutionary rupture that occurred in 1959 is to look at the diaspora community through this lens of the intermediary relationship, as it offers an explanation for many of the observable trends within Cuban exile culture. When the more radical nationalistic characteristics of the Cuban Revolution became clear, many of these traditional upholders of colonial norms fled to the United States. Many expected the stay to be temporary, and that the U.S. would soon intervene to pacify the insurgency and return the island to its pre-revolutionary conditions.

Eventually, with the routing of U.S.-backed exile forces at Playa Girón in 1961, and the near catastrophic consequences of the Cuban Missile Crisis, the longevity of the revolutionary regime seemed assured and many Cubans in the United States began to realize that they might not see their homeland as soon as they originally planned. As María Cristina García noted in *Havana USA: Cuban Exiles and Cuban Americans in South Florida, 1959-1994*, the first wave of Cuban emigration to the United States formed the economic base for every subsequent wave. These solidly middle-class Cubans’ strong desires to restore the

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<sup>83</sup> Ibid., 18.

<sup>84</sup> Ibid., 42.

<sup>11</sup> María Cristina García, *Havana USA: Cuban Exiles and Cuban American in South Florida, 1959-1994* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996), 2-4.

*patria* (homeland) to the same conditions that had allowed them flourish in Cuba helped the exile community to learn how to “work within the American political system.”<sup>85</sup> Many scholars have tended to portray the exile enclave in South Florida as monolithic and staunchly conservative, but this picture largely ignores the diversity of the Cuban community in the United States. On the other hand, it was the most militant forces of conservatism that maintained hegemony within the exile community, due to their experience governing in Pre-Revolutionary Cuba, their strong economic position in Miami, and a better understanding of the political process in the United States.

As their arrested development vis-à-vis a return to Cuba became clearer, Cuban exiles with the aid of the Federal government, began to build new lives in the United States. Programs were created in order to help the process of assimilation. This aid included the creation of bilingual programs in Dade County schools, programs to help relicense medical professionals under U.S. standards, and financial and material aid to help as a foundation for those who had left the island with nothing. Cuban exiles also received assistance from private charitable organizations, such as those connected to the Catholic Church. Legislation was passed that gave Cubans a far less restricted path to citizenship than most Latin American immigrants. For instance, The Cuban Adjustment Act of 1966 allowed Cubans to apply for citizenship within two years of entering the country.<sup>86</sup> Undoubtedly, such legal concessions to Cuban immigrants solidified their status as favored immigrants and their public image as symbols of anti-Communism.

By the late 1970s, at the precipice of the Mariel Boatlift, the Cuban exile community was already an important voting bloc and Cubans firmly ingrained themselves within the

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<sup>86</sup> Ibid., 42.

American political system. With the flood of new emigration out of the Port of Mariel in 1980, and the subsequent political fallout, the issue of Cuba once again proved crucial to clenching victory in U.S. domestic politics. Ronald Reagan became President of the United States, in no small part, due to conservative Cuban lobbying efforts. The reasons for voting Reagan were many, but many cast their ballot due to a belief that he would get tough on Cuban leadership on the island. In order to best capitalize on the prevailing political climate, Cuban businessman Jorge Mas Canosa, along with other Miami entrepreneurs, founded the Cuban American National Foundation (CANF) in 1981. The CANF was a lobbying organization devoted to influencing policy toward Cuba and domestic issues that affected the exile community.<sup>87</sup> Much has been made of the influence of the Cuban diaspora lobby on the United States' foreign policy, but this view allots far too much agency to Cuban émigrés who were limited by the constraints of the American political structure.

Indeed, as Cuban exile turned scholar Maria de los Angeles Torres noted in her book *In the Land of Mirrors: Cuban Exile Politics in the United States*, it was not so much a question of “how ethnic groups influence foreign policy,” but “how the foreign and domestic policies of host and home countries have influenced the politics of émigré groups, particularly Cuban exiles.”<sup>88</sup> One of the most important exemplars for exponents of the influence of the Cuban lobby within the U.S. government has been the passing of the legislation that created Radio Martí. Radio Martí is a program meant to subvert the authority of the Cuban government by the broadcasting of news and other programming that paints the regime in a negative light and promotes dissidence on the island. The program was based upon the model of Radio Free Europe, which broadcasted media highly critical of the

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<sup>87</sup> Ibid., 147.

<sup>88</sup> Maria de los Angeles Torres, *In the Land of Mirrors: Cuban Exile Politics in the United States* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2001), 31.

respective regimes targeted. Rather than a continuation of U.S. foreign policy endemic to the Cold War even within the Cuban context, many have seen the creation of Radio Martí as representative of the exile lobby's influence within the State Department.

**Methodology:** Radio Martí was overseen by the United States Information Agency (USIA) and this analysis will make use of various assessments of Cold War broadcasting on the part of Communist countries done by the agency. This study will also analyze independent reviews of Radio Martí contracted by the federal government. Obtained from the National Archives at College Park in Baltimore, Maryland, these studies serve to put Radio Martí within the larger context of U.S. foreign policy during the Cold War. To best synthesize the information within the larger historical narrative, two other primary documents have been used. The first, a microfilm collection of *Granma Weekly Review*, the English language newspaper put out by the Cuban government on a weekly basis, and the second, Chief of Mission of the U.S. Interest Section, Wayne Smith's memoir entitled *The Closest of Enemies: A Personal and Diplomatic Account of U.S.-Cuban Relations Since 1957*.

Both sources are problematic in some sense; for example, *Granma Weekly Review* offers state-sanctioned Cuban domestic and international news with its own inherent bias. Wayne Smith's memoirs were published over five years after his tenure as Chief of Mission and, of course, his summarization of events reflected his position as a representative of the United States government and its foreign policy. At the same time, both sources offer an important perspective from which to view the events that transpired with the ascendancy of Ronald Reagan and the right-wing coalition that brought him to victory in November of 1980 and the subsequent collapse in the normalization process between the two countries. How

both governments reacted to and portrayed Cuban emigration to the United States was integral to the formation of both countries' foreign and domestic policies.

As de los Angeles Torres noted, for the Cuban government, émigrés “became the vehicle through which the government could rid itself of political opponents and consolidate power. If dissenters were externalized, competition for power would be reduced.”<sup>89</sup> For the United States, newly arrived Cuban exiles “became the conduit through which U.S. foreign policies were implemented,” and as a channel for U.S. efforts “to overthrow and discredit” the revolutionary regime, they “came to fulfill the military, propagandistic and symbolic needs of the United States.”<sup>90</sup> These depictions of Cuban exiles are found throughout the pages of the *Granma Weekly Review*, and in Smith’s disapproval of what he saw as the blind ideology of the Reagan Administration’s foreign policy toward Cuba. While there are issues involved with using both sources, any source used runs similar risks, and the benefit of the insight to be gained from both sources outweighs these issues.

**Thesis:** Many scholars have emphasized the influence of Cuban exile organizations on American foreign policy, but such a view is problematic, as it tends to ignore the historical context of the United States’ relationship to Cuba, and the importance of Cuban elites as functionaries of U.S. hegemony. Given their position; those within the exile community were limited in the way that they could relate to their *patria* and influence the foreign policy position of their adoptive home. Often, this meant working within the existing political structure and participating in domestic politics. From this perspective, victories like Radio Martí represented less the triumph of exile organizations, but more a convergence of interests with the current administration and its foreign policy toward the island. While it

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<sup>89</sup> Ibid., 53.

<sup>90</sup> Ibid., 55.

would be unfair to discount the importance of Cuban organizing in the United States, it is far more illuminating to look at policy decisions like Radio Martí within the larger historical-political context to the Cuban-U.S. relationship.

***El Diálogo: The Logic of Regime Change Challenged:***

The Administration of President Jimmy Carter, in many ways attempted to shift the foreign policy paradigm for Cuba. In the late 1970s, a policy of rapprochement between the two countries became the norm for a brief time. This short-lived, but integral moment in Cuban-U.S. relations represented an attempt to change the overall logic of the United States' relationship to Cuba, and vice versa. For the exile community in the United States it meant a challenge to the hegemony of conservative Cuban elites, and the ascendance of a forward-thinking constituency of Cubans motivated to repair the severed links to their homeland and witness a normalization of relations between the U.S. and Cuba. While this period may have appeared to have been a small lapse in continuity in the relations between Cuba and the United States, 1980 would prove that this change was merely surface level and that in many ways the small cracks in the political structure were more superficial than substantial. The attempted *Diálogo* (dialogue) between certain sectors of the exile community and the Cuban government exemplified the degree of superficiality of the change in relations between the United States and Cuba, and the utilization of expatriates to further the political ends of both countries.

During the Carter years of the late-1970s, the protracted attempt at détente between Cuba and the United States allowed for openness within the Cuban émigré community that did not exist earlier. It was this opening that permitted sectors of that community to begin discussing the possibility of coming to terms with the existing regime in Cuba, and sowing



the seeds for a new relationship to the island that many had not seen since childhood. With origins in the détente process initiated by the Carter Administration, this *Diálogo* also represented the tendency of both the Cuban and United States government to use Cuban exiles to further their respective causes. In most cases, this tended to be the diminishment of the other's legitimacy.

The stated cornerstone of the Carter Administration was an emphasis on human rights; under those circumstances, it should be unsurprising that part of negotiations with Cuba centered on the release of political prisoners. Negotiations initiated in 1977 soon became complicated by the issues that had plagued Cuban-U.S. relations since 1959. That complication was the projection of their respective social systems into the international arena, particularly the Third World. Since the mid-1970s, Cubans had been engaged in supporting liberation movements on the African continent. To authorities in the United States, this Cuban position represented a threat to U.S. interests and thus proved a sticking point in the negotiations between both countries. Cuba remained unwilling to withdraw its support for these African liberation movements, while the United States continued to make withdrawal a necessary precursor to any further negotiations. Unfortunately, this made any possible inroads even more unlikely.

As Wayne Smith noted in his memoirs, even the objective of curbing human rights abuses were obscured by the obstinacy of the United States toward Cuban internationalism. Following the conclusion, “that the Cubans were not disposed to negotiate the withdrawal of their troops from Africa, the NSC (National Security Council) instructed the Department of State to discuss politics with the Cubans,” but with the stipulation that they should neither

“raise nor discuss with them any other matter, whether bilateral or multilateral in nature.”<sup>91</sup>

Such limitations on negotiations hindered progress on both sides. It often left one or the other in a state of confusion only heightened by the traditional antagonisms between the United States and Cuba.

Eventually, in November of 1978, the Cuban government agreed to release thousands of political prisoners. In an attempt to downplay the amount of continued communications with the Cubans, the NSC ordered that the reasons for the prisoners’ release should not be publicized. Much to the chagrin of Smith, who understandably could not contemplate as to why the “the president’s human-rights policies were to be given no credit at all,”<sup>92</sup> This obscuring of reality by the executive branch bureaucracy ultimately limited the inroads that the prisoner release made, and left the true mechanism for the prisoners’ release responsible to be taken credit for. Initial exuberance for less turbulent relations between the two countries opened up the exile community to return to their homeland for the first time since the Cuban Revolution had transformed social relations on the island.

María de los Angeles Torres, writing in her capacity as a participant rather than as a historian recalled that “everything looked beautiful, even the young military guards poised with shiny rifles whose job it was to guard the Palace of the Revolution from us. It was a time of optimism.”<sup>93</sup> Torres was part of the Antonio Maceo Brigade, named after the Cuban Army Independence General; the exile organization was integral to the *Diálogo* and championed a closer relationship between émigrés and their homeland. Militant anti-Castroism had been far from purged from the ranks of the exile community at large, and for

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<sup>91</sup> Wayne Smith, *The Closest of Enemies: A Personal and Diplomatic Account of U.S.-Cuban Relations Since 1957* (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 1987), 148.

<sup>92</sup> *Ibid.*, 161

<sup>93</sup> *Ibid.*, 9.

that reason, many who towed a similar line to the brigade members found themselves at the wrong end of terrorist violence. Carlos Muñiz Varela, a member of the organization, was killed by these forces for his support of normalization in Puerto Rico.<sup>94</sup>

In an interview with the Mexican newspaper *Uno más Uno* that was reprinted in the March 9<sup>th</sup> issue of *Granma Weekly Review* in 1980, a representative of the brigade noted the difficulty the attitudes these extremists placed on the normalization process. Andres Gómez claimed that the Cuban community in the United States faced “ideological oppression based on terror,” and that this prevented “political debate and the evolution” of the community.<sup>95</sup> The threat of violence only became more and more pronounced as a broader coalition of exiles joined the Committee of 75, who journeyed to Cuba in order to take part in the *Diálogo* over November and December of 1978. Indeed, Smith recalled once back in Miami, “several committee members were set upon and beaten. The lives of others were threatened, and one was in fact murdered.”<sup>96</sup>

Despite the repression faced by these exile activists, many believed they were making incremental progress toward their goal of normal relations between Cuba and the United States. In the media, the release of 3,600 prisoners after the Committee of 75’s visits in 1978 was portrayed as the victory of groups like the Antonio Maceo Brigade. These groups “pose[d] a threat to the interests” of conservative hegemony, and as a result, much of the violent repression of *diálogo* supporters was symptomatic of the fear of “losing control of the situation” within the exile community.<sup>97</sup> Unfortunately, from Smith’s account it is apparent that the decision to release the prisoners had been made prior to the arrival of the Committee.

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<sup>94</sup> Ibid.

<sup>95</sup> “Cubans Living in the United States Subjected to Ideological Oppression,” *Granma Weekly Review* (Havana, Cuba), Year 15 Number 9, March 9, 1980, 7.

<sup>96</sup> Ibid., 162.

<sup>97</sup> “Cubans”, 7.

They were instead the result of months of negotiation between Bernardo Benes, a prominent exile banker, the Cuban government, and the U.S. State Department, but many like Torres were unaware of the reasons for the prisoners' release until the publication of his memoirs in 1987.<sup>98</sup>

From this view, it is clear that for both Cuba and the United States the exile community represented a means to further their agendas. Both sides portrayed the émigrés in a way that fit their ideological narrative. While activists within the Cuban diaspora may have been constrained by the respective political structures of both Cuba and the United States, this should not undermine the real material contributions that proponents of normalization made on either side of the Florida Straits. In order to take advantage of loosening travel restrictions, travel agencies were set up to maneuver through the red tape imposed by both governments. For exiles to travel to Cuba, they had to obtain permission from the Cuban government, which in turn meant a strong working relationship with the bureaucracy. In the United States, they had to contend with the embargo and, thus, the travel agencies had to carefully follow the dictates of the Treasury Department.<sup>99</sup>

Through this work, it is clear that despite constraints placed upon Cuban exiles by governments of both Cuba and the United States, many were able to act as agents and establish a point of contact with their homeland that was previously inconceivable. Ultimately, though, these limitations curtailed continuous interaction between the expatriate community and the *patria*, and were reliant upon the more congenial political atmosphere between the two countries. Attempts to forge a new set of relations between Cuba and the United States broke down, due in part to the revolutionary moments occurring throughout

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<sup>98</sup> de los Angeles Torres, 96.

<sup>99</sup> *Ibid.*, 99.

Latin America, which included the success of the Nicaraguan and Grenadian Revolutions, and the insurgency against the military-civilian *junta* in El Salvador. While these events may have colored Cuban-U.S. relations, there were other factors that went into the further breakdown of negotiations between the two countries.

One of these factors was the failure to prosecute Cubans who hijacked boats and planes in order to reach the United States. Both countries signed hijacking agreements long before the process of normalization, and the Cuban government saw its lack of enforcement as a declaration of the United States' true intentions. Often, the U.S. allowed Cubans that arrived by small craft to obtain immigration visas, even if they would not have done so through proper diplomatic channels. According to Smith, "to the Cubans, we thus appeared to be encouraging illegal departures even as we restricted legal means of entry."<sup>100</sup> This status quo came to a head after the U.S. refused to uphold the hijacking agreement when seven armed and nine unarmed Cubans commandeered a Liberian Freighter called the *Lisette*. These hijackers, rather than jailed or prosecuted in the United States, were paroled.<sup>101</sup>

In a speech before the 3<sup>rd</sup> Congress of the Federation of Cuban Women (FMC) on March 8, 1980, Fidel Castro acknowledged these incidents where he made Cuba's official position known. He claimed that "they[the U.S.] all but give those who seize boats a hero's welcome."<sup>102</sup> In response, Fidel threatened that if the United States failed to "discourage illegal departures from the country," Cuba would in turn "also have to take measures."<sup>103</sup>

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<sup>100</sup> Smith, 199-200.

<sup>101</sup> *Ibid.*, 201.

<sup>102</sup> Fidel Castro, "Speech by Fidel At Closing Session of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Congress of the Federation of Cuban Women (FMC) March 8, 1980, Year of 2<sup>nd</sup> Congress," *Granma Weekly Review* (Havana, Cuba), March 16, 1980, Year 15 Number 11, 4.

<sup>103</sup> *Ibid.*

Smith pleaded through official channels that the Department of Justice should act to rectify Cuban concerns, but they failed to do so. He speculated that this was due to a lack of political will to prosecute in Miami where the anti-Castro sentiment would disallow the possibility of conviction, but as Smith noted “promising conviction was beyond the power of the Department of Justice, promising to uphold the law was not.”<sup>104</sup> Failures like this inability to prosecute hijackers converged with issues that transpired in Cuba to bring about the conditions that would ultimately end the years’ long rapprochement between the island and its traditional nemesis to the north, culminating in the Mariel Boatlift and the election of Ronald Reagan.

#### **Exodus From the Port of Mariel: Antagonisms Reaffirmed:**

Born on February 22, 1953 in the Chivirico Township located in the Oriente province, by all accounts, Private Pedro Ortiz Cabrera was the archetypal child of the Cuban Revolution. As a child, he joined the Union of Pioneers of Cuba. In 1959, at the behest of the newly triumphant revolutionary regime and its call to raise agricultural productivity, he harvested coffee in his native region. As of the record-breaking 1970 *zafra*, he became a permanent cane cutter at the Paquito Rosales sugar mill. The following year, he enlisted to become a member of the Centennial Youth Column and remained a part of the organization until 1973 when he became a member of the Young Communist League. That same year, at 20 years old, he was selected to join the Embassy Defense Unit. According to government officials he was chosen “for his sense of responsibility, his political maturity, and the thoroughness with which he had always carried out all missions entrusted to him.”<sup>105</sup> It was at his post that Cabrera ultimately met his demise after another sentry opened fire on a bus

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<sup>104</sup> Smith, 205.

<sup>105</sup> “Biographical Data on Private Pedro Ortiz Cabrera, Guard at the Peruvian Who Was Killed on April 1,” *Granma Weekly Review* (Havana, Cuba), April 13, 1980, Year 15 Number 15, 1.

that crashed through the gates of the Peruvian embassy complex. After this incident, the Cuban government removed protection detail from the Peruvian embassy. Leading up to the event, Cuban malcontents had been using foreign embassies as a means to leave the island by more than dubious claims of political asylum. According to Smith, many left “not because they had political difficulties, but because they wanted to leave the country in search of a better life.”<sup>106</sup>

The Cuban government condemned the actions of these dissidents in an official statement three days later and categorized those who desired to leave Cuba as the dregs of society, calling them “common criminals,” “antisocial elements,” borrowing a term from Marx, described them as “lumpen,” or the element of society that would act as an impediment to the achievement of classlessness.<sup>107</sup> In explaining the motive behind removing embassy protection, the government harkened back to the island’s former position of isolation in the Americas. They claimed that other Latin American countries as “allies of imperialism, harassed Cuba, imposed the blockade, robbed it of its international sugar markets and committed all sorts of crimes against our country.”<sup>108</sup> Further, “the oligarchic and reactionary governments in existence in Latin America followed suit, the sole, honorable exception being Mexico,” and brazenly claimed that “Cuba is not afraid to face a similar experience once more.”<sup>109</sup>

Later, on April 7<sup>th</sup>, the Cuban government released another statement that claimed anyone who wished to leave the island could do so by gathering at the Peruvian embassy complex, but they would have to receive guaranteed passage to their destination of choice.

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<sup>106</sup> Smith, 199.

<sup>107</sup> “Statement By the Revolutionary Government of Cuba,” *Granma Weekly Review* (Havana, Cuba), April 13, 1980, Year 15 Number 15, 1.

<sup>108</sup> Ibid.

<sup>109</sup> Ibid.

This meant the countries in question would have to provide asylum. According to the decree around 3,000 had gathered. Quick to dismiss the discontented mass of Cubans, government officials added that “to judge by their dress, manners and language, seldom has a ‘select’ group gathered anywhere.”<sup>110</sup> Eventually, Costa Rica agreed to accept immigrants, and an airlift to San José began on April 16<sup>th</sup>. The Cuban government found the portrayal of the airlift in the media distasteful, and thus, halted it in favor of a boatlift from the Port of Mariel just outside of Havana.<sup>111</sup> They told exiles living in the United States that anyone who still had family on the island could pick them up. This action was partially a means of salvaging the poor situation in favor of the regime, but was also due to the blatant flouting of the hijacking agreement that had occurred over the preceding months.

This Cuban perspective can be seen in the Cuban academic journal, *Line of March*, in which a Cuban scholar declared that U.S. immigration toward Cuba historically “exploited[ed] immigration and us[ed] it as an aggressive propaganda tool.”<sup>112</sup> Since the abrupt rupture between the United States and Cuba that occurred in 1960s, the U.S.’ immigration was viewed as giving Cubans a most-favored-immigrant status, and in the view of the revolutionary regime this constituted a threat to the building of socialism. The ease at which those who emigrated received citizenship and the multitude of aid programs offered to Cubans that were not available to other immigrants from Latin America, was seen by the regime as a means of politicizing immigration to the benefit of the United States. It also allowed many to abandon the austere process of constituting the new Cuban nation. Of course, as the pronouncements above show, the Cuban government was also not above

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<sup>110</sup> “Cuba’s Position,” *Granma Weekly Review* (Havana, Cuba) April 13, 1980, Year 15 Number 15, 2.

<sup>111</sup> Smith, 210-212.

<sup>112</sup> Rafael Hernández, “U.S. Cuban Policy and the Cuban Community Question,” *Line of March: A Marxist-Leninist Journal of Rectification*, no. 18 (Fall 1985), 10.



politicizing emigration either. The *marielitos*, as they became pejoratively known in South Florida, were depicted in ways that made them appear as traitors to the Cuban Revolution. This came at a time when exiles had only recently garnered a term of endearment, from being formerly known as *gusanos* (worms) to *mariposas* (butterflies), due to the experience with the *diálogo*.<sup>113</sup>

Just as quickly as the reconciliation between the diaspora and the homeland began, it abruptly ended, and exiles once again became relegated to the position of counterrevolutionaries. In the United States, the newly arrived immigrants provided a stark contrast to those of previous waves. The first two waves of immigration had disproportionately represented professionals and managers, and while the Cuban census of 1953 determined that 27% of the island's population was black or mulatto, they only represented 3% of those who immigrated to the United States.<sup>114</sup> Many seized upon the Cuban government's description and determined that the *marielitos* were a threat to the Cubans' special immigration status. Of the over 100,000 that emigrated from the Port of Mariel, 26,000 had criminal records, but what that raw figure does not distinguish is the fact that many of the "laws" broken by these Cubans would not have been considered as such in the United States.

In contrast to popular imagination, only 4% were actually mentally disabled or serious criminals, and 80% had no record at all. Their acceptance was not helped by the fact that between 15-40% were either black or mulatto, and that 70% of them were men. Unfortunately, due to this demographic constitution coupled with the popular belief of their

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<sup>113</sup> de los Angeles Torres, 98.

<sup>114</sup> Garcia, 43-46.

criminality, many were faced with a harsh new reality in the United States.<sup>115</sup> Most importantly, the Mariel Boatlift signaled the end of rapprochement between the United States and Cuba, and the reassertion of conservative hegemony in the exile community. Some became disillusioned with the prospect of normalization, while others just remained silent, as ideological divergence became no longer tolerated. Once again, immigration transformed into a tool of foreign policy during the Cold War. In November of 1980, Ronald Reagan won the Presidential Election, in part due to his hardline posturing toward Cuba and other Communist countries, and under his administration relations between the two countries took a decidedly different turn.

### **A Strategy of Dealing with Cuba in the 1980s: Rejection of Rapprochement**

In his book *Constructing US Foreign Policy: The Curious Case of Cuba*, David Bernell asserted that once Reagan and his devotees seized the reins of power in Washington, the paradigm that formulated foreign policy shifted. Rather than accept what they saw as America's accommodation to shifts in geopolitics, the administration viewed certain elements within the country as a cancer to the body politic that would have to be removed in order to make the United States healthy again. On the world stage, they believed that "the Soviets with a great deal of help from the Cubans, had asserted themselves around the world at America's expense."<sup>116</sup> In this view, Cuba was reduced to a client-state of its patron, the Soviet Union. Not only did this perception reduce the agency of Cuba, it placed the island in the position of an aggressor toward the United States that obstructed the U.S.' ability to reassert its traditional dominance in Latin America.

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<sup>115</sup> Ibid., 64-68.

<sup>116</sup> David Bernell, *Constructing US Foreign Policy: The Curious Case of Cuba* (New York: Routledge, 2011), 71-75.

In this stringent ideological world view there was no room for alternative narratives or perspectives, often that meant eschewing reality in favor of foreign policy that followed the directives informed by that view. Edward Gonzalez’s work for the RAND Corporation, entitled *A Strategy for Dealing with Cuba in the 1980s*, represented exactly this ascendant anti-Communist paradigm. Published in 1982, the work outlines recommendations for dealing with the newly constituted Cuban threat. For Gonzalez, Cuba constituted the main threat to U.S. hegemony and was the catalyst for all revolutionary violence present in the Caribbean Basin. From this view, Nicaragua and Grenada represented “opportunit[ies]” to be “exploit[ed]” by Cuba for its’ own ends.<sup>117</sup> With Cuba as the constant instigator, there was little room to analyze domestic reasons for these insurrections. In Latin America, repressive military regimes predominated, and that many even colluded to deal with dissidents is well-documented. It did not matter to observers like Gonzalez that in Grenada:

in the aftermath [of the revolution], ammunition made in Chile was discovered in the basements of the police stations, and later it became known that top ranking officials had received antisubversion training with Pinochet’s thugs.<sup>118</sup>

Such evidence did little to dissuade Gonzalez, and in his report it was clear that not only did Cuba motivate these revolutionary groups to topple their respective regimes—but the internationalist aid it did give was a self-serving way to legitimate the regime to the Cuban people and the world.<sup>119</sup>

In light of this cynical view, it is not surprising that any Cuban overtures were seen as merely empty gestures meant to pacify critics of the regime, and thus, the administration’s

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<sup>117</sup> Edward Gonzalez, *A Strategy for Dealing with Cuba in the 1980s* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 1982), 12.

<sup>118</sup> Roberto Morejon, “Grenada: An Unexpectedly Bright Jewel,” *Granma Weekly Review* (Havana, Cuba), February 17, 1980, Year 15 Number 7, 1.

<sup>119</sup> Gonzalez, 19.

policy of aggression was warranted.<sup>120</sup> Not only was it necessary for this policy to be implemented, the political will or “domestic consensus need[ed] to be nourished and maintained by one U.S. Administration to the next.” This unanimity of public opinion was necessary to establish “sufficient support for sustained pressures against Cuba during the course of the 1980s.”<sup>121</sup> By doing so, the United States would have a stronger clarity of purpose that would bolster its allies in the region and in Western Europe. Part of Gonzalez’s proposal for putting pressure on Cuba, involved the use of mass media, in particular radio. Essentially, of Cuban state media, Gonzalez remarked that the means of circulating information was “pedantic, selective, and politicized.”<sup>122</sup> In that light, a program like the proposed Radio Martí could offer an alternative to the monotony of state media.

#### **Radio Martí and the Cuban American National Foundation: Mass Media Subversion:**

At the time of *A Strategy for Dealing with Cuba in 1980s*’ publishing in 1982, Radio Martí had failed to garner support from Congress, and for this reason it was in a temporary state of limbo. The idea for Radio Martí originated with Jorge Mas Canosa, the President of the Cuban American National Foundation. Mas made the formal proposal for a “Radio Free Cuba” on November 8, 1980, after he witnessed the discontent among many of the *marielitos*. Radio Free Cuba would replace the regional broadcast of Voice of America (VOA) in Spanish with a broadcast modeled after Radio Free Europe/ Radio Liberty. The latter, rather than focusing on projecting American ideals abroad, like the VOA, produced programming that was overtly critical of Communist regimes.<sup>123</sup> Gonzalez’s suggestion for Radio Martí programming closely follows this original intent. So as to best fit into the frame

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<sup>120</sup> Ibid., 38.

<sup>121</sup> Ibid., 100.

<sup>122</sup> Ibid., 113.

<sup>123</sup> Nicholas Cull, *The Cold War and the United States Information Agency: American Propaganda and Public Diplomacy, 1945-1989* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 407.

of reference of Cubans socialized by the Cuban Revolution, he asserted that the programming should include:

a weekly analysis of the regime that employed a Marxist framework and that focused on the “new class” emerging in Communist Cuba, and the evidence of continued “class struggle” and “exploitation” under the Castro regime.<sup>124</sup>

Such an approach was not only subtle in its criticism of the regime, it would be less likely to appear to its listeners as overtly pro-American propaganda, and thus, more effective in its desired purpose—to foment dissent on the island.

In order to boost chances of the programs approval, National Security Advisor Richard Allen announced on March 23, 1981, that Radio Free Cuba would become Radio Martí, and that it would be placed under the purview of the VOA.<sup>125</sup> In 1982, Wayne Smith was recalled to Washington in order to consult on a foreign policy paper that involved Radio Martí. According to Smith, the working hypothesis of the policy paper was that the regime could be intimidated into compliance with American authority. To do so meant increasing the already high level of tension between the U.S. and Cuba. Of course, the already fragile relations could not withstand to become any tauter without the risk of completely fraying once again. It was then, that Smith identified the Reagan Administration’s modus operandi toward Cuba. The Cold War policy of escalation and anti-Communism, inherent to the administrations’ foreign policy meant that “normalization was ruled out even as a distant possibility, no matter what Cuba did,” and Radio Martí was crucial to that aggressive stance.<sup>126</sup>

Despite the hardline approach taken by the executive branch, some congressmen refused to give Radio Martí the greenlight with support from a faction within the USIA.

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<sup>124</sup> Gonzalez, 118.

<sup>125</sup> Cull, 407.

<sup>126</sup> Smith, 245.

These forces felt that it may have been “counterproductive” and set “bad precedent.”<sup>127</sup>

Eventually, these initial reservations were overcome, and Radio Martí passed through congress in September of 1983 and was put under the jurisdiction of the VOA. For Smith, the passage amounted to a small victory for forces of compromise and moderation, as the station would not be able to “broadcast strident propaganda” and do “tremendous harm.”<sup>128</sup>

For the CANF on the other hand, this was a successful return on political capital that the organization invested into passing the legislation and the foundation’s growing presence in Washington. To understand the CANF’s role in creating Radio Martí is to not only recognize the organization’s role in formulating foreign policy, but also maintaining conservative hegemony in the Cuban exile community.

In 1980, Cuban-expatriate businesses generated \$2.5 billion in profits. Of the almost 500,000 Cubans in the Miami-Dade County area 40% were professionals. On top of that, 18,000 Cuban-owned businesses existed.<sup>129</sup> By that same year, and in time for the November’s presidential election, 55% of eligible Cubans in Dade County were American citizens.<sup>130</sup> In both the election of 1980 and 1984, 90% of Dade County Cubans cast their ballot for Ronald Reagan.<sup>131</sup> In 1981, it was in this political atmosphere that the CANF was born. The Foundation also formed a Political Action Committee to fund the campaigns of congressmen willing to take a hard stance on Cuba. This Free Cuba PAC was responsible for \$385, 000 in donations between 1983 and 1988 to campaigns for candidates on both sides of the aisle—two of these politicians, Democrat Lloyd Bentsen and Republican Dan Quayle, went on to become vice-presidential candidates in 1988. By 1986, the CANF budget reached

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<sup>127</sup> Ibid., 246.

<sup>128</sup> Ibid., 269.

<sup>129</sup> García, 108-109.

<sup>130</sup> Ibid., 113.

<sup>131</sup> Ibid., 146.

\$1.5 million.<sup>132</sup> Much of the leadership of the CANF, accustomed to life in the United States, had no intention to return to Cuba. On the other hand, as García noted, they “want[ed] to play a role in Cuba’s political and economic reconstruction.”

In a sense, the CANF and its maintenance of a hardline position to their former patria, represented part of wealthy Cuban elites’ traditional position as intermediaries on the island. Even in the United States, they acted as mediators to the diaspora and helped shape how exiles related to their adoptive homeland. It was under their leadership that the antagonistic relationship to Cuba was maintained. Of course, while this state of affair benefitted Cuban elites, it would have been untenable without the support of the federal government. Without Washington’s backing, the conservative hegemony over the Cuban émigré could not have been maintained. On the other hand, this limited the options of the Cuban exiles who wished for the immediate overthrow of Fidel Castro. While some may have continued to pursue extralegal measures, the CANF and Free Cuba PAC represented Cuban elites’ commitment to remaining within the United States’ existing political structures.

The approval of Radio Martí was the culmination of that effort, and represented a convergence of interests within the Reagan Administration. Smith recalled in his memoirs that “the administration further, had no interests in practical solution which advanced U.S. interests; rather, it was intent on proving an ideological point.”<sup>133</sup> Originally scheduled to go online on the 132<sup>nd</sup> anniversary of José Martí’s birth, the operation met with some difficulties, and so Paul Drew was hired on to get the station up and running. Radio Martí began broadcasting on May 20, 1985—a day after the centennial of Martí’s death and the 83<sup>rd</sup> anniversary of the end of U.S. military occupation—the broadcast was held over the

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<sup>132</sup> Ibid., 147-150.

<sup>133</sup> Smith, 260.

1180 AM wave band.<sup>134</sup> In response the Cuban government constructed two new 500-KW transmitters, which were exponentially more powerful than American commercial broadcasting capabilities. These hulking transmitters could broadcast to locations as distant as Alaska on a medium wave.

This escalation very well could have amounted to a direct confrontation between the United States and Cuba; officials in Washington were not opposed—at least in rhetoric—to supporting tactical missions to take out these transmitters.<sup>135</sup> To contemporary readers, this preoccupation over who controlled the radio waves may seem nonsensical, but at the height of the Cold War, some believed that the clash of ideologies would be determined by whoever could best circulate information. Fixation on radio broadcast can be seen in a Working Paper entitled “Communist International Radio Broadcasting to Latin America and North America Decreased In 1983-1984,” which was prepared for the USIA on January 14, 1986. The work was commissioned after the nighttime program “La Voz de Cuba” ceased to broadcast in North America and Latin America in 1984. The ending of the broadcast decreased the hours of airtime filled by Communist media by 38. “La Voz” and Cuba’s other radio stations were responsible for much of the Communist broadcasting in Latin America, which included the content broadcast by the USSR and Eastern Europe for a total of 780 program hours per week. Cuba’s broadcasting was not limited to Latin America; an English version known as the “the Voice of Cuba” broadcasted for a short period of time until 1982.<sup>136</sup>

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<sup>134</sup> Cull, 449.

<sup>135</sup> *Ibid.*, 450.

<sup>136</sup> January 14, 1986 “Communist International Radio Broadcasting to Latin America and North America Decreased in 1983-84,” S-1-14-86, Identifier: 5684701, Container: 48, NACP, 1.



Of course, this output was dwarfed by that of “Western” and “free world” stations, which had a total output of 1,054 hours.<sup>137</sup> What is most interesting is that not only did this study measure the amount of airtime allotted to Latin America by Communist countries, but also what language they were broadcast in. This included the region’s dominant languages Spanish and Portuguese, as well as the languages of the broadcasting countries, i.e., Czech, Albanian, German, Russian, etc. Interestingly though, both the Soviet Union and Cuba broadcasted in the widely spoken indigenous languages Guaraní and Quechua. Cuba, for example, broadcasted in Quechua for a total of twelve and a half hours per week, and in Guaraní for a total of seven. Not only did Cuba offer news and other media in these indigenous languages, the island also broadcasted for fourteen hours in Creole, which likely referred to Haitian Creole (an amalgam of Spanish, Portuguese, French, English, Taíno, and various African languages).<sup>138</sup> Broadcasting in this wide variety of languages showed the continued importance of radio propaganda for Cuba despite the minimization of its broadcast hours.

While this USIA study may have shown a slight decrease in the amount hours broadcasted by Cuba to Latin America, the reason for doing so was that many of the stations responsible for international broadcast were converted for domestic use.<sup>139</sup> It remains to be seen why this would have been the case, but it was in all likelihood a response to the imminent threat of Radio Martí becoming operational, which had passed through congress the year prior to this study. Radio Martí may have represented a further ideological saturation of the airwaves by the United State over Cuba; nevertheless, the program still had its detractors and critics in the U.S. The main criticism being the question of the actual

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<sup>137</sup> Ibid., 2.

<sup>138</sup> Ibid., 5.

<sup>139</sup> Ibid., 1.

effectiveness of radio propaganda, or even the need for a station separate from VOA Spanish, which was already broadcast throughout Latin America. There was also the fear among some critics that the broadcasting would be far more overt in its mission to destabilize the Cuban government than necessary.

An independent evaluation of Radio Martí conducted by Douglas A. Boyd of the University of Delaware and Joseph Straubhaar of Michigan State University, confirmed many of these critics' fears. Completed on April 28, 1986, many of the scholars' recommendations to those in charge of Radio Martí mirrored the initial reservations that many detractors had. Interestingly, the first recommendation given by Boyd and Straubhaar pointed to a lack of material unrelated to Cuba, and both men suggested that whenever possible that Radio Martí use VOA Spanish material. Apparently, the station did not "provide breadth or depth equivalent to VOA on non-Cuban issues and events."<sup>140</sup> While Radio Martí was technically part of the VOA its production functioned independently. The review noted that this state of affairs left the programming not only below the typical caliber of other VOA programming, it also lacked the production oversight of the VOA. It was thus advised that Radio Martí be "full[y] incorporated" into VOA production and "should implement a program-review procedure that utilizes people from the U.S.I.A. Office of Research, the VOA, and outsiders from commercial broadcasting."<sup>141</sup>

Another major concern of Boyd and Straubhaar was the research that was used to create programming. The focus groups that provided this foundation for programming were conducted at the radio station offices in Miami by Radio Martí. Such a conflict of interests,

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<sup>140</sup> Douglas A. Boyd and Joseph Straubhaar, May 17, 1986, "Independent 1986 Evaluation of Cuba Service---Radio Martí Program, Voice of America, USIA," S-5-0-86A, Identifier: 5684712, Container: 48, NACP, 20.

<sup>141</sup> *Ibid.*, 21.

the reviewers noted, went against typical procedures in the social sciences. They emphasized:

When the sponsorship is as obvious as in this case, it is almost impossible to avoid either positive or negative bias in responses, depending on what the interviewee thinks of the organization sponsoring the research.<sup>142</sup>

Similarly, they found that the use of these interviewees' input for the creation of content to be troubling. To Boyd and Straubhaar, it represented a potential bias in programming and the creation of an insular feedback loop between the audience and the programming creators. The logic followed that exiles—desiring to flee their homeland for a multitude of reasons—did not represent the listeners who may or may not have wanted to remain there.<sup>143</sup> In light of that criticism, the reviewers recommended that the interviews be conducted with exiles that chose a different adoptive homeland than the United States, and if possible interview Cuban travelers abroad rather than exiles.<sup>144</sup>

**Conclusion:** From this evaluation, it is not difficult to understand that Radio Martí actually fulfilled its intended function—as propaganda meant to showcase the ideology of the conservative elites in a hegemonic position within the exile community. Prior to the Cuban Revolution, these elites acted as intermediaries for the United States, but as many Cubans began to assert the right to self-determination during the revolutionary upheaval, many of these elites fled the island. From their position in exile, many continued to try to exert influence on the island through a variety of different means with the help of the United States. These Cuban intermediaries may have had a considerable clout within their communities and may have influenced domestic policies to a degree, but victories such as Radio Martí—passed due to considerable support from Cuban exile organizations like the

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<sup>142</sup> Ibid.

<sup>143</sup> Ibid., 22-23.

<sup>144</sup> Ibid., 24.

CANF—embodied more the willingness to work within existing U.S. political structures than a distinctively new approach to foreign policy directed at Cuba.

After President Barack Obama’s recent visit to the island, Cuban media released an article that announced a recent community internship program to prepare leaders for Cuban civil society. The fund, amounting to \$753, 989 dollars, would allow Cubans to work at a non-profit organization in the United States to help inform Cubans on how to build up civil society and shape the formation of democracy in Cuba. This announcement came only three days after Obama claimed that the United States no longer wished to impose a political or economic system on Cuba.<sup>145</sup> While the thawing of relations between Cuba and the United States seems to represent a watershed moment for the two country’s relations to one another, many things appear to remain the same. This new program appears to be merely the newest attempt in a long line to create a class of Cuban intermediaries to influence island politics.

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<sup>145</sup> Cuba Debate, “U.S. Department of State Allocates \$800,000 Dollars To “Train” Cuban Youth,” *Granma* (Havana, Cuba), March 30, 2016. <http://en.granma.cu/cuba/2016-03-30/us-department-of-state-allocates-800000-dollars-to-train-cuban-youth> (accessed April 2, 2016).

## **Goliath's Spin Doctors: U.S. Propaganda and Foreign Policy**

**Introduction:** Prior to the severance of relations between Cuba and the United States—due to the course taken by the Cuban Revolution—both countries enjoyed a close bond, built upon roles that each country played for one another. From the perspective of the United States, Cuba represented an integral part of the defense of its maritime borders, and for Cubans the production of sugar for U.S. markets and the investment of North American capital were the driving forces of the Cuban economy.<sup>146</sup> Following, what Louis Pérez Jr. called “the virtual collapse of Cuban trade with Europe,” postwar trade with the United States exceeded its former levels and further penetrated into Cuban markets.<sup>147</sup> Further, he argued that because other sugar producing countries had leveled off their production, Cubans as *the* major sugar producers viewed the world through rose-colored glasses. This overly optimistic view of global commodity production slowed the level of development of Cuban productivity. For this reason, after 1925, very little improvements in Cuban productive capabilities were made after the initial expansion of the sugar industry in the decades following the Great War for Independence.<sup>148</sup>

As Cuba drifted closer into the orbit of the North American world, a close connection between Cuba and South Florida emerged. Indeed, many middle-class Cubans traveled to Miami in order to take part in raucous shopping sprees. In fact, the practice became so commonplace that Cuban legislators attempt to pass laws that limited the amount of money spent by Cubans abroad.<sup>149</sup> Unfortunately this rosy appearance of Cuban-U.S. relations does not explain the key element that undergirded the relationship between the two countries.

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<sup>146</sup> Louis Pérez, Jr., *Cuba and the United States: Ties of Singular Intimacy* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1990), xiv.

<sup>147</sup> *Ibid.*, 205.

<sup>148</sup> *Ibid.*, 207.

<sup>149</sup> *Ibid.*, 208-209.

Cuban production of sugar—left to the dictates of world sugar prices—was thus subject to the booms and busts of simple commodity production. Without much stability, these fluctuations created what Pérez described as a “national neurosis,” and this unpredictability caused many Cubans of wealth to invest in industry in the United States, rather than in their own homeland.<sup>150</sup> This contradictory behavior negatively affected the level of development of industry in Cuba, and so when Cubans took their destiny in their own hands and toppled the regime of Fulgencio Batista, one of the first things challenged was Cuban dependence on the United States for finished products.

Since Cuban dependency was seen as inherently linked to the United States and the two countries intimate relationship, the first acts of the revolutionary government was to distance Cuba from and reject the hegemonic position of the U.S. The formation of new bonds with the Soviet Union functioned very much as a part of this rejection, but given the conditions of the Cold War this state of affairs only deepened antagonisms between the Cuban Revolution and the United States. It was this development, which created the oppositional forces on both sides, “as the Cuban leadership moved implacably to eliminate U.S. influence in Cuba, the United States moved with equal determination to remove the Cuban leadership.”<sup>151</sup> In response to the refutation of the logic of the traditional Cuban-U.S. relationship, the U.S. acted viscerally to quell the dissent of the Cuban leadership and the threat the Cuban Revolution posed to its hegemony in the wider Latin American and Caribbean world.

One of these methods was the embargo against Cuba that made trade with the island exceedingly difficult. Technically, non-Communist countries could take part in commerce

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<sup>150</sup> Ibid., 228-233.

<sup>151</sup> Ibid., 239-244.

with Cuba, but in practice trade became untenable. Any goods that had more than 5% of its materials produced in the United States could not be sold to Cuba.<sup>152</sup> Other tactics in the toolbox of U.S. imperialism included the use of political pressure (ostracizing Cuba from the OAS) and covert operations (the Bay of Pigs Invasion). When this standard formula for regime change failed to bring about the desired results, the very nature of U.S. hegemony in Latin America was called into question.<sup>153</sup> Another effort to undermine the influence of the Cuban Revolution was the Alliance for Progress (AFP). Initiated by the Kennedy Administration, the AFP amounted to a Marshall Plan for Latin America, except with a major caveat—the former never had the same backing that the latter had from the U.S. Congress. Thus, the AFP was never able to have the material impact that the Marshall Plan had on Europe following the Second World War.<sup>154</sup>

While all of these various methods at isolating the Cuban Revolution had the effect of making life on the island austere, they did not make extinguish Cuban leadership's desire for Cuban self-determination. The level of pressure imposed upon Cuba by the United States was continually exerted using the same methods for the remainder of the 1960s, but after the end of that decade the Central Intelligence Agency's direct covert assaults on the island were at the very least no longer explicitly permitted. From the 1970s onward, the main programs employed to bring about regime change were for the most part restricted to the economic blockade, diplomatic pressuring from other countries in the region, and the propaganda distributed throughout the region, which painted the Cuban Revolution in a negative light.

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<sup>152</sup> Julia E. Sweig, *Cuba: What Everyone Needs To Know*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), 89.

<sup>153</sup> Mark Williams, *Understanding U.S.-Latin American Relations: Theory and History* (New York: Routledge, 2012), 180.

<sup>154</sup> *Ibid.*, 193-196.

One of the organizations that engaged in the creation and distribution of this propaganda was the United States Information Agency (USIA).

The United States Information Agency (USIA), whose precursor the Foreign Information Service was created on February 24, 1942 right in the midst of World War II to serve the furthering of U.S. interests in the war effort.<sup>155</sup> Prior to the creation of an agency responsible for the projection of American ideals abroad, the U.S. government had relied upon independent institutions like Hollywood to depict life in the United States. While such mediums amounted to the cost-free distillation of American life, not all fit the narrative that the U.S. government preferred to show abroad. Thus, the lack of ability to shape the narrative of American culture was disconcerting to many working in the U.S. government.<sup>156</sup> Eventually, this wartime program became the official arbiter of the image of America abroad. In order to function adequately as a means of distributing information, the USIA hired people adept at the art of research so as to best understand conditions on the ground in the countries that the agency operated in. Often this led many in the USIA to view themselves as most capable of formulating U.S. foreign policy, which brought them into confrontation with the State Department. The propaganda created by the USIA and the functioning of the agency in relation to the State Department, as well as its role in both shaping and reinforcing foreign policy is immensely important to understanding U.S.-Cuban relations.

Nicholas Cull noted that after the Kennedy Presidency, emphasis on world opinion polls—which measured prevailing sentiments regarding the United States—diminished and largely fell into disuse.<sup>157</sup> This attempt to gauge the prevailing attitudes toward U.S. policy

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<sup>155</sup> Nicholas Cull, *The Cold War and the United States Information Agency: American Propaganda and Public Diplomacy, 1945-1989* (New York, Cambridge University Press, 2008), 14-15.

<sup>156</sup> *Ibid.*, 9.

<sup>157</sup> *Ibid.*, 487.



may have fallen into a state of ill repute, but it was still a method used. Many of the polls conducted in Latin America in regard to Cuba tell more about the nature of the attitudes toward Cuba of the researchers and their own contradictory logic, than the actual public opinion of Latin Americans. Often this contradictory nature of the USIA's work stemmed from the very basis of its existence as an agency independent of the State Department. It was assumed that as the agency responsible for creating propaganda that it was "a mechanism for further security and political objectives," rather than responsible for the formation and interpretation of foreign policy. While others believed by the very nature of their work in the field there was a need to be able to influence foreign policy so that it would not conflict with Washington's official line in the area.<sup>158</sup> Many such contradictions operated between the USIA and the State Department, but at the same time they often served to complement one another as two sides of the same propaganda coin. The stated objectives of foreign policy formulated by the State Department often focused on the military threat of Cuba and the Soviet Union, while the propaganda of the USIA was often focused more on the issue of the legitimacy of the respective regimes.

**Methodology:** In order to best convey the nature of propaganda formation and its place in reinforcing dominant ideologies, one source of significant importance was the work *Cool Words, Cold War* by sociologist Leo Bogart. The work was compiled under the initial auspices of an independent review of the USIA conducted in 1953 and completed in 1954. Eventually, the commissioned report was published in 1976 as the book *Premise for Propaganda: The United States Information Agency's Operating Assumptions in the Cold War*. The updated version, *Cool Words, Cold War* offers a more contemporary evaluation by

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<sup>158</sup> Leo Bogart, *Cool Words, Cold War: A New Look at USIA's Premises for Propaganda* (Washington D.C.: The American University Press, 1995), 32-35.

the author of the original study, but also retains the original text. Of course, it would be incorrect to say that the operating assumptions for the USIA were the same in 1950s as they were for the 1970s and 1980s, but the insight gleaned from the study still remains useful in understanding the ideology that underpinned much of the work that was done by the agency.

Complementing this foundational work, and indicative of attempts to reaffirm their own perspective of U.S. relations to Cuba and the rest of Latin America, a series of public opinion polls administered in the regions by individuals associated with Gallup for the USIA painted a picture of peoples very much opposed to or ambivalent to the presence of Cuba in the affairs of the Caribbean basin. Of course, many of these opinion polls and their data should not be taken at their outward appearance; instead the methodology of the data collection should be analyzed and called into question. Rather than testaments to public opinion, it is more useful to view these as artifacts of reaffirmation. These polls functioned as a means of justification of U.S. actions in the region for those in the USIA, and thus, the Executive Branch.

Two more important sources that may be familiar are Wayne Smith's memoir and Edward Gonzalez's report entitled *A Strategy for Dealing with Cuba in the 1980s*. Smith's account proves a powerful narrative of events important to the direction of Cuban-U.S. relations in the late 1970s and early 1980s, while Gonzalez's work is very much symbolic of the ideological perspective from which the Reagan Administration approached the issue of Cuba and the wider Latin American world. To best offer a narrative counter to that of the opinion polls and reports by policy formulators like Gonzalez, it is pertinent to let mainland Latin American and Caribbean leaders speak for themselves. This can be done through the use of published speeches, and in the case of Cuba, the national press. *Granma Weekly*

*Review*, the English-language version of the official organ of the Cuban Communist Party, printed weekly, offers a Cuban perspective on regional and international news.

**Thesis:** By the tail end of 1970s societal discontent in the Caribbean basin reached a tipping point, and sheer repression on the part of military regimes was no longer able to quell revolutionary fervor. In 1979, a rebel group influenced by Marxist-Leninism and the example of the Cuban Revolution twenty years prior took power in the tiny island nation of Grenada. A similar group in Nicaragua, the Sandinistas, ended the dictatorship of the Somoza family that had lasted decades. Neither government adopted the Cuban model of development *carte blanche*, but accepted assistance from both Cuba and the Soviet Union. Such a state of affairs and the beginnings of another insurgency in El Salvador caused many onlookers in the United States to believe in the ascendancy of the Soviet Union in Latin America from their Cuban beachhead. For this reason, many felt the pressing need to neutralize this threat to U.S. hegemony. Through the auspices of humanitarianism, organizations like the USIA created propaganda that sought to paint the world in shades of black and white, which they believed would severely diminish the appeal of the Cuban model of development and depict Cubans as antagonists throughout Latin American and the Caribbean.

### **The Carter Administration and the Cuban Revolution: The Failure of Normalization:**

In the previous chapter the abandonment of the exportation of revolution was emphasized, and indeed as Hobsbawm wrote in *The Age of Extremes*:

The U.S.A accepted a communist Cuba on its doorstep. The small flames of liberation and guerilla war lit by the Cuban revolution in Latin America and by the wave of decolonization in Africa, did not turn into forest fires, but seemed to flicker out.<sup>159</sup>

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<sup>159</sup> Eric Hobsbawm, *The Age of Extremes: A History of the World, 1914-1991* (New York: Vintage Books, 1996), 243.

While this course of events may have characterized the mid-to-late 1970s, by the time of the attempted détente between Cuba and the United States during the Carter administration, Cuba had become embroiled in liberation movements on the African continent, and indigenous social revolutions were erupting throughout the Caribbean basin. Cuba pledged support for both of these movements as a show of internationalist solidarity, while the United States strongly opposed Cuban involvement, as it endangered its interests in both regions. These diametrically opposed foreign policies eventually led to a collapse in the attempt at détente initiated by President Jimmy Carter, and led to an intensification of hostilities under the Reagan administration. In order to understand how such hopeful beginnings led to an abrupt renegeing from both sides, it is necessary to look at the failings of the attempted negotiations.

One of the largest criticisms of the United States' policy toward Cuba was the ban on travel to the island that had been established vis-à-vis the Trading with the Enemy Act, which, in effect, did not directly prohibit travel, but rather the use of U.S. currency. Similar restrictions were applied to travel to Vietnam, Cambodia, and North Korea, and in an attempt to silence both domestic and international critics, Carter lifted the ban.<sup>160</sup> This move, along with the ending of intelligence overflight, signaled that the new administration was open to compromise in order to work toward normalization of relations between the two countries. Part of this normalization process included the establishment of *Interest Sections* in both Havana and Washington D.C. These Interest Sections acted as embassies in all but name only. Unfortunately, even this occasion exemplified the problems faced by the Carter Administration in attempting to keep the dialogue between the two countries going. Often

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<sup>160</sup> Lars Schoultz, *That Infernal Little Cuban Republic: The United States and the Cuban Revolution* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2009), 301.

the President displayed what Wayne Smith called “the penchant for contradictory signals and policy incoherence” that would eventually characterize its “failure.”<sup>161</sup>

This inconsistency was by no means directly the fault of President, and much of the blame can be put on the inability of the different parts of the federal government to adequately communicate to one another. One such instance happened in November of 1977, when the National Security Advisor to Carter, Zbigniew Brzezinski issued a statement declaring that normalization would no longer be possible due to a buildup of Cuban troops in Angola. According to Smith, such a buildup never occurred, and that the CIA had merely revised the estimated number of Cuban soldiers stationed there.<sup>162</sup> Instances such as this would continue to stifle the negotiations for the rest of Carter’s tenure in office. With the refusal of the Cuban government to remove any troops from Africa, an attempt was still made to continue the dialogue between the two nations. This effort was arrested from the onset. Members of a U.S. diplomatic envoy met with their Cuban counterparts in order to discuss the release of political prisoners in 1978, but they were under working orders from the National Security Council (NSC) to not bring up any other issues, other than the one at hand.<sup>163</sup> To complicate matters further, the NSC gave orders that the public would not be told who had negotiated and what had prompted the release of the prisoners.<sup>164</sup>

Such an act seems absolutely contradictory in nature given the use of human rights in the Carter Administration’s foreign policy. While the way this policy was often implanted was full of contradictions from the start—given that the administration continued to fund dictatorial governments in Iran, South Korea, and Argentina—it would have made sense for

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<sup>161</sup> Smith, 103.

<sup>162</sup> *Ibid.*, 123.

<sup>163</sup> *Ibid.*, 148.

<sup>164</sup> *Ibid.*, 161.

Carter to want to claim such a clear “victory” for his trademark cause.<sup>165</sup> This gave the Cuban government the impetus to convene a meeting, called the *diálogo* (dialogue) between the regime and the exile community. While the two governments proceeded to process the prisoners, Fidel Castro announced to representatives of the Cuban American community who attended the *diálogo* that the prisoner release had been orchestrated as a “gesture of good faith” to all those affected by the Cuban diaspora.<sup>166</sup> These actions may appear as an antagonism on the part of the Cubans, but even so U.S. foreign policy had accomplished its objectives on its own terms. Rather than celebrate what must have felt a hollow victory, a series of naval maneuvers were held off the coast of Cuba. The show of force only served to send mixed messages, as the Cuban government had made the agreed upon concessions.<sup>167</sup> These heavily confused attempts at diplomacy would only deteriorate further as Cuba continued to balk at U.S. demands to remove its troops from Africa, which the United States viewed as part of Cuba’s role as a pawn of the Soviet Union.<sup>168</sup> That Cuba could be involved due to its international solidarity was beyond the purview of those within the ranks of the United States government.

Of course, this stance was not surprising given that Cull asserted that one of “traged[ies] of American Cold War foreign policy was its tendency to regard its North-South relations through an East-West lens: seeing nationalists as communists.”<sup>169</sup> This conception of foreign relations would dog Carter for the rest of his presidency, and when homegrown anti-capitalist national insurrections appeared throughout the Caribbean basin, the

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<sup>165</sup> Morris H. Morley, *Imperial State and Revolution: The United States and Cuba: 1952-1986* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 242.

<sup>166</sup> Schoultz., 327.

<sup>167</sup> Smith., 169.

<sup>168</sup> Morley, 260.

<sup>169</sup> Cull, 495.

administration believed it could be only Cuba to blame. These challenges to U.S. hegemony occurred in very close proximity. The first occurred in March 1979, when longtime dictator Eric Gairy was overthrown in favor of the Marxist-Leninist leadership of the New Jewel Movement under Maurice Bishop.<sup>170</sup> While there was no evidence that Cuba was involved with the March 13<sup>th</sup> coup that deposed Gairy, Cuba quickly asserted its solidarity with the People's Revolutionary Government and pledged military assistance. Of course, as Wayne Smith noted in his memoirs, "Grenada, a tiny little island of some 100,000 souls, posed no danger to the United States," further he wrote "even to suggest that it might was demeaning I thought. Nor could Grenada threaten its neighbors, unless the U.S. fleet gave it dispensation to do so."<sup>171</sup> Unfortunately, such logic did not carry the day in the midst of the heightened paranoia of the Cold War.

The second revolutionary moment of 1979 occurred when the U.S.-backed lineal dictatorship of the Somoza family came to an end in Nicaragua after two decades of opposition and two years of armed resistance led by the Sandinista Front of National Liberation (FSLN).<sup>172</sup> Cuba again confirmed its stance of solidarity with Third World Liberation movements by way of support of the Sandinistas. Once again the U.S. government became concerned with what appeared to be a revolutionary momentum in the Caribbean basin, and all signs seemed to point to Havana. While these developments may have caused an adverse reaction in Washington and among some sections of the general public, this would not be the real coup de grâce to the Carter Administration's foreign policy. Instead that blow was delivered on April 20, 1980, an election year. The Cuban government

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<sup>170</sup> Morley, 263.

<sup>171</sup> Smith, 171.

<sup>172</sup> Mark Williams, *Understanding U.S.-Latin American Relations: Theory and History* (New York: Routledge, 2012), 246.

had continued to communicate with the exile community after the *diálogo* of 1978, and the U.S. government slowly but surely began to process released political prisoners, and by the July 1980, 4,000 had left Cuba in this fashion. During this process 11,000 Cuban dissidents occupied the Peruvian embassy in an attempt to negotiate a way to leave the island. In response to these requests on April 20, 1980, the Cuban government announced that any of those dissatisfied with the revolutionary project would be allowed leave the island, and pressured any relatives residing in the U.S. to come get them from the Cuban port of Mariel.<sup>173</sup>

### **Exporting Ideology: Premise for the USIA's Operations in the Third World:**

In outlining the scope of and reasons behind his classic study of the USIA, sociologist Leo Bogart explained that the objective was “to cast light on relevant assumptions, to reveal the reasoning behind them, to indicate differences in opinion and practice, and to point to problems where they occurred.”<sup>174</sup> Through the course of his work Bogart would come to find contradictions within the agency's operating procedures as well as the contradictory nature that so often underpinned the fractured division of labor among executive branch bureaucracies. Bogart emphasized the difference in the practice of the stated objectives of the agency, which resulted from the actual prevailing conditions of both field work and allotted financial resources. Indeed, many of the operatives, according to Bogart, had the tendency to “reinterpret” the Agency's directives in a manner that fit the paradigm of the field.<sup>175</sup>

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<sup>173</sup> María Cristina García, *Havana USA: Cuban Exiles and Cuban Americans in South Florida 1959-1994* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996), 51-60.

<sup>174</sup> Bogart, 2.

<sup>175</sup> *Ibid.*, 3-11.



One of the chief concerns concerning the operating procedures of American propaganda producers was their “tendency to divide the world in two, discarding any notion of middle ground.”<sup>176</sup> This was problematic as it often resulted in a distorted view of actual realities, and for this reason, tactics used often fit the perceived rather than a real view of the world. Another issue in the functioning of the agency was its ambiguous working directives. While the USIA technically had a mission statement—essentially the projection of American ideals—what that meant and how it would be accomplished was far from outlined. For the most part there were two schools of thought that were created in order to uphold the mission statement. The first school believed that in order to accomplish the goal of projection, the USIA should have persuasion as the ultimate objective. The second believed that in order for the agency to be effective it had to directly promote political actions that could be measured if successful. This school thought that propaganda should be a “call to action,” which ideally would “rouse people from their apathy.”<sup>177</sup>

Both of these methods of accomplishing this mission were further complicated by what some actually believed to be main directive of the USIA, which was the fight against Communism. Part of the reasoning behind that line of thought was the Cold War foundations of the agency. This belief also stemmed from the fact that much of the agency’s funding was derived from the belief in congress that anti-Communism was not only the USIA’s main objective, but also its “sole one.”<sup>178</sup> Similar to the lack of a singular method to project American ideals, there was a multitude of working assumptions within the agency on how to combat Communism. Some thought that the battle could be best fought through directly countering the ideology which underpinned the Soviet system, while others thought that it

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<sup>176</sup> Ibid., 12.

<sup>177</sup> Ibid., 13-16.

<sup>178</sup> Ibid., 18.

could be done through calling attention to the nature of Soviet expansion and defining it as imperialist.<sup>179</sup>

Further contradictions existed within the agency's operations. Some worked under the assumption that the USIA was merely a mouthpiece for disseminating already existing foreign policy formulated by the State Department. While others worked within the parameters that "actions should not contradict words."<sup>180</sup> In many cases field operatives had a better sense of what was going on within the countries that the agency worked in, and realized that there were times that the propaganda did not necessarily fit with U.S. foreign policy in the region. Not only was there a level dissonance between the USIA propaganda and State Department foreign policy, there was a lack of communication between propagandists and economic and diplomatic policymakers. Such a state of affairs could lend itself to the creation of unnecessary tension, when propagandist's work directly contradicted that of U.S. diplomats.<sup>181</sup>

Another problem encountered in trying to determine the agency's operating procedures, was determining what audience to target in order to influence populations toward a pro-American position. Some assumed that reaching and convincing the mass of the population should be the top priority, while others thought that this goal could be accomplished by proxy through winning over directly either influential persons or cultural elites.<sup>182</sup> Indeed, some acknowledged that in many countries, low literacy rates, made the process of targeting pointless as the very makeup of the population made it so that written material could only reach the educated. As if the dissonance inherent to the operation of the

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<sup>179</sup> Ibid.

<sup>180</sup> Ibid., 32-35.

<sup>181</sup> Ibid., 35-38.

<sup>182</sup> Ibid., 53-56.

agency was not broad enough, many could not agree on the viability of combating the influence of Communism. Many saw “Communism as a conspiracy,” and thus, it could not be countered with propaganda. While others saw Communism as a movement of mass mobilization that was rooted in real material problems that could be addressed by the propagandists.<sup>183</sup>

### **Ronald Reagan: Routing Revolution at the Source:**

Bogart’s study is illuminating because it shows a distinct lack of a unified vision within the USIA, and thus, left the agency’s personnel to blow with the prevailing political winds. Often that meant working within the dominant ideology of whoever controlled the executive branch. The election of Ronald Reagan signaled an era in which foreign policy was bent in a way that fit within the Administration’s ideological framework and not vice versa. This perception of the world was largely internalized by those working within the government, including the State Department and bureaucratic agencies like the USIA. Such a view could not help but shape the way the United States engaged revolutionary movements in Latin America and the Caribbean. The fear that underpinned this belief was evidenced by Edward Gonzalez’s work produced for the U.S. Airforce-connected think tank the RAND Corporation, entitled *A Strategy for Dealing with Cuba in the 1980s*. In its introduction Gonzalez explained that “the [Caribbean] Basin no longer its exclusive preserve, the United States is having to share its influence with Cuba as the second most powerful state in the region.”<sup>184</sup> Now, such a claim appears ludicrous, but this was the modus operandi of United States during the Reagan years.

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<sup>183</sup> Ibid., 58-63.

<sup>184</sup> Gonzalez, 5.

Key to combating the perceived Cuban threat, Gonzalez pointed out the crucial task of garnering the support of Western Europe, in order to put itself in a better position of leverage.<sup>185</sup> As pointed out in the first chapter, that undertaking proved tenuous at best in many cases. Endemic of the United States' position in Latin America though, was Gonzalez's suggestion that the United States attempt to reinvigorate Mexico as a regional power and also deal with Cuba as well. His scheme involved providing Mexico with more military aid in order to quash internal dissidence, which would provide leverage to turn Mexican support away from Cuba. The second part to this strategy entailed brokering a deal between Mexico and Cuba for Mexican petroleum to be provided to the island, thus, neutralizing the nation's dependence upon Soviet oil.<sup>186</sup> This disregard for the sovereignty of either Mexico or Cuba, and even the nations of Western Europe showed the ideological lens with which powerbrokers within the U.S. government viewed the world.

Of the USIA, Morris Morley outlined its main objective as "creating favorable images of U.S. imperial activity and denigrating revolutionary action and programs of social-economic transformation," which was accomplished through the use of "psychological warfare including the creation of false consciousness."<sup>187</sup> It was likely though, that these operators often imbibed the very propaganda they were spinning. This was probably true at all levels of government not just the USIA. The belief system that these bureaucrats and operatives held left no room for Latin American agency. Cuba was responsible for all actions in Grenada and Central America, especially with the consolidation of revolutionary forces in El Salvador into the Farabundo Martí National Liberation Front. Despite little

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<sup>185</sup> Ibid., 123.

<sup>186</sup> Ibid., 126-127.

<sup>187</sup> Morley, 22.

evidence that Cuba was involved, all fingers remained firmly pointed toward the island.<sup>188</sup> In the case of the USIA, many of these beliefs were likely reinforced by the people in the countries that they operated in. One of the operational directives that Leo Bogart outlined in his sociological study of the agency was the tendency to see elite groups as important, in fact, more important than providing information as a mass media outlet. He characterized these targets as directly influential persons and cultural elites.<sup>189</sup> These groups were most likely to act in their own self-interest and at the very least humor the Americans into believing they shared the same ideology.

In a series of polls collected by the USIA during the Reagan administration, Latin American public opinion was surveyed throughout the region. Unfortunately, there is no explanation within the polls to determine the procedure used to survey and how large the pool of people surveyed was. As Cull noted in his book on the agency, by the 1970s, the agency worked with an ever tightening budget, and that meant increased focus “on the cultivation of elites on the assumption that their attitudes would radiate out to the wider population,” with the caveat that “this strategy worked well so long as the elites retained the confidence of their own masses.”<sup>190</sup> Thus, it seems reasonable to question as to whether those surveyed were not typical of the Latin American subaltern classes, but rather the region’s elites. From the results of the survey, that conclusion would seem quite likely. In which case, the surveys’ results would act as an echo chamber to those in the USIA, and further, others within the U.S. government. If data pool did not just consist of elites surveyed, and the Latin American masses were represented through these questionnaires, even those results would likely be skewed. Much of Latin America remained under the yoke

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<sup>188</sup> Ibid., 322-323.

<sup>189</sup> Ibid., 56.

<sup>190</sup> Cull, 496.

of military dictatorships and other repressive regimes. Many participants may have feared giving an answer that would betray their political inclination. Even a neutral answer might be perceived as tacit support of revolution.

Given the questionable procedure taken to obtain this public opinion, what was more important was that these polls represented evidence of Latin American support of U.S. machinations. Not only that, but it served to further reinforce the rigid ideology of Cold Warriors. According to a poll put out on April 29, 1981, 40% of the general public disapproved of the Sandinista government in Nicaragua while about 35% approved. Of those surveyed in Mexico City, Guadalajara, and Monterey by the USIA, 53% believed that Cuba had a hand in events in Nicaragua. Further, on the escalating violence in El Salvador, 40% of Mexicans questioned whether the governing *Junta* could solve the problems of the country, while 30% had no opinion.<sup>191</sup> Was this really a lack of opinion or were those polled fearful of answering the question in a way that might give up their ideals? As noted above, at this time the PRI were dealing with internal dissent, and any Mexican would be keenly aware of this. According to the same poll, two-fifths of Mexicans saw Cubans as bringing instability to the Caribbean and Central America, while only 15% saw Cuban influence as “beneficial” for the region. Most importantly, only a fifth saw the Cuban model as a “good or excellent” developmental model for Latin America, while 83% percent surveyed commented that they saw U.S.-Mexican relations as fair to good.<sup>192</sup>

It is interesting that the field operatives chose to ask about the Cuban model of development, as even the Cubans themselves no longer practiced nor preached the model they championed in the 1960s. In fact, as Wayne Smith recalled of Cuban aid to Nicaragua

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<sup>191</sup> Wm. J. Willard, April 29, 1981, “Mexican Public Divided on Sandinistas, But Generally Favor El Salvador’s Junta,” N-31-81, Identifier 5685515, Container 3, NACP, 1.

<sup>192</sup> *Ibid.*

in his memoir, “Castro was indeed advising the Sandinistas to proceed slowly and pragmatically,” and the Cuban leader emphasized that “Nicaragua needed a mixed economy, a pluralist system and good relations with Church,” and most importantly “they should not burn their bridges with the U.S.”<sup>193</sup> Essentially, the very stance that made the Cuban Revolution an example for many workers and peasants across the rest of Latin America, Fidel Castro viewed as no longer viable or desirable. In essence, while the Cuban model made great strides in the realm of education, healthcare, and overall standard of living, these improvements were also made at the cost of being labeled an international pariah, and increasingly dependent upon the USSR. Thus, by the 1980s even the most militant among the Cuban leadership advised a pragmatic approach to transforming Latin American economies.

On June 9, 1981, the USIA released the results of a poll conducted by a Gallup affiliate throughout Latin America. The poll gauged the support for the *junta* government in El Salvador. According to the results, a very small minority supported either opposition from the right or the left. Support for the leftist opposition constituted 3 to 18% of those surveyed, while the right made up 1 to 15%.<sup>194</sup> Conflict in El Salvador, according to the poll, ranked as one of the most pressing issues facing Latin America, ranging from 21% in Columbia to 31% in Ecuador.<sup>195</sup> According to the same poll, “the United States [was] correctly perceived” as providing military assistance to the Salvadoran government, but interestingly enough, in some countries it was believed that the United States supported the right-wing paramilitaries. These views were held anywhere between 15% in Uruguay and

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<sup>193</sup> Smith., 179.

<sup>194</sup> Joseph D. Straubhaar, June 9, 1981, “Latin American Support for Present Government in El Salvador,” N-45-81, Identifier 5685529, Container 3, NACP, 1.

<sup>195</sup> Ibid., 1.

29% in Ecuador.<sup>196</sup> On the other hand, in most countries, the highest proportions saw the Cubans and Soviets as supplying arms and giving military assistance to Salvadoran revolutionaries.<sup>197</sup>

In another USIA poll by the same affiliate put into circulation on July 2, 1981, it was claimed that in a Latin American regional survey two-fifths (36-46%) of the population saw Cuban foreign policy as detrimental to the stability of Central America and the Caribbean. In every country surveyed “at least a third” perceived Cuba as influential in Nicaragua.<sup>198</sup> Most Latin American countries, with the exception Argentina and Brazil, between 38 and 57% believed that the Cuba and the Soviet Union was supporting the leftist insurgency in El Salvador. The survey results also noted that most surveyed viewed a partnering with Cuba as undesirable, and as in the previous poll, “Cuba is described as a “poor” model among those with an opinion.”<sup>199</sup> On the Gallup website, the company offers an outline of its international methodology, which states that the company “interviews approximately 1,000 residents per country,” and in countries where telephones are owned by a majority of the population these surveys are completed over the telephone, but “where telephone penetration is less than 80%, Gallup uses face-to-face interviewing.”<sup>200</sup>

In Latin America, where large portions of the population have only been recently brought into the market economy, rampant poverty still prevails and many regions remain isolated. One wonders if the typical *campesino* (peasant) even figures into their baseline. Such problems limit the accuracy of the surveys, as noted above. Likely though, the results

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<sup>196</sup> Ibid., 2.

<sup>197</sup> Ibid.

<sup>198</sup> Joseph D. Straubhaar, July 2, 1981, “Latin Americans Relatively Unconcerned with Cuba, See it as a Bad Model,” N-52-81, Identifier 5685536, Container 3, NACP, 1.

<sup>199</sup> Ibid., 2.

<sup>200</sup> Gallup, “How does Gallup’s global polling work?,” *Gallup*, <http://www.gallup.com/poll/128189/Gallup-global-polling-work.aspx> (accessed February 26, 2016)



did not actually matter, but rather the conclusions that could be drawn from them. Such a view reinforced the strange contradictory image conjured by U.S. propaganda that Cuba was simultaneously a weak client-state of the Soviet Union, while at the same time, the island constituted a threat to the safety of the Western hemisphere.<sup>201</sup> What were not important, in this case, were the figures given. Even if they had reflected the consensus of Latin Americans, these surveys served a far more important purpose. These results underpinned the American sense of righteousness in its actions, and served as evidence of the United States continued hegemonic status in the region. Without these reaffirmations of their ideological view of Cuban-U.S. relations, the USIA's premise for propaganda would seem disingenuous and U.S. foreign policy toward Cuba illegitimate.

#### **Grenada: Invasion for an International Airport:**

On March 13, 1980, Prime Minister of Grenada, Maurice Bishop thanked “our brother people of Cuba” for the material support that they had given in the months after the ouster of Eric Gairy.<sup>202</sup> Bishop expressed gratitude to the Cubans, not for their tactical support or shipment of arms, but rather medical assistance, aid in building up the island's internal infrastructure, helping to develop the productivity capabilities of the fishing industry, and finally aiding in the construction of a new international airport.<sup>203</sup> Indeed, in another speech given less than two months later, Bishop ceremoniously thanked Cuba for its support for both Grenada and Nicaragua by providing both countries “with their doctors, with their teachers, and with their selfless workers.”<sup>204</sup>

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<sup>201</sup> Bernell, 86-87.

<sup>202</sup> Maurice Bishop, “Forward Ever!,” (March 13, 1980), in *Maurice Bishop Speaks: The Grenada Revolution and Its Overthrow 1979-1983* (New York: Pathfinder, 1983), 203.

<sup>203</sup> Ibid.

<sup>204</sup> Maurice Bishop, “Cuba, Nicaragua, Grenada: Together We Shall Win,” (May 1, 1980), in *Maurice Bishop Speaks*, 207

In an interview published in *Granma Weekly Review* on March 9<sup>th</sup>, 1980, the Grenadian Ambassador to Cuba, Richard Jacobs detailed the exact nature of this Cuban aid. Prior to the Grenadian Revolution, Jacobs explained that the Ministry of Fishing “never did anything,” but with the help of Cuban technicians Grenada created a program to help teach young people about the intricacies of the fishing industry.<sup>205</sup> With the aid of “Cuban comrades,” fishing beds were identified in the waters surrounding the island nation. This show of international solidarity between Cuba and Grenada did not end with this fishing aid. One major project that the Grenada and Cuba attempted to conduct in cooperation was the building of an international airport. Grenada is a relatively small Caribbean island, and it was believed that one of the ways that the country could better develop in order to meet the needs of its people was the through the expansion of tourism. To do that the island needed an airport that could handle international air traffic.

In this respect, “the fraternal friends in Cuba” could help their Grenadian comrades by providing aid in a limited capacity: Cuba could provide skilled workers that were sorely lacking in Grenada, construction equipment, and building materials such as cement and steel.<sup>206</sup> Time and time again, it is the material contribution to Grenada’s development that were emphasized by Grenadian leaders and officials, not military or defense. That is not to say that Cuba did not provide the island with any military aid, but that this was not the priority of Cuban international aid. The people of Grenada could not eat rifles and ammunition. Yet, even if Cuba had provided extensive military support it would not have been unwarranted.

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<sup>205</sup> Miguel Comellas, “Interview with Richard Jacobs, Grenadian Ambassador to Cuba,” *Granma Weekly Review* (Havana, Cuba), Year 15 Number 10, March 9, 1980, 12.

<sup>206</sup> Maurice Bishop, “Together We Shall Build Our Airport,” (March 29, 1981), in *Maurice Bishop Speaks*, 277.

The building of the international airport with the aid of the Cubans was seen as an attempt to further expand the sphere of influence of the Soviet Union into Caribbean basin, rather than an attempt to bring in tourist revenue to help boost the Grenadian economy. Whether out of outright desire to make the reality fit their narrative or ignorance of geography, as Schoultz noted nobody from within either the Carter or Reagan administration, no one “understood why the Bishop government would consider it desirable to have a modern airport at Point Salines, immediately adjacent to Grand Anse and five minutes from St. Georges.”<sup>207</sup> In two separate speeches, Bishop noted the hostility with which the airport project was met with from the Reagan administration. In the first, he emphasized that in building a modern international airport that Grenada would be eventually be able to break from its traditional dependence, and for that reason, he explained that “they [the U.S.] are very anxious to crush this airport project.”<sup>208</sup>

In the second speech given on March 13, 1982, Bishop noted that Reagan’s denunciation of Cuba, Grenada, and Nicaragua in a speech to the OAS was a desperate recognition “that the people of the region now understand very clearly that there is an alternative to fascism, to nineteenth century capitalism and dictatorship.”<sup>209</sup> He was right to make such a comment, as it was slightly more than a year after he made that remark that the United States invaded Grenada in the aftermath of Bishop’s murder at the hands of a faction within the ruling New Jewel Movement. On October 20, 1983, just five days before the invasion of Grenada, Fidel Castro made a public statement on the behalf the Cuban government and the PCC. In the statement, he assured his audience that Cuba would not

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<sup>207</sup> Schoultz, 391.

<sup>208</sup> Maurice Bishop, “The Present Stage of the Grenada Revolution,” (July 1981), in *Maurice Bishop Speaks*, 346.

<sup>209</sup> Maurice Bishop, “Three Years of the Grenada Revolution,” (March 13, 1982), in *Maurice Bishop Speaks*, 457.

intervene in the power struggle within the New Jewel Movement, or attempt to occupy the country to assure an outcome beneficial to Cuba.<sup>210</sup>

On the day of the invasion, the Cuban government released another statement describing its reaction to the ongoing incursion on Grenada's sovereignty, and the role that Cuba would play. Cuba, not wanting to provoke the United States or give any reason for retaliation, publicly stated that the island would not send any more troops to Grenada. This action was taken for two reasons, the inability of the Cuban air force and navy to compete with that of the United States, and also because to intervene would publicly legitimize the U.S. intervention into Grenada's affairs. The only defensive maneuvers that Cuba would take, was to defend "their positions in their camps and working areas with all their energy and courage."<sup>211</sup> These Cuban troops were there in order to protect Cuban workers and technicians aiding with the construction of the airport. What this series of events really shows is the lack of validity to much of the claims made by policymakers within the Reagan administration. Rather than a concern for truth, the administration sought to justify its action whether or not there was actual evidence to support it. These very same tactics were contemporaneously applied to the two other countries experiencing revolutionary moments in the Caribbean basin, Nicaragua and El Salvador.

#### **Nicaragua and El Salvador: Intransigence and Insurgency:**

Speaking at the Sixth Summit Conference of Nonaligned Countries held in Havana over the week of September 3 through 9, 1979, representing Nicaragua, Daniel Ortega explained of the revolution in his country:

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<sup>210</sup> Fidel Castro, "Statement By the Cuban Government and the Cuban Communist Party," (October 20, 1983), in *Maurice Bishop Speaks*, 525-526.

<sup>211</sup> Cuban Government and Cuban Communist Party, "The Truth About Cuba's Role," (October 25, 1983), in *Maurice Bishop Speaks*, 536.

And when Somoza was losing the war, they [presumably the United States] were talking about Costa Rican intervention, Panamanian intervention, Cuban intervention, Soviet intervention—simply because they have never been able to understand, and are never going to understand, that people are capable of achieving their liberation, that people are able to solidarize themselves with people.<sup>212</sup>

Ortega's declaration of sovereignty and self-determination very much contradicts official policy positions of those within the Reagan Administration. Indeed, rather than a puppet of Cuba or the Soviet Union, Ortega claimed that the Sandinistas had pursued homegrown solutions to homegrown problems. The Nicaraguan Revolution had occurred in response to years of dictatorial abuses perpetrated by the Somoza regime, and was not planned by Cuba to further its sphere of influence in Latin American.

Unfortunately for Nicaragua, the ascendant doctrine of Jeane Kirkpatrick essentially defined Latin Americans as inherently disposed toward repressive dictatorships. Thus, she suggested that the U.S. support the inevitable and use its resources to provision dictatorships friendly to its interests. She insisted that only the dichotomy of a dictatorship of the left and right existed in Latin America, and that the two alternatives were either, a regime congenial to the United States and its interests, or an “unfriendly communist totalitarian.”<sup>213</sup> In this scenario, the friendly dictator left most of the population free from oppression, while under a Communist regime, citizens had absolutely no freedom of movement.<sup>214</sup> Indeed, such a view served to not only legitimize the United States' role in Latin America, but to naturalize it. This justification left no room for indigenous liberation movements born in response to the very form of government that Kirkpatrick claimed as natural.

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<sup>212</sup> Daniel Ortega, “Nothing Will Hold Back Our Struggle For Liberation,” (September 1979), in *Sandinistas Speak: Speeches, Writings and Interviews with Leaders of Nicaragua's Revolution*, edited by Bruce Marcus (New York: Pathfinder, 1982), 59.

<sup>213</sup> Schoultz, 366.

<sup>214</sup> *Ibid.*

In a series of interviews and speeches held in 1983, Tomás Borge addressed the issue of Cuban encroachment. According to the Sandinista leader, neither the Cubans nor the Soviet Union pulled the strings in Nicaragua. An alliance between his country and Cuba and the Soviets did not amount to a foreign seizure of power. Nicaragua had not become a “satellite of a satellite.” Noting the irony with which the United States approached the issue of Cuban influence, Borge commented that it was clear that “if we[Nicaragua] decided to become a satellite of this cowboy[Ronald Reagan], we would not only save these headaches but would also have saved but would have also saved ourselves all the aggressions from the National Guard.”<sup>215</sup> Further, showing either the supreme ignorance or failure to acknowledge the root indigenous causes of the revolutionary moment in Nicaragua on the part of the United States, Borge commented that the notion that his country was dominated by Cubans and Soviets seemed to be “based on an ignorance the pride and power of national feelings among Nicaraguans.”<sup>216</sup>

In an interview held in January of 1980, Chief of the Sandinista’s People’s Army stressed the importance of the Cuban Revolution and its influence on the Sandinista movement in Nicaragua. Ortega’s comment serves to paint a picture that does show a meddling Cuba that intervenes in Latin America, but rather a Cuba who’s revolution served to give “a practical example of how it was to possible to overthrow a tyrant.”<sup>217</sup> Much like in the case of Grenada, Nicaragua’s Sandinista government became the beneficiary of Cuban internationalism. After the ouster of Somoza, with Cuban aid, Nicaraguans embarked on a

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<sup>215</sup> Tomás Borge, “This is a Revolution of Working People,” (June 1983) in *Nicaragua: The Sandinista People’s Revolution*, edited by Bruce Marcus (New York: Pathfinder, 1985), 287. The National Guard was an institution used by the Somoza regime to suppress any challenge to its rule in Nicaragua.

<sup>216</sup> Tomás Borge, “We Speak to You From a Country at War,” (December 1983), in *Nicaragua: The Sandinista People’s Revolution*, edited by Bruce Marcus (New York: Pathfinder, 1985), 385.

<sup>217</sup> Marta Harnecker, “Nicaragua: The Strategy of Victory,” *Granma Weekly Review* (Havana, Cuba), Year 15 Number 4, January 27, 1980, 3.

Literacy Campaign similar to the one that occurred in Cuba during the 1960s. According to a report in *Granma*, by January 6, 1980, 1,200 Cuban teachers had gone to Nicaragua and assisted Nicaraguans in building 620 schools and instruct 50,000 students.<sup>218</sup> Organized in the military style of the Cuban Literacy Campaign, teachers in Nicaragua were divided into 40 columns—with each teacher instructing 120 students.<sup>219</sup> Once again, as with Grenada, it was direct material contributions in the form of education professionals and other skilled professionals that were trumpeted by Nicaragua. These claims directly countered the accusations of the U.S. government that Cuban and Soviet assistance was merely a guise with which to establish a Communist military presence in Latin America.

El Salvador constituted a different situation altogether. In 1979, a coup d'état brought to power a civilian-military *junta*, with the goal of arresting the ongoing revolutionary situation occurring in the country. Some liberal concessions were attempted by the *junta* in order to address some of the grievances of the Salvadoran people, but even the most modest agrarian reforms caused the dissolution of the initial *junta*. Throughout the throes of the revolutionary process, the Salvadoran people endured flagrant repression inflicted by the military. Eventually, a second civilian-military *junta* was formed with the assistance of the United States. During this conflict, Cuba supported the coalition of various factions of resistance in El Salvador called the Farabundo Martí National Liberation Front. This assistance came mainly in the form of arms shipments, along with a very small number of Cuban military advisors. This fact was boasted by the United States, as proof of Cuba's

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<sup>218</sup> "Cuban Teacher's Solidarity with Nicaragua," *Granma Weekly Review* (Havana, Cuba), Year 15 Number 1, January 6, 1980, 6.

<sup>219</sup> "Nicaragua: The Literacy Campaign," *Granma Weekly Review* (Havana, Cuba), Year 15 Number 3, January 20, 1980, 20.

machinations for Latin America, and once again took to minimizing the existing conditions that might have led to revolution in El Salvador.

Even when Cuba attempted to assuage the U.S. by supporting Mexican-brokered peace talks for El Salvador, and announced that it would refrain from shipping any more arms to El Salvador in 1982, the U.S. government responded only with suspicion. As Smith recalled in his memoir, a cable had been in circulation that essentially explained that it was irrelevant whether Cuba had stopped its arms shipments, because according to the cable there were “enough arms were stockpiled in Nicaragua so that shipments could continue to El Salvador even if none arrived from Cuba for a while.”<sup>220</sup> Further, of the cable he clarified:

had no evidence that Cuban support for armed violence in Latin America was increasing nor had the Cubans refused to discuss anything with us. Quite the contrary: the Cubans were seeking to hold talks, and the U.S. was refusing. But even before Reagan took office, this administration had said new sanctions ought to be imposed then, even if they accomplished nothing and even if it had to fabricate the justification for imposing them.<sup>221</sup>

Of course, these very same forces within the Reagan Administration refused to admit that between 1968 and 1980, the United States had provided \$16,000 million dollars in military aid and trained 2,000 military officers in El Salvador. The very same military officers that now refused to relinquish control of the Salvadoran state. These funds amounted to nearly \$5,000 million in direct military aid, close to \$6,000 million in arms sales, and approximately another \$6,000 million for military training. Not only was the United States responsible for propping up the regime, as a failsafe, it sponsored an inter-regional alliance between El Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras.<sup>222</sup>

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<sup>220</sup> Smith, 255.

<sup>221</sup> *Ibid.*, 260.

<sup>222</sup> Orestes Valera, “El Salvador: United States Tries to Prop Up Junta,” *Granma Weekly Review* (Havana, Cuba), Year 15 Number 10, March 9, 1980, 10.



The suppression of the March 17<sup>th</sup> General Strike in El Salvador gives a small taste of the repressive military apparatus there. The strike organized by the Revolutionary Coordinated Body, was held in order to protest the continued existence of the governing *junta* in El Salvador. The force that suppressed the strikers included armored vehicles, mortars, helicopters, as well as field artillery—in the resulting clashes more than 100 were killed.<sup>223</sup> Dr. Felix Ullon, a professor at the National University in El Salvador, described the violence unleashed upon student protesters. According to Ullon, the military had “fired on buildings using tank guns, .50-caliber machine guns and light artillery pieces. In addition to rifles, .30-caliber machine guns and tear gas grenades caused great damage.”<sup>224</sup> The sheer ferocity of the repression needed in order to uphold the status quo in El Salvador seems almost inconceivable, but with such a reality seems to support the argument for the indigenous origins of the revolutionary movement. At the same time, it seems that a movement so steeped in the ideas of egalitarian justice, such as the Cuban Revolution, that Cuban support of resistance seems understandable given that context. In effect, the situation in El Salvador and Cuban involvement was not as black and white as those in the U.S. government sought to paint it for their own justifications.

**Conclusion:** Rather than attempt to work with Cuba, the U.S. government and the agencies within took part in acts of ideological reaffirmation that solidified their antagonistic position toward the island. It was through that lens that made homegrown revolutionary movements appear from the outside as Cuban machinations. While The Cuban Revolution clearly proved an inspiration in both Nicaragua and Grenada, neither nation followed the Cuban template totally. Instead, both the New Jewel Movement in Grenada and the

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<sup>223</sup> Oreste Valera, “General Strike a Complete Success,” *Granma Weekly Review* (Havana, Cuba), Year 15 Number 13, March 30, 1980, 13.

<sup>224</sup> *Ibid.*

Sandinistas in Nicaragua were both expressions of a desire for self-determination. Those within positions of power in the United States could not conceive this, and instead placed the blame on Cuba and the Soviet Union. For this reason, under the guise of humanitarianism, agencies like the USIA constructed a public image of Cuba in strict opposition to everything that the United States stood for. To do this these propagandists emphasized the contrasting political system and the lack of development of the Cuban economy.

On December 17, 2014, a process of normalization has begun once again between Cuba and the United States. While it has not been a seamless process, it seems that the Obama Administration has met with fewer obstacles than rapprochement under Jimmy Carter. Raúl Castro is not his brother, both men share distinct approaches to leadership and foreign policy. For now, it appears that the fifty-five year embargo may come to an end in the near future, but the adversarial tension that has persisted for five decades will not be quick to disappear. Most importantly, all parties involved must remember that this is not the first time that a policy of détente has been tried between the United States and Cuba. That experience showed just how quickly negotiations can deteriorate. This collapse of bilateral talks can largely be blamed on the incoherence of foreign policy on the part of the United States. Those within government apparatus were so convinced on the nature of Cuba and its government, that despite evidence to the contrary and the pleadings of American diplomats on the ground, the United States continued to posture aggressively when the conditions did not call for that action.

## Conclusion

It has been nearly 61 years since revolutionary leader Fidel Castro claimed that the course of history would lead to his inevitable absolution. Castro was a young man then, not even thirty years old, but as he—by his own admissions—comes to the end of his life, it seems only fitting to assess his claim.<sup>225</sup> Through the course of the revolution the Cuban people made massive inroads in the realms of education, health, and the Cuban people more so than many other Latin American countries have guaranteed rights to basic necessities such as food and shelter. Even when the collapse of the Soviet Union and the Eastern Bloc ushered in an era of austerity for Cuba, the Cuban government retained a level of social spending amounting to 20% of the GDP.<sup>226</sup> For this reason, Castro's legacy seems assured, but the legacy of the Cuban Revolution seems to be less certain. While it has been 25 years since the disintegration of the USSR and the Communist regimes of Eastern Europe, the Cuban leadership has maintained its hold upon the state created by revolution that brought them to power.

This grasp upon the reins of power in Cuba has remained despite most steadfast observers' assumption of the regime's relegation to the dustbin of history for the entirety of those 25 years. On the other hand, despite their position of power the policies of the Cuban leadership are rapidly changing to fit the realities of an increasingly globalized world. In order to break itself of dependency on sugar, Cuba has moved toward promoting an economy based upon tourism. This has led to increased foreign investment into the Cuban economy, and brought about a monumental shift into lives of everyday Cubans. How this will play out

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<sup>225</sup> Fidel Castro Ruz, "Fidel Castro: The Cuban People Will Overcome," *Granma* (Havana, Cuba), April 20, 2016, <http://en.granma.cu/cuba/2016-04-20/fidel-castro-the-cuban-people-will-overcome> (accessed April 20, 2016).

<sup>226</sup> Mayra Espina Prieto, "Changes in the Economic and Social Policies in Cuba," *The North American Congress on Latin America*, <https://nacla.org/article/changes-economic-model-and-social-policies-cuba> (accessed April 20, 2016).

remains to be seen. One of these changes is the current process of normalization between Cuba and the United States begun on December 17, 2014. On that day President Barack Obama explained that the United States “will end an outdated approach that, for decades, has failed to advance our interests, and instead we will begin to normalize relations between our two countries.”<sup>227</sup>

Further, he commented that moving forward:

We will insist that civil society join us so that citizens, not just leaders, are shaping our future. And I call on all of my fellow leaders to give meaning to the commitment to democracy and human rights at the heart of the Inter-American Charter. Let us leave behind the legacy of both colonization and communism, the tyranny of drug cartels, dictators and sham elections.<sup>228</sup>

In this sense, Obama, like most observers in the United States, have failed to grasp the last 56 years of Cuban history. The Cuban Revolution was largely the product of more than half a century of pent up frustration at the dream of self-determination deferred. After the struggle for Cuban independence brought Cubans a Republic that merely represented the interests of the United States and Cubans complicit with those interests, for many Cubans only a clean break would do. That is why, for better or for worse, Cubans have chartered a course that has been by and for Cubans. One can criticize the Communist regime and the society that it has created, but to deny the existence of a civil society and participation in the constitution of the new Cuban nation after 1959 is to patronize the Cuban people and remove what agency that they do have. Participation in the political process may not mirror that of the United States, but indeed it does exist.

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<sup>227</sup> Barack Obama, “Statement by the President on Cuba Policy Changes,” (December 17, 2014), *The White House*, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2014/12/17/statement-president-cuba-policy-changes> (accessed April 20, 2016).

<sup>228</sup> Ibid.

This lack of understanding in the United States is apparent in media coverage of the process of rapprochement. Observers in the United States seem to want the process to proceed with rapidity, while Cubans are more cautious.<sup>229</sup> Part of this stems from a tendency to understand the antagonisms from the traditional narrative that exists on Cuban-U.S. relations in the United States. Many view the rupture in relations as merely a product of the Cold War. In that sense these onlookers intend to see Cuba as the last vestige of a bygone-era, a Soviet client-state without a patron. These people then see the process of normalization as marking out the final bits of red leftover from the Cold War ledger, erasing the final holdouts of the era before the triumph of international capitalism and liberal democracy. Of course, this fails to understand that the Cuban Revolution was itself, not a product of the Cold War, but rather shaped by it. What the Cuban Revolution meant for so many Cubans, was a chance to determine their own destiny, independent of the United States. Prior to their revolution, it was not Cuban interests that prevailed on the island, but rather those of the United States—in many ways the island was perceived as existing to suit the needs of American citizens and businesses.

For this reason, it would not be difficult to claim that the reluctance which has characterized Cuba's approach to normalization has its origins in that history. Many Cubans have spent the last fifty five years engaged in the socio-political experiment of constructing the Cuban nation, an experiment not altogether different from the one began in the United States in 1776. They meet the U.S. with a sense of trepidation because they do not want to see the entirety of that experience repudiated, and a return of the very the conditions that brought the Cuban Revolution into existence in the first place. Another reason for this

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<sup>229</sup> Mimi Whitefield, "U.S. Business Relations with Cuba Seem to Have One Speed: Slow," *Miami Herald* (Miami, FL), April 22, 2016, <http://www.miamiherald.com/news/nation-world/world/americas/cuba/article73224192.html> (accessed April 22, 2016).

caution should not surprise any students of history. The continued hostility on the part of the United States toward Cuba is well documented. Since 1959, the United States has used every tool in the toolbox of imperialism in order to undermine the influence of the Cuban Revolution in Latin America.

Indeed, it is as if Goliath survived to sully the name of David on the world stage. These attempts to subvert the influence of the Cuban Revolution have included, but are not limited to: an attempted invasion, the artificial impoverishment of the Cuban people, and covert attempts on the lives of Cuban leadership. The aforementioned tactics are only the most blatant attempts to dictate Cuba's international position. By the late 1970s and early 1980s, U.S. attempts to isolate Cuba were far more nuanced. Most of the tactics used by this period were what political scientists would term the application of soft power. This soft power subversion included diplomatic maneuvering, propaganda meant to influence public opinion, and the use of economic pressure to intimidate leadership. What these methods of soft power show are the importance of culture and the circulation of information to maintain international distributions of power and upholding U.S. hegemony in Latin America.

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