

Figuring Out “Little Hitler”

Relations Between Cuba and the United States 1958-1961

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Abstract

The relations between the United States and Cuba from 1958 to 1961 can be characterized as volatile. With Fidel Castro taking power on January 1, 1959, the United States would see the continued decline of relations between the two nations until diplomatic ties were broken on January 3, 1961. The question is was Castro predestined to move away from the United States and embrace communism or was the pressure from the U.S. responsible for the transition? Through research in primary documents such as the Foreign Relations of the United States, memoirs of individuals involved, and newspaper articles, this study finds that Castro was a communist from the very beginning of his movement and would have moved away from the United States no matter what the circumstances were. In addition, once the United States had determined relations with Cuba could not be salvaged, officials decided action had to be taken against Castro (through economic sanctions and covert military intervention) that pushed him into the arms of the Soviet Union more quickly.

Fidel Castro, the now former President of Cuba, has been a constant reminder to the United States of its inability to stop the spread of communism in its own backyard. Cuba's development into a socialist nation was rapid, taking only two and a half years from the coming to power of the 26th of July Movement on January 5, 1959 to Castro's declaration of a socialist Cuba on May 1, 1961. Yet, when Castro first emerged as a revolutionary leader he claimed he was not a communist and that he was a champion of democracy in the American political tradition. Why did this happen? Was Castro merely lying when he said he was democratic? How did relations deteriorate to the point of Eisenhower referring to Castro as "Little Hitler"?¹ Historians have attempted to answer these questions with mixed results. Some support the idea that Castro was pushed towards Communism as the only way to keep his nationalist dreams alive while others say it was a combination of pressure from Castro's advisers within the government and the United States' policies towards Cuba. Still others say Castro was a communist all along and that he merely hid his agenda so as not to prematurely rile the United States until the revolution could be secured. The issue is complicated by the fact that for many years Castro denied he was a communist (or at least did not counter the charge that he was not) but in recent years has said that in fact he was. With the opening of some key government documents and a growing literature on Castro and the revolution, it can now be definitively shown that Castro was communist from the very beginning and that he hid this fact from the United States so as to ensure the success of the revolution. The U.S. was fairly powerless to prevent him from implementing a communist "agenda". As the U.S. government began to

¹ Dwight D. Eisenhower, "#1578 Diary Entry", July 6, 1960, [The Papers of Dwight David Eisenhower](http://eisenhower.press.jhu.edu.cowles-proxy.drake.edu/), <http://eisenhower.press.jhu.edu.cowles-proxy.drake.edu/>, (accessed November 8, 2009); "Cuban and Central American Developments", January 5, 1961, <http://www.foia.cia.gov/>. (accessed November 21, 2009).

realize Castro's ideas could not be altered, it began to pressure him harder and develop plans to effectively neutralize both Cuba and Castro, a process that ended up pushing him closer to the Soviet Union.

Brief History of Cuban Revolution

It is important, when looking at an issue as complicated as the Cuban transformation into a socialist nation, to look briefly into the rise of the 26th of July Movement. The name of the revolutionary organization started by Castro demonstrates the very origins of the movement. It is named after the first aggressive force led by Fidel Castro against the government of Fulgencio Batista.² Batista had ruled Cuba from 1933 to 1944 and retook power in a bloodless coup in 1952.³ He thereafter ruled Cuba as a ruthless dictator, subduing the masses through fear and intimidation, perpetuating poverty through economic policies that favored Cuba's rich families and U.S. corporations, and turning Cuba into a cesspool of drugs, prostitution, and corruption. On July 26, 1953 a group of men led and trained by Castro attacked the military barracks at Moncada. 160 men took part in the assault, attacking the two main barrack complexes.⁴ The attack was repelled by the Cuban army inside the barracks, and the rebel forces had to retreat, but it set in motion what many consider the beginning of the Cuban Revolution. In fact, this attack was even commended by the U.S. as a show of power by

²Ernesto Che Guevara, Reminiscences of the Cuban Revolutionary War, Trans. Victoria Ortiz, (New York: Monthly Review Press, Inc, 1968), 37.

³Fulgencio Batista, The Growth and Decline of the Cuban Republic, Trans. Blas M. Rocafort, (New York: The Devin-Adair Company. 1964), 14-37.

⁴Fidel Castro and Ignacio Ramonet, My Life: A Spoken Autobiography, Trans. Andrew Hurley, (New York: Scriber, 2008), 121-122.

the Batista regime because of the strong support it received from the military.⁵ Neither the Batista regime nor the U.S. government could have known this attack on Moncada would result in the creation of a movement that would topple the government six years later.

Shortly after the failed attempt to take the barracks at Moncada, Castro was captured and sentenced to prison. While in prison, public support for the rebels mounted and Batista was forced to release Castro and his colleagues. After being released, Castro and the members of what would become the 26th of July Movement went into self-exile in Mexico. There he met a young revolutionary who would have a profound effect on Castro and vice versa. His name was Ernesto Che Guevara and he soon became one of the leaders and visionaries of the 26th of July Movement. Che Guevara explains the first meeting he had with Castro: "I met him (Fidel) on one of those cold nights in Mexico. And I remember that our first discussion was on international politics. A few hours later that same night-at dawn- I was one of the future revolutionaries."⁶

While in Mexico, the 26th of July Movement began to train for an invasion of Cuba to finally overthrow the Batista government. The group learned guerrilla-fighting techniques and developed political focus as many of the leaders' ideals came together.⁷ After training for a significant amount of time, the 82 followers boarded a ship named the *Granma* and set off for Cuba. The boat was so weighed down with men and equipment that it took two days longer

⁵ "Memorandum of Conversation, by John L. Topping of the Office of Middle American Affairs", September 1, 1953, Foreign Relations of the United States, (FRUS), Vol.: IV: (Washington D.C., Government Printing Office 1988), 899.

⁶Guevara, 37.

⁷ Ramonet, 174-175.

than expected to reach the shores of Cuba.⁸ When the men finally reached the shore on December 5, 1956, they started their trek towards the Sierra Maestra mountain range where they would begin launching their attacks. However, the very next day they were attacked by Batista's army, in a battle called Alegría de Pio, and suffered an extreme setback. Thereafter, the remaining 12 revolutionaries, who had made it into the mountains, started to regroup.⁹

After the rout at Alegría de Pío, the 26th of July Movement members began their revolutionary activities. At first they were seen as an isolated band of rebels unable to pose a serious problem to the Batista government. In fact, many officials were under the impression that Castro was dead. It was not until an article written by Herbert Matthews was published in the *New York Times* that the movement gained speed and support. The article jump-started the movement by putting a face on the opposition to the Batista regime. Matthews's article was also one of the first places where the issue of the movement's political persuasion surfaced.¹⁰ As the fighting continued in the Sierra Maestra Mountains, the political pressure began to mount on Batista and he was forced to hold elections in 1958. The elections brought to power a Batista-supported candidate named Riviera Agüero. At the same time, the United States started to move away from the Batista regime, sensing its imminent collapse. As political and social pressure mounted and the continued victories of the 26th of July Movement kept piling

⁸ *Ibid*, 182.

⁹ *Ibid*, 182.

¹⁰ Herbert L. Matthews, "Cuban Rebel is Visited in Hideout", *New York Times*, February 24, 1957.

up, Batista's government began to falter. On January 1, 1959 the government officially fell with Batista leaving the country and paving the way for Castro to take power.¹¹

United States' Views Towards the 26th of July Movement: Pre January 1, 1959

An understanding of United States' involvement in Cuba prior to the fall of Batista's regime is important to understanding that fall. For the previous fifty years, the U.S. had been intimately involved with Cuban affairs. In the most recent Batista episode, they had supported both his rise to power and his dictatorial rule since 1952.¹² The U.S. did recognize early on the potential for this Cuban government to fall, but it did not pull its support from Batista until 1958. Castro's movement did not start to get much attention from the U.S. until 1956 when he landed back on Cuba. From the very beginning, the U.S. took an uneasy stance towards the 26th of July Movement. In 1956 the U.S. ambassador to Cuba, Arthur Gardner, described Castro "as a dangerous individual and a fanatic" which enhanced the uneasiness towards he and the revolutionary movement.¹³

Despite the problems they saw in Castro, issues with Batista ran even deeper at this point. The U.S. had grown weary of the Batista government by late 1957 and was looking at its options. Earl Smith, the newly appointed U.S. ambassador, expressed his concern with the situation in a dispatch to the State Department on December 7, 1957.¹⁴ Smith brought up problems with both Castro, who had documented socialist leanings as early as 1953, but had

¹¹ "Dispatch from the Ambassador in Cuba (Smith) to the Department of State", December 7, 1957, FRUS, Vol.: VI, (Washington D.C., Government Printing Office 1991), 865-870.

¹² Batista, 14-37.

¹³ "Memorandum of a Conversation, Department of State", December 6, 1956, FRUS, Vol.: VI, (Washington D.C., Government Printing Office 1987), 838.

¹⁴ "Memorandum from the Secretary of State to the President", January 7, 1959, FRUS, Vol.: VI, (Washington D.C., Government Printing Office 1987), 347.

supposedly renounced them since, and Batista's potential to become a dictator, which would weaken both the potential to bring democracy to Cuba and American interests on the island.¹⁵ Smith's early recommendation was to support the "continuation in office of the present government until the end of its elected term or at least until after elections; by the holding of free, open and honest elections at an early date, as prescribed by the Constitution; and by the emergence of an administration which would have the support of a majority of the people and be able to maintain law and order, . . ." ¹⁶ Smith recognized this would not be possible unless the U.S. brought both sides into the fold and used them to complete his recommendation. This statement from Smith was the first time the U.S. government viewed itself as being in an unfavorable situation in supporting Batista. Meanwhile, over the next few months, U.S. officials continued to supply Batista's government with arms and other forms of support while doubting their position.

At the time, the United States had been adhering to a very strict non-interventionist policy towards Cuba.¹⁷ Through this move the U.S. was trying to pull away from the Batista government. What is interesting about its non-interventionism was the strict way the government followed it in Cuba. The U.S. kept out of direct military conflict, which was contradictory to its standard mode of operation. This policy was adopted, not because of some sense of moral clarity on the part of the U.S., but because of pressures put on it by its former decisions and actions.

¹⁵ *Ibid*, 866-867.

¹⁶ *Ibid*, 867-868.

¹⁷ "Telegram From the Embassy in Cuba to the Department of State", March 12, 1958, FRUS, Vol: VI, (Washington D.C., Government Printing Office 1991), 53.

The first policy that pushed the U.S. towards non-intervention was the previous support of the unpopular Batista regime and the connection the United States had with it. The U.S. had developed such a strong relationship with the government of Cuba that it was finding it hard to distance itself from Batista. The damage to the United States' relationship with the Cuban people had already been done. They had supported him for so long while also attempting to silence his opponents, that when Cubans thought of the Batista government they could not help but also think of the menacing giant from the north standing behind him.¹⁸ This reality was part of the problem the U.S. faced with the 26th of July Movement as well. The U.S. had been viewed as such a negative force in Cuba that the anti-Batista movement had a significantly anti-American position as well.¹⁹ This was not an outrageous reaction on the part of the revolutionary forces. The U.S. had been in a controlling situation in Cuba for the last 50 years, more for its own benefit for Cuba's. In addition, most of the biggest companies on the island were American-owned and they had a large influence on the affairs of the government.

The second factor was that the U.S. had no other choice of a leader they could support besides Batista. Interestingly, the Eisenhower administration never made a move on Castro outside of its limited support of the Batista government. Judging by the U.S. government's record on interventions (the Guatemalan coup in 1954 and the Iranian coup in 1953) one would expect it to have become involved. But, it hesitated in the Cuban situation, which, while puzzling, can be explained. The first reason it did not reach out to the 26th of July Movement is

¹⁸ "Memorandum of a Conversation, Department of State", December 23, 1958, FRUS, Vol. : VI, (Washington D.C., Government Printing Office 1991), 308

¹⁹ "Dispatch From the Embassy in Cuba to the Department of State", March 3, 1958, FRUS, Vol. :VI, (Washington D.C., Government Printing Office 1991), 46.

because the U.S. was not sure of its political intentions. Since the start of Castro's movement, the U.S. was unable to decide where it would go if it came to power. As early as 1956 the U.S. had gathered some evidence that the movement might have communist tendencies.²⁰ After the elections on June 1st, 1958 in Cuba the president elect Rivera Aguero mentioned the issue of communism within Castro's movement numerous times to Ambassador Smith. Aguero even went so far as say "a victory for the 26th of July Movement would be the worst thing that could possibly happen to Cuba or to U.S. interests in Cuba."²¹ American businessmen who dealt in the Oriente province of Cuba, where Castro's movement operated, also noted that Castro's movement was both communist-inspired and dominated.²² Even the Central Intelligence Agency knew the movement included at least some communists and leftist members while at the same time harboring anti-American sentiments.²³ Furthermore, Ambassador Smith noted "It is my opinion if the US strictly adherers to non-interventionist policy, communists will be the only ones to profit from the resulting chaos and U.S. may have to intervene later for humanitarian reasons."²⁴ Finally, Vice President Nixon pointed out "it would be undesirable to take a chance on Communist domination in Cuba, which had one of the largest communist Parties in the Hemisphere."²⁵

²⁰ "Memorandum of a Conversation, Department of State", 838.

²¹ "Memorandum of a Conversation Between the Ambassador in Cuba (Smith) and President-elect Rivero Aguero", November 25, 1958, FRUS, Vol.: VI: (Washington D.C., Government Printing Office 1991), 267.

²² "Telegram from the Embassy in Cuba to the Department of State", December 2, 1958, FRUS, Vol.: VI: (Washington D.C., Government Printing Office 1991), 276.

²³ "NSC Briefing-Cuba", November 29, 1958, <http://www.foia.cia.gov/>, (accessed November 1, 2009).

²⁴ "Telegram from the Embassy in Cuba to the Department of State", 277.

²⁵ "Memorandum of Discussion at the 392nd Meeting of the National Security Council", December 23, 1958, FRUS, Vol.: VI: (Washington D.C., Government Printing Office 1991), 303.

However, despite such reports top government officials remained uncertain. For instance, in a memorandum to President Eisenhower, Secretary of State John Foster Dulles informed the president that “we also know that the communists are utilizing the Castro movement to some extent, as would be expected, but there is insufficient evidence on which to base a charge that the rebels are communist dominated.”²⁶ Eisenhower even admitted that he did not learn until the end of 1958 that Castro might be a problem. In his memoir he writes: “During the rush of these last events in the final days of 1958, the Central Intelligence Agency suggested for the first time that a Castro victory might not be in the best interests of the U.S.”²⁷ In another passage he expressed alarm that communism might penetrate Latin America by way of Cuba, which demonstrated that even at this late date that he did not consider Castro a communist. He wrote: “This threat (communism), though none of us knew it at the time, was to be thrust into the open first, not on the Latin American mainland, but on the island of Cuba.”²⁸ The lack of communication to the upper echelons of the government is astounding. All of the information regarding the communist potential within the 26th of July Movement had failed to reach top U.S. decision makers. This occurred despite the fact that Eisenhower had gone to great lengths in 1955 to prove he would oppose communism in Cuba by saying “It is essential that as we make such a study we do not forget the vital importance to us of a sound, non-communist government in Cuba.”²⁹

²⁶ “Memorandum from Acting Secretary of State to the President”, December 23, 1958, FRUS, Vol.: VI: (Washington D.C., Government Printing Office 1991), 304.

²⁷ Dwight D. Eisenhower, The White House Years: Waging Peace 1956-1961, (Garden City, New York: Doubleday & Company, Inc 1965), 521.

²⁸ *Ibid*, p. 520.

²⁹ Dwight D. Eisenhower, “#1290 Letter to Ezra Taft Benson”, February 5, 1955, The Papers of Dwight David Eisenhower, <http://eisenhower.press.jhu.edu.cowles-proxy.drake.edu/>, (accessed November 8, 2009).

This factor leads one to the next cause of lackluster action against the 26th of July Movement: the fear of upsetting a popular movement. Early in the movement's life it was unable to gain significant amounts of popular support either because of low membership numbers or due to Cuba's successful economy, driven primarily by sugar.³⁰ However, the Movement did grow in influence, especially after the article written by Herbert Matthews in the *New York Times*.³¹ As its popularity grew, the movement gained strength both at home and abroad. Even people in the U.S. embraced Castro as the democratic savior of Cuba and supported his bid to overthrow the Batista government.³²

The final reason for the lack of support of the 26th of July Movement is the issue of similar accusations of communist infiltration when the Batista government came to power in 1952. Shortly after Batista's rise to power some U.S. government officials cried out against Batista and his supposed communist sympathies; however, the accusations lacked evidence.³³ Thus, the U.S. was forced to wait and see which way Batista would swing with regard to communism. Within a short period of time after taking power, Batista implemented an anti-communist attitude within his government.³⁴ This past experience with Batista had to have had a significant effect on the actions of the United States six years later when similar accusations were made about the July 26th Movement. Therefore, because of Castro's development into a popular figure both at home and abroad, the hesitation on branding his movement communist,

³⁰ "Supplementary Notes of Meeting Between the President and Legislative Leaders", June 8, 1955, *FRUS*, Vol. : VI, (Washington D.C., Government Printing Office 1991), 818.

³¹ Matthews, *New York Times*.

³² *Ibid*.

³³ "Memorandum of Conversation, by Harvey R. Wellman of the Office of Middle American Affairs", July 25, 1953, *FRUS*, Vol.: IV, (Washington D.C., Government Printing Office 1983), 896.

³⁴ *Ibid*, 896-897.

the history of support of Batista, and the previous experience the government had with communist accusations, the U.S. feared direct intervention in Cuba.

Fidel Castro's Political Ideology Before 1959

The political ideology held by Fidel Castro before his movement took power on January 1, 1959 was shrouded in mystery. People such as Fulgencio Batista and Earl T. Smith, the ambassador to Cuba until January 10, 1959, claimed they knew he was a communist from his attack on the barracks at Moncada.³⁵ Although the claims of these two important sources are negated by what is shown in the previous section, they are important because they show that Castro was an enigma in the eyes of people outside of the 26th of July Movement. Castro's communist ideology took hold before his coming to power in January of 1959 but it was a closely guarded secret within the movement.

Castro has been recently arguing that he was in fact a communist all along. In a recent interview, Castro stated: "in a relatively short time, on my own and with very little knowledge of economics or other essential subjects, I started becoming what today I would call a 'Utopian Communist' [.]"³⁶ Castro points to the time before his university days as the period where he began to embrace communist thought. He is quick to add that his university experience led him in the direction of becoming a true revolutionary but that he had already embraced communism.³⁷ It is important to note that Castro uttered these statements close to 50 years after the revolution, potentially raising some doubt to his supposed communist origins. Because

³⁵ Batista, 40; Earl E.T. Smith, The Fourth Floor: an Account of the Castro Communist Revolution, (New York, Random House, Inc. 1962), 67-68.

³⁶ Ramonet, 92.

³⁷ *Ibid*, 92.

of such a long length of time between this statement and the revolution he might have motives for proclaiming himself a committed communist now. Thus it is important to look deeper into the 26th of July Movement itself to test Castro's claims.

The connection of Castro's political ideology to that of the 26th of July Movement can be shown when Castro met Che Guevara while in Mexico after his prison term for the attacks at Moncada. Throughout the revolution and subsequent revolutionary government, Che was a known communist and was consistently blamed as the source of communist infiltration within the movement itself.³⁸ Throughout Che's significant writings on the subject of the Cuban revolution there is no discussion of the political ideology of either himself or Castro before taking power. One place the ideology is discussed at length is in interviews with one of Che's right-hand men, Harry "Pombo" Villegas. Villegas joined the 26th of July movement in 1957 when he was 17 and soon became a trusted soldier of Che's. Villegas later became a leader within the movement and followed Che until he was killed in 1967.³⁹ Villegas is of the opinion that from very beginning the movement was communist driven.

Villegas pointed to the ideology of past Cuban revolutions as the ultimate source of this communist influence, which both Che and Castro latched on to as a front for their political agenda. Villegas explained that Che was very interested in the history of the past Cuban revolutions, specifically the revolution of 1895. Due to his study of the 1895 revolution, Che identified with one of the leaders of this movement, namely Jose Marti, as a conduit for the movement's communist, and to a lesser extent, nationalist, beliefs. In addition to being a leader

³⁸ Smith, 34.

³⁹ Harry (Pombo) Villegas, At the Side of Che Guevara: Interviews with Harry Villegas (Pombo), edit. Mary-Alice Waters, Luis Madrid, Elsa Blaquier Ascano, (New York: Pathfinder Press 1997), 3, 35-36.

of the 1895 revolution, Marti also took time to write extensively about his political beliefs and what he saw as the future of Cuba.⁴⁰ According to Villegas, Che studied Marti's writings and began to find similarities between Marti and Marx. Villegas stated:

In his writings Marti says: 'Create a republic where the first law will be respect for the dignity of man.' This cannot be achieved under capitalism. He was thinking of a different society. And when he says: 'This is a republic including all and for the welfare of all,' he is talking of a more universal republic, where men are truly equal in rights, in possibilities, and this can be achieved only under socialism.

In other words, one of the things Che discovered through his study of Cuba's history is that the goals of Marti converge with the course of Marxism-Leninism. This is true even with regard to the party, and the conception of how to lead, how to conduct the struggle, Marti's ideas are not at all separate from the conceptions of Marxism.⁴¹

The connection made by Villegas, of Marti's ideology to that of Marxism-Leninism and there from Che to Castro, cannot be overstated. In addition, Villegas emphasized the importance of Fidel in the plan concocted by Marti saying, "That is why we always say, 'What Marti promised, Fidel carried out.' That is the truth."⁴² Through Marti it is possible to connect communist ideology to that of the Cuban nationalist ideology within Castro's movement, casting significant doubt on the argument made by many scholars that Castro was initially a nationalist and only later a communist.⁴³

Once this vital connection is realized, we can look back to the writings and speeches of Castro to see if he references Marti. During one of Castro's statements to the Cuban people during his time in exile he referenced Marti numerous times. The first mention of Marti stated: "Politics, as conceived by Marti and as we understand it, is the art of keeping the peace and

⁴⁰ Ramonet, 146, 154.

⁴¹ Villegas, 17.

⁴² *Ibid*, 18.

⁴³ Luxenberg, Alan H, "Did Eisenhower Push Castro Into the Arms of the Soviets", *Journal of Interamerican Studies and World Affairs*, Vol. 30, No. 1 (Spring, 1988), 38-39.

greatness of the country, but not the vile art of creating a fortune at its expense.”⁴⁴ Later in the same statement Castro explained, “we think like Marti that a sincere man does not seek where his advantage lies but where his duty is and that the only practical man is the one whose present dream will be the law of tomorrow.”⁴⁵ In total, Castro mentioned Marti 27 times in writings spanning from 1948-1958, with many of them exhibiting a tone similar to the aforementioned one.⁴⁶ This statement by Castro paired with those of Villegas reveals how the 26th of July Movement and its leaders were able to hide their communist sympathies through nationalist rhetoric.

It could be questioned why, if Castro had a communist agenda, he and his movement did not come out and proclaim that they did. The answer is a very simple one. U.S. foreign policy towards real and supposed communists was not one of affection. The U.S. had overthrown two governments in the 10 years previous, Iran in 1953 and Guatemala in 1954, because they were accused of being influenced by communist sympathizers. In addition, both nations held significant importance to the U.S. economy. Guatemala had the United Fruit Company and Iran had Western oil interests, which according to the U.S., were being threatened by communist leaders. Not to mention that United States’ policy toward Latin America, including Cuba, for the fifty years prior to Castro’s emergence was one of bullying and intervention. With examples all around him, Castro would have had to be blind to think he would succeed if he made known his communist agenda. Castro recognized that Cuba was

⁴⁴ Fidel Castro, Revolutionary Struggle 1947-1958: Volume 1 of the Selected Works of Fidel Castro, Edit. Rolando E. Bonachea and Nelson R. Valdes, (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The MIT Press, 1971), 267.

⁴⁵ *Ibid*, 271.

⁴⁶ *Ibid*, 2, 5, 7, 11, 14, 42, 57, 74, 82, 83, 154-159, 191, 196, 199, 205, 219, 220, 237, 259, 262, 267, 275, 287, 295, 328, 337, 375.

different from Guatemala and Iran, not only because it was so much closer to the U.S., but also because Cuba itself was home to a variety of U.S. businesses. Castro elaborated, “They [the United States] owned land in lots of countries, of course, but here, historically, those corporations were very powerful and very influential.”⁴⁷ He even recognized that there was much anti-communist momentum in Cuba at the time so he would have to fight an uphill battle in his own country.⁴⁸ Castro acknowledged this by stating “I had to appeal to every recourse of my imagination to persuade them [Both Cubans and the United States] without giving our position away. [i.e. that we were going to proclaim Socialism].”⁴⁹ Consequently Castro and his supporters were left with no other option but to falsify their political credentials and wait until they took power to implement drastic communist change in Cuba.

Developments in Cuban Policy Post January 1, 1959

After Batista fled Cuba in the early hours on January 1, 1959, developments within the nation sped up. Castro and his movement began to take control of major cities culminating in Castro’s triumphant procession into Havana on January 8, 1959.⁵⁰ Early in the week, Manuel Urrutia took on the role as president of the new government with the strong support of Castro, who at that time did not express interest in the position.⁵¹ The concern held by the U.S. with regard to the issue of communism within the 26th of July Movement was, for the moment, stifled due to a moderate like Urrutia taking the presidency. Its fears were further quelled through the appointment of many moderate revolutionaries to cabinet positions in the

⁴⁷ Ramonet, 245.

⁴⁸ *Ibid*, 216.

⁴⁹ *Ibid*, 243.

⁵⁰ “Telegram From the Embassy in Cuba to the Department of State”, January 9, 1959, FRUS, Vol.:VI, (Washington D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1990), 350.

⁵¹ “NSC Briefing-Cuba January 6, 1959”, <http://www.foia.cia.gov/>, (accessed November 23, 2009).

following week.⁵² These seemingly positive developments led the CIA to have great confidence in the new government. In a NCS briefing they stated “Cuba likely to become an aggressive champion of democracy in hemisphere.”⁵³ With all of these positive steps being taken by the new government, the only question mark was Castro himself. The American leadership was still uncertain which way he would swing in the long run.⁵⁴ With the overall situation turning in favor of the U.S., very few could fathom how fast relations between the two nations would deteriorate.

The swing away from the United States was set in motion almost instantly after Batista left the country. There was an extensive backlash within the Cuban population against the U.S. due to its historic support for the Batista regime. To add to this unrest, Castro began to speak out against the U.S. through speeches during the first month of the new government.⁵⁵ His criticisms mostly centered around the presence of American military installations on the island. As the American Embassy in Cuba stated, “He [Castro] said he felt the missions [military] should ‘pack up and leave,’ and, according to press reports, stated that military missions ‘might be spying.’”⁵⁶ In addition to Castro and the population lashing out at the U.S., moderate members within the government began to resign. This process started with the resignation of the Prime Minister José Miro Cardona and the whole cabinet on February 13, 1959.⁵⁷ Not only did the U.S.

⁵² *Ibid.*

⁵³ *Ibid.*

⁵⁴ “White House Special Staff Note”, January 13, 1959, FRUS, Vol.: VI, (Washington D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1990), 356.

⁵⁵ “Telegram From the Embassy in Cuba to the Department of State”, January 15, 1959, FRUS, Vol. : VI, (Washington D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1990), 364.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

⁵⁷ “Telegram From the Embassy in Cuba to the Department of State”, February 14, 1959, FRUS, Vol. : VI: (Washington D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1990), 399.

learn that all of the moderates they had recently been praising were now gone, but also that Castro replaced Cardona as the Prime Minister.⁵⁸ Taking the position of Prime Minister was not enough for Castro; he also altered the law in order to give himself, as the new Prime Minister, drastically increased power. The American Embassy stated “He [Castro] will ‘dictate policy of government’ and ‘dispatch administrative matters’ with president.”⁵⁹ Castro then proceeded to suspend elections for two years.⁶⁰ Within a month, Castro had effectively neutralized the moderate section of the government and had given the U.S. a preview of similar changes to come.

Agrarian Reform

One of the major points of conflict between the United States and the new Castro regime was the issue of Agrarian Reform and its implementation. Cabinet passed The Agrarian Reform Law, thanks to an endorsement by Castro, on May 17th 1959.⁶¹ The U.S. government saw the law as a “radical change in the land tenure system of Cuba.”⁶² The law had many different points and only a few contained changes that were of drastic importance to the relationship between the U.S. and Cuba. One of the most important changes was that all landholdings over 99 acres were subject to expropriation by the government.⁶³ There was an exception to this rule when it came to sugar plantations, rice farms, and cattle ranches which saw that the maximum number was set at 3,300 acres before the holdings would be subject to

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*

⁶⁰ Eisenhower, 523.

⁶¹ “306. Editorial Note”, *FRUS*, Vol. : VI: (Washington D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1991), 509.

⁶² “Telegram from the Embassy in Cuba to the Department of State”, May 19, 1959, *FRUS*, Vol. : VI: (Washington D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1991), 509.

⁶³ “NSC Briefing-Cuba”, May 21, 1959, <http://www.foia.cia.gov/>, (accessed November 23, 2009).

expropriation.⁶⁴ With the expropriation of these lands, the government would split them up into cooperatives that would share “agricultural equipment, storage facilities, transportation, schools, hospitals, and other social services.” Another important development was the law that stated that within one year of its passing, all private corporations would lose the ability to exploit sugar cane fields unless they had registered their stockholders and all of the stockholders were Cuban citizens. All the expropriated landowners would be subject to compensation but it would be in the form of 20-year bonds with no more than 4.5 percent interest.⁶⁵ Some officials, including President Eisenhower, found this compensation lacking.⁶⁶ This law would lead to what was estimated at 50,000 caballería, equivalent to 1,660,000 acres, of American-owned land being expropriated. Surprisingly, after hearing concern from the U.S. government, Castro was cited as saying it would have no affect on the relations between Cuba and the U.S.⁶⁷

The agrarian reform was seen as a very disturbing development in the eyes of United States’ officials. The issue was so pressing that they requested that their ambassador come to Washington D.C. within five days of the law being passed.⁶⁸ Not only did the government fear the loss of American-owned property in Cuba but they also harbored a concern that the land reform would result in a reduction of the sugar crop and would render the nation unable to fill

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶⁶ Dwight D. Eisenhower, “#1582 Letter to Harold Macmillan”, July 11, 1960, [The Papers of Dwight David Eisenhower](http://eisenhower.press.jhu.edu/cowles-proxy.drake.edu/), <http://eisenhower.press.jhu.edu/cowles-proxy.drake.edu/>. (accessed November 30, 2009).

⁶⁷ “*Telegram From the Department of State to the Embassy in Cuba*”, May 22, 1959, [FRUS](#), Vol. : VI: (Washington D.C: Government Printing Office, 1991), 510.

⁶⁸ *Ibid*, 511.

its sugar quota.⁶⁹ The U.S. officials did come out and say they were not opposed to the idea of land reform, (which did not line up with their previous record on the issue), and in fact were willing to offer their support both in technical and other areas to help make the reform law successful.⁷⁰ Shortly after these concerns were expressed to the Cuban government, Castro sent a telegram to the secretary of agriculture stating, “In answering to fear expressed by your department in regard to the consequences of agrarian reform concerning sugar production of Cuba, we are in a position to sell to the United States of America 8 million tons of sugar at 4¢ of a dollar per pound in 1961.” (It is important to note their quota for 1959 was 3 million tons)⁷¹ Despite this fact, the U.S. was shaken by the agrarian reform law’s implementation.

After the shock of the agrarian reform law, many people within the United States began to speak out against it. One of the reasons for this backlash was many American property owners stated the reform law was an intense demonstration of the amount of communist infiltration within the Castro led government. One went so far as to say “There was also the clear indication that the Castro land reform movement was Communist-inspired, if not directed, and thus its fulfillment could be expected not only to render normal relations impossible between our country and Cuba but might well bring about a Communist-controlled nation close to our shores.”⁷² Despite these statements, the government was still in doubt of Castro’s actual political beliefs. After the agrarian reform law passed, for the first time they had

⁶⁹ “Memorandum of a Conversation, Department of State”, May 27, 1959, FRUS, Vol. : VI: (Washington D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1991), 513.

⁷⁰ “Telegram from the Department of State to the Embassy in Cuba”, June 1, 1959, FRUS, Vol. : VI: (Washington D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1991), 515.

⁷¹ “316. Editorial Note”, FRUS, Vol. : VI: (Washington D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1991), 522.

⁷² “Memorandum of a Conversation, Department of State”, June 24, 1959, FRUS, Vol. : VI: (Washington D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1991), 540.

an inkling of a doubt about his democratic principles.⁷³ Admittedly, little concrete evidence existed to support the accusations of communist inspiration, but the seed of doubt regarding the Cuban government's political ideology had been planted.

Land expropriations began at the end of June 1959. The outcries of many American and Cuban large agricultural landowners did not go unnoticed by the Cuban government. On June 30, the National Security Council (NSC) was informed by the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) that "Soldiers occupied Cattle lands in Camagucy province following Castro's declaration that immediate nationalization of excess cattle land would occur in response to cattlemen's opposition to agrarian reform."⁷⁴ The U.S. identified this incident originally as strictly an isolated case but by the end of the year full-scale expropriation had begun. The CIA cited many separate instances of continued expropriation of lands beginning in December 1959. In addition to the expropriation of "cattle lands, telephone companies, petroleum concessions, domestic airlines, and hotels," Castro had set out plans, through the now extremely powerful National Institute of Agrarian Reform run by Che Guevara, to continue expropriating other lands and companies such as "sugar plantations and mills, oil refineries, and insurance and banking enterprises."⁷⁵ This expropriation continued into 1960 and the U.S. began to see that it was being implemented with little to no legal notification or viable promise of compensation, both of which were called for in the Agrarian Reform Law passed the previous year.⁷⁶ Although

⁷³ "Memorandum from Secretary of State to the President", July 7, 1959, FRUS, Vol. : VI: (Washington D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1991), 554.

⁷⁴ "NSC Briefing-Cuba", June 30, 1959, <http://www.foia.cia.gov/>, (accessed November 26, 2009).

⁷⁵ "The Situation in Caribbean through 1960", December 29, 1959, <http://www.foia.cia.gov/>, (accessed November 15, 2009).

⁷⁶ "NSC Briefing-Cuba", January 13, 1960, <http://www.foia.cia.gov/>, (accessed November 26, 2009).

promised compensation for their property, most of the owners would never see anything due to increased hostility between Castro's government and the U.S.

Castro, the Soviets, and the Final Push Towards Radicalization

As 1959 came to a close, the Cuban situation took a dark turn from which it would never come back. While the agrarian reform law was being implemented across the nation, Castro began to focus on foreign policy. Before major connection was made to areas in the Soviet Bloc, Castro had one final domestic obstacle-President Urrutia. Urrutia had been slowly losing influence in the government and had become disenfranchised with the revolutionary leaders. On July 18, 1959 he spoke out against the communist infiltration of the government that led to stronger radicalization and led to him being replaced by Osvaldo Dorticos, a lawyer who was close to Cardona but was believed to be simply a puppet of Castro's.⁷⁷ After the removal of Urrutia, the communist leader Cuba Lazaro Pena called for the radicalization of the revolution with full communist participation.⁷⁸

As the domestic situation in Cuba began its final purging of moderates, foreign interaction had started to heat up. Before Urrutia's official resignation on July 16, 1959, Che Guevara was meeting with communists while visiting India. During his visit he had expressed his displeasure with the American military presence on Cuba and said once the military missions were removed, Cuba would be able to show its true colors when it came to foreign policy.⁷⁹ In

⁷⁷ "NSC Briefing-Cuba", July 16, 1960, <http://www.foia.cia.gov/>, (accessed November 28, 2009).

⁷⁸ "NSC Briefing-Cuba", July 23, 1960, <http://www.foia.cia.gov/>, (accessed November 28, 2009).

⁷⁹ "Memorandum of a Discussion in the 413th Meeting of the National Security Council", July 16, 1959, FRUS, Vol. : VI: (Washington D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1991), 560.

October of the same year, Cuba threatened to turn to Soviet-bloc nations, primarily Czechoslovakia, if they were not sold jets from Western nations.⁸⁰ In addition, it was leaked that the U.S. was trying to stop the shipment of the jets to Cuba.⁸¹ As the year continued, the U.S. attempted to prevent arms sales to Cuba on a more regular basis. This policy widened the rift between the U.S. and Cuba while Cuban connections to the Soviet bloc grew stronger.

The U.S. was confident that the Soviet Union would not sell arms to Cuba as 1959 came to a close.⁸² But within the first two months of 1960, the CIA began to get word that arms shipments had begun to funnel into Cuba from the United Arab Republic.⁸³ Shortly after these reports arrived, the CIA found evidence of the potential sale of 23 fighter jets, lighter aircraft, and small arms to Cuba from the UAR.⁸⁴ Around the same time, the State department began to get reports of Cuba selling sugar well below the world market price to the Soviet bloc.⁸⁵ The sale of military hardware and discounted sugar were not the only issues of concern to the U.S. because earlier in the month Cuba and the Soviets had come to an economic agreement. The agreement called for the Soviets to buy five million tons of sugar over a three-year period with Cuba receiving \$100 million in trade credits, and for the two nations to collaborate in the United Nations.⁸⁶ With this deal in place the two governments had formed a bond that would

⁸⁰ "Telegram from the Embassy in the United Kingdom to the Department of State", October 15, 1959, FRUS, Vol. : VI: (Washington D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1991), 625.

⁸¹ "Telegram from the Embassy in Cuba to the Department of State", October 16, 1959, FRUS, Vol.: VI: (Washington D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1991), 639.

⁸² "Memorandum of Discussion at the Department of State-Joint Chiefs of Staff Meeting", January 8, 1960, FRUS, Vol. : VI: (Washington D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1991) ,733.

⁸³ "Cuban Arms Purchase", February 23, 1960, <http://www.foia.cia.gov/>, (accessed November 20, 2009).

⁸⁴ "Cuban Arms Purchase", *February 25, 1960*, <http://www.foia.cia.gov/>, (accessed November 20, 2009).

⁸⁵ "Memorandum of a Discussion at the 432d Meeting of the National Security Council", January 14, 1960, FRUS, Vol. : VI: (Washington D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1991), 741.

⁸⁶ "Memorandum of a Discussion at the 435th Meeting of the National Security Council", February 18, 1960, FRUS, Vol. : VI: (Washington D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1991), 792.

last for the rest of the Cold War. The bond was formalized on May 7 when Cuba and the Soviet Union announced official diplomatic ties.⁸⁷

On March 25, 1960 Cuba began to officially trade arms with the UAR.⁸⁸ Many of these arms were thought to have been Czechoslovakian, raising suspicion of communist involvement. However, this was not a large enough sign of communist influence. Cuba and China had agreed to talk about opening trade relations a mere four days after the arms deal went through. China had already been trading sugar with Cuba over the previous three months and there was speculation on the part of the CIA that China was trying to advance communism in Latin America through the Cuban government, but this was never proven.⁸⁹ It would still be a few months until the first confirmed military hardware of communist origin would make it into Cuba, but by March of 1960 the United States had changed its policy towards the tiny island nation from passive to aggressive.⁹⁰

United States Policy Change Towards Cuba

The attitude the United States held towards Cuba and the revolution through the end of 1959 was a wait and see policy. They were very open to the idea of a democratic partnership with Cuba and initially had faith that Castro would be able to produce it. As the year came to an end, agrarian reform, expropriation on U.S.-owned land, and the close connections formed with the Soviets, led the U.S. to turn their foreign policy towards Cuba and Castro in a more hard line direction.

⁸⁷ "Cuba-USSR", May 9, 1960, <http://www.foia.cia.gov/>, (accessed November 21, 2009).

⁸⁸ "Cuba to Buy Military Aircraft from UAR", March 25, 1960, <http://www.foia.cia.gov/>, (accessed November 20, 2009).

⁸⁹ "Sino-Cuba Trade Missions Arranged", March 29, 1960, <http://www.foia.cia.gov/>, (accessed November 20, 2009).

⁹⁰ Eisenhower, 537.

The first of these changes in policy had to do with the implementation of the Agrarian Reform Law, which, we have seen, resulted in large amounts of land and businesses being nationalized and was having a negative effect on American holdings. After fighting the law in a passive way, Washington instructed their ambassador in Cuba, Philip Bonsal, who had replaced Earl Smith the year before, to send a note to the Cuban government protesting what they saw as the illegal actions and abuses that the National Institution for Agrarian Reform (INRA) had perpetrated against American-owned companies in Cuba.⁹¹ Bonsal then proceeded to plead the case for the companies saying they had followed the laws of the nation, had been invaluable in developing the country, and paid wages which exceeded the average wage for Cuban workers. The Cuban Foreign Minister Marcelo Fernandez responded by saying the Agrarian Reform law did not make exceptions when it came to land expropriation and, thus, the American companies would be treated like any other company.⁹² The fighting over the Agrarian Reform law would continue through the end of the year.

Sugar Quota Cut

One of the most important items of trade between Cuba and the U.S. was sugar. In fact, when first discussing the transition of power in Cuba, the *New York Times* said, “we continue to hope for peace and prosperity in Cuba. This must include a quick handling of this year’s sugar crop . . .”⁹³ The Sugar Act of 1948 provided Cuba with a sizable portion of the American sugar market. In 1959 alone, the act allowed Cuba to export more than 3,500,000 tons of sugar to the

⁹¹ “Telegram from the Embassy in Cuba to the Department of State”, January 11, 1960, FRUS, Vol. : VI: (Washington D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1991), 739.

⁹² *Ibid*, 739-740.

⁹³ *New York Times*, “Fidel Castro’s Cuba”, *New York Times*, January 18, 1959.

U.S., which counted for more than a third of total American sugar consumption.⁹⁴ In addition, the current sugar act called for the U.S. to pay Cuba double the world market cost.⁹⁵ Cuba's economy heavily relied on sugar exports to survive and United States officials knew it. As Harry R. Turkel, the Director of the office of Inter-American Regional Economic Affairs, put it, "cutting the sugar quota is the ultimate weapon in relations with Cuba."⁹⁶ In the wake of the Agrarian Reform Law's passage, many people in Washington began to question whether Cuba could keep up with their quota of sugar imports.⁹⁷ When faced with the potential of losing their sugar supply, United States officials began to look for other suppliers if Cuba could not cover its quota or if the political situation in the country forced the United States' hand.⁹⁸ In fact, Congress had already begun to discuss the possibility of cutting the Cuban sugar quota when the Sugar Act came up for renewal in 1960.⁹⁹

As relations between the two nations began their downward spiral, officials within the Eisenhower presidency started working to safeguard the U.S. from being tied to Cuba through the Sugar Act. Within the U.S. government, a push started in the summer of 1959 to add a provision into the Sugar Act that would give the president the ability to change a nation's given quota at any time through an executive order.¹⁰⁰ To be sure, there was hesitancy in

⁹⁴George Auerbach, "Cuba's Sugar Problem: An Analysis of U.S. Quota Program and why Castro is Seeking Changes" *New York Times*. April 8, 1959.

⁹⁵ "Memorandum of a Discussion", July 6, 1960, FRUS, Vol. : VI: (Washington D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1991), 979.

⁹⁶ "Memorandum by the Director of the Office of Inter-American Regional Economic Affairs", July 1, 1959, FRUS, Vol. : VI: (Washington D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1991), 549.

⁹⁷ "Memorandum of a Conversation, Department of State", May 27, 1959, 513.

⁹⁸ "Memorandum of a Conversation Department of State", September 24, 1959, FRUS, Vol. : VI: (Washington D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1991), 608.

⁹⁹ *Ibid*, 608.

¹⁰⁰ "Memorandum from the Ambassador to Cuba (Bonsal) to the Assistant Secretary of State for Inter-American Affairs (Rubottom)", September, 1959, FRUS, Vol. : VI: (Washington D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1991), 615.

implementing this policy because Cuba was still up in the air politically, but by the end of the year there was nearly a consensus.¹⁰¹ Early in the first month of 1960, two revisions of the acts had been introduced to Congress and called for many of the suggestions put forward by both the Department of Agriculture and the State Department.¹⁰² This new bill called for the Sugar Law to be extended for four years, and gave the president direct control over the quota numbers for each country.¹⁰³ By March of 1960, relations between Cuba and the U.S. had failed and the embassy stated that there is “No hope that the United States will ever be able to establish a satisfactory relationship with any Cuban government dominated by Fidel Castro or his close associates.”¹⁰⁴

The new law was put into place on July 6, 1960 and was welcomed by many people in Washington. Within hours of gaining this new power, President Eisenhower signed an executive act that would cut the sugar quota for Cuba to 700,000 tons.¹⁰⁵ Given the developments in Cuba over the last 18 months this move was not surprising on the part of the President. When he signed the act, Eisenhower said, “This action amounts to economic sanctions against Cuba; now we must look ahead to other moves economic, diplomatic and strategic.”¹⁰⁶ The reaction in Cuba was very quick. The day the act was signed the CIA pointed to “bitterness being so

¹⁰¹ “Memorandum of a Conversation Department of State”, November 24, 1959, FRUS, Vol. : VI: (Washington D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1991), 678.

¹⁰² “Memorandum from Samuel E. Belk of the National Security Council Staff to the President’s Special Assistant for National Security Affairs (Gray)”, January 8, 1960, FRUS, Vol. : VI: (Washington D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1991), 735.

¹⁰³ “Memorandum from Samuel E. Belk of the National Security Council Staff to the President’s Special Assistant for National Security Affairs (Gray)”, March 16, 1960, FRUS, Vol. : VI: (Washington D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1991), 855-856.

¹⁰⁴ “Latin America: US-Cuba Relations”, March 10, 1960, <http://www.foia.cia.gov/>, (accessed November 24, 2009).

¹⁰⁵ Eisenhower, 535.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid*, 535.

engendered against US so persistently that violent mob action against US property or personnel is [a] possibility.”¹⁰⁷ In addition to this reaction by the civilians, the government seized all American-owned lands on the Island.¹⁰⁸ This action was in conjunction with Castro’s previous threats when asked about possible sugar quota cuts. He was quoted as saying that he would “take everything ‘down to the nails in their shoes’ from Americans in Cuba if Cuba’s sugar quota in the US market were cut.”¹⁰⁹ Cuba also was able to save some of its sugar losses by turning to the Soviets and selling them sugar to supplement the lost quota from the U.S.¹¹⁰ With the Sugar Quota now cut, the U.S. turned to more drastic foreign policy action against Cuba.

Covert Operations, Economic Sanctions, and the End of Relations

Covert operations against Castro’s administration had been under discussion as early as March 1959. There was much talk of power change in Cuba starting in March, which did not gain momentum until the summer when the State Department reached out to the CIA for help formulating a plan to overthrow Castro.¹¹¹ While stalling in August and September due to negotiations taking place (which demonstrated signs of potential stability in Cuban-American relations) discussions commenced in earnest once more after it became apparent the talks were going nowhere. On October 31, the CIA and the State Department recommended that the president authorize the support of Cuban opposition groups to make the fall of Castro look like a domestic affair.¹¹²

¹⁰⁷“NSC Briefing Cuba”, July 6, 1960, <http://www.foia.cia.gov/>, (accessed November 20, 2009).

¹⁰⁸ “Cuba”, July 7, 1960, <http://www.foia.cia.gov/>, (accessed November 20, 2009).

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁰ “Sino-Soviet Bloc Support for Cuba”, July 8, 1960, <http://www.foia.cia.gov/>, (accessed November 20, 2009).

¹¹¹ “Memorandum of Discussion at the 432d Meeting of the National Security Council”, January 14, 1960, 742.

¹¹² *Ibid*, 743.

With the start of U.S. support for domestic opposition, the move towards unilateral action in Cuba was the next issue discussed. The Chief of Naval Operations Arleigh Burke suggested in February of 1960 that the U.S. intervene in Cuba to stop Castro. Burke explained, "In considering and comparing the above courses of action, the basic assumption that the United States cannot and must not permit within the Western Hemisphere the establishment of any government dominated by the International Communists is paramount. Therefore, if other courses of action fail, the U.S. must, even in the face of adverse world opinion, take unilateral action to prevent such an occurrence."¹¹³ Burke's recommendations were supported by the Joint Chiefs of Staff but were not agreed upon by other government agencies.¹¹⁴ Thus, the discussion fell back to the formulation of covert support for Cuban opposition within the country. In the summer of 1960 the U.S. began to lash out at Cuba, even going as far as releasing a statement in June identifying Castro with the Internationalist Communist Movement.¹¹⁵ Through the rest of the Eisenhower presidency, talk and development of covert opposition to Castro would continue and result in the Bay of Pigs invasion under the Kennedy administration.

One of the final steps taken by the Eisenhower administration was the implementation of economic sanctions on Cuba. On October 16, 1960 the Secretary of State suggested the recalling of ambassador Bonsal due to the deteriorating Cuban situation and the potential of

¹¹³ "Letter from the Chief of Naval Operations (Burke) to the Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs (Merchant)", February 26, 1960, FRUS, Vol. : VI: (Washington D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1991), 818.

¹¹⁴ "Memorandum From the Assistant Secretary of State for Inter-American Affairs (Rubottom) to the Secretary of State", March 9, 1960, FRUS, Vol. : VI: (Washington D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1991), 828.

¹¹⁵ "Memorandum From the Assistant Secretary of State for Inter-American Affairs (Rubottom) to the Secretary of State", June 27, 1960, FRUS, Vol. : VI: (Washington D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1991), 956.

economic sanctions.¹¹⁶ On October 19, 1960 these economic sanctions against Cuba became a reality. The U.S. saw this action as an act of defense with regard to U.S. businesses and US sovereignty, but it was clearly also an attempt to increase anti-Castro feelings on the Island and thus increase opposition movements.¹¹⁷ The U.S. hoped these partial sanctions would force Cuba to change its course because it was so heavily reliant on exports to and imports from the U.S. They had hoped all production on the Island would come to a standstill.¹¹⁸ Instead, it drove Cuba deeper into the arms of the Soviets that gave Cuba top priority when it came to non-bloc trading as a result of the sanctions.¹¹⁹

As 1960 came to a close, tensions between Cuba and the United States could not have been higher. Within the first few days of 1961, Castro demanded the American embassy staff be reduced to only 11 people within 48 hours. He said the embassy had around 300 workers with about 80 percent of them being spies.¹²⁰ As Eisenhower pointed out in his memoirs, “the truth was that the embassy had only 87 persons, of whom more than half were Cuban.” Despite the blatant miscalculation on Castro’s part Eisenhower had heard enough from “Little Hitler” and cut diplomatic relations with Cuba on January 3, 1961.¹²¹ Thus, over the previous year U.S.-Cuban relations had gone from a minor issue that the U.S. thought could be worked out to a complete break of diplomatic ties.

¹¹⁶ “Memorandum from the Secretary of State to the President”, October 16, 1960, FRUS, Vol. : VI: (Washington D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1991), 1088.

¹¹⁷ “Memorandum of a Discussion at the 464th Meeting of the National Security Council”, October 20, 1960, FRUS, Vol. : VI: (Washington D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1991), 1099.

¹¹⁸ *Ibid*, 1094-1100.

¹¹⁹ “USSR Increases Attention to Cuba”, October 25, 1960, <http://www.foia.cia.gov/>. (accessed November 20, 2009).

¹²⁰ Eisenhower, 613.

¹²¹ Dwight D. Eisenhower, “#1578 Diary Entry”, (accessed November 21, 2009).

Conclusion

From 1959 to 1961 Cuba and the United States saw their relationship go from one of close friends to bitter enemies. For the next 50 years, Cuba would be a lasting reminder to the United States of their inability to fight communism in their own backyard. Granted, this was not the fault of the United States and their foreign policy, but was rather a predestined outcome due to Castro's hidden political agenda. Therefore, after quickly moving to the left after taking power through the ousting of moderates, opening strong ties with communism, and the Agrarian Reform Law; the United States was pushed to answer by cutting the sugar quota, instigating covert operations, and implementing economic sanctions which resulted in Castro's government embracing the Soviets even faster.

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