

CUBA'S INVASION JITTERS . . by Carleton Beals

CUBA HAS intervention jitters. Cuban leaders, who know history much better than do U.S. politicians, recall that when President Taft ordered American citizens out of Mexico in March, 1913, there followed the assassination of one of Mexico's most honorable Presidents (one who had been badgered and conspired against by North American corporations), and the setting up of the brutal, anti-revolutionary government of Victoriano Huerta.

Cubans recall their own recent history. When, in 1934, Grau San Martín — a mild reformer — had the temerity to impose a minimum wage of \$1 a day in Cuba and tried to reduce electricity rates from 25c to 17c a kilowatt-hour, the island was ringed with thirty U.S. war vessels; two cruisers sat out his entire administration in Havana Harbor, their naked guns pointing up O'Reilly Street. Cubans recall how U.S. Ambassador Sumner Welles, who had ousted dictator Machado and set up the short-lived De Cespedes government, conspired with the Fascist A.B.C. terrorists and Fulgencio Batista to overthrow Grau and put in the illegal Carlos Mendieta government, with its ensuing terror and bloodshed.

They recall more recent history: the secret consultations by U.S. Ambassador Earl E. T. Smith with Minister of War Tabernilla to replace the tottering Batista regime with a military junta. But unlike the machinations of Ambassador Henry Lane Wilson in Mexico and those of Puerifoy in Guatemala, Mr. Smith's maneuverings came too late to short-change the Castro revolution.

Castro's revolutionary government knows that Washington has declared implacable economic warfare on Cuba, that its goal is the overthrow of Fidel Castro whatever the cost. Some months ago, Castro's officials got hold of copies of placards being secretly printed by U.S. Ambassador Philip W. Bonsal. This is the house of an American citizen, the placards

read, and the text went on to ask that both citizens and property be respected *not by the government of Cuba, but by whoever might have authority*. Now Washington has suggested that Americans get out of Cuba. In Cuba, this was taken to be the first step in an armed intervention scheme. It was also so interpreted by every ex-Batista assassin and exiled plotter.

Cuba has become somewhat accustomed to U.S. Congressmen ram-paging up and down Latin America, spreading propaganda that the Havana government is Communist; they are used to the worst elements of the Batista regime being permitted to deliver the same message in the committee rooms of the Senate. They have become somewhat inured to the hate campaign in the American press. They were even biased for Washington's latest economic step, the final cutting off of U.S. trade.

But recent U.S. moves have been more serious. The lid is apparently off once more for planes based in the United States to violate Cuban territory, to scatter literature, to land rebels and weapons, to destroy cane fields and factories. The Cuban government charges that the Escambray band of rebels was supplied by arms dropped from a U.S.-based plane.

The Cuban government is worried about two other developments. It alleges that a fleet of army transport planes has been assembled in Guatemala for probable attack on Cuba (just as planes and equipment had previously been assembled in Nicaragua and Honduras for the overthrow of the Arbenz government in Guatemala). Cuba is also concerned with the rapid build-up of military strength and materiel in Haiti, where the shaky terroristic government of Duvalier is sustained by the biggest U.S. military mission in all Latin America.

MUCH OF THE tense situation in Cuba pivots on the U.S. Naval Base at Guantánamo, controlling the port which the Americans chose as their invasion point in the Span-

ish-American War. Given present-day weapons, including atomic submarines, the base no longer has the strategic importance it once enjoyed as a defense outpost for the Panama Canal. Today it is chiefly a vacation paradise for tired Marines and top brass — and, as U.S. Navy spokesmen have indicated, a point from which the United States can seek to dominate the political life of the Caribbean people.

The manner in which the base was originally obtained — by means of the bayonet-imposed Platt Amendment — presumably would be out of date in this era of universal national emancipation. And for use of this fair spot wrested from the Cubans, the United States has been paying the generous sum of \$2,000 in gold annually to the Cuban government — less than the apartment rent of some of our State Department officials. (In contrast to this rental figure, a Cuban official estimates that personnel on the base have cleared at least \$1 million in black-market money operations since Castro came into power. It was through this back door, Raul Castro believes, that Sergio Cárbo, publisher of *La Prensa Libre*, was able to get over \$500,000 out of the country before skipping out.)

WHAT THE Cubans most fear is a fake assault on the U.S. Guantánamo base as a pretext for armed intervention. The Cuban militia has ringed the base not in order to attack it, but to try to prevent any such trick maneuver by land. But the air is something the Cubans cannot control. They consider the U.S. news reports that Cuba has been painting some of its own planes with U.S. insignia a very sinister matter. Acting Foreign Minister Carlos Olivares Sánchez, replying to a U.S. protest, declared the report "malevolent and false," revealing "criminal espionage activity" aimed at embarrassing the Cuban regime. On its side, the State Department has told the press it fears that the Cubans are deliberately trying to provoke an American

CARLETON BEALS has been writing on the Latin American scene for nearly four decades.

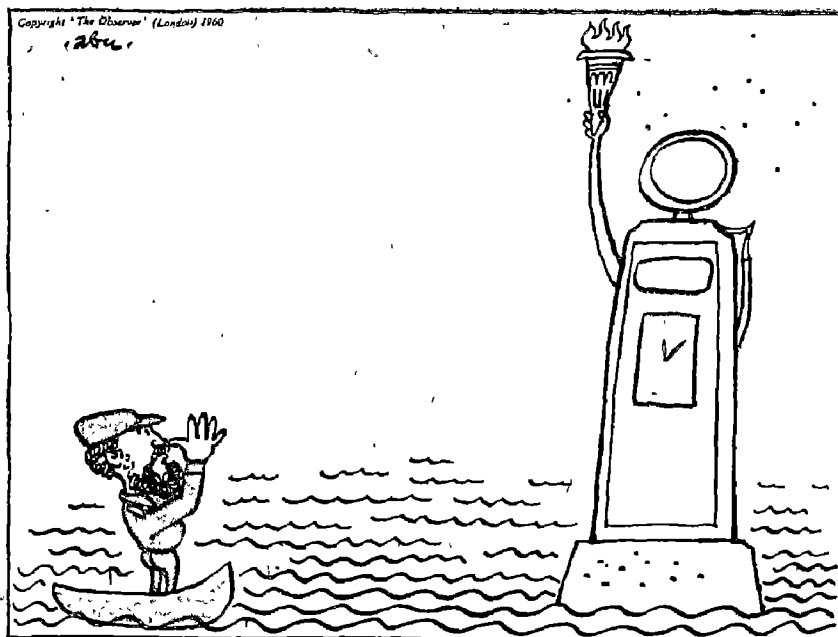
attack. Whatever the truth, the Cubans really fear that the United States is maneuvering to use Guantánamo as a pretext for invasion.

Even if an attack occurred, the Cubans may be wrong in believing that immediate armed intervention would follow. A state of quasi-belligerency between the two countries would permit the United States to blockade the island and starve the Cuban people into submission. There are indications that a clique in Washington, chiefly military, wishes to set up such a blockade and seize all shipments from iron curtain countries. Such a course could bring about armed clashes with the Soviets, who might attempt to protect their shipping with warships and submarines.

Besides threatening world conflict, our Cuban policy has broken the New World front. Each hour that our punitive blows hit Cuba, we lose support from the people of Latin America; and even the support of "loyal" governments grows shaky. Peru, to which we offered a fair-sized loan to induce it to initiate the recent San Jose conference of American states, has now refused to accept the money; instead, the Peruvian Congress is considering four laws for seizure of American oil property.

NOR does Latin America feel easy over our attempt to cut off Cuba's trade with the Soviet bloc. Many of our sister republics have extensive trade deals with Communist countries. Brazil has set up a \$200 million trade deal to get rid of surplus coffee. Argentina made a \$100 million deal in return for which Russia obtained oil exploration and drilling rights. Uruguay has been selling a third of her national product to Eastern Europe. Chile has been negotiating a deal to trade copper for oil. A number of other countries have trade arrangements. This trade is necessary, for the United States would bankrupt itself if it guaranteed to take all Latin America's surplus raw materials at proper prices. Indeed, Washington has never before complained in this regard. Even Batista had sold nearly two million tons (\$180 million worth) of sugar to the Soviet Union.

Latin American ill-feeling toward



the United States has been building up steadily, especially since the Washington-engineered overthrow of Arbenz in Guatemala. The resentment flaring today — in every country — at our Cuban policy needs no Castro propaganda to feed it. Today there is scarcely a government to the south of us that dares criticize Castro or to defend our policy towards him. Unless our policy is rectified, and soon, a revolutionary wave of unprecedented proportions is likely to shake the entire continent; and if Castro's revolution is broken by us in Cuba, the Organization of American States will also be smashed.

THERE IS nothing to hope for from either Presidential candidate. [This was written before the election.—Ed] Nixon upholds the present punitive policy and seeks the overthrow of Castro, even if he disagrees with Kennedy's wild proposals to promote revolution in Cuba. The Democratic candidate's own twelve-point program for Latin America, seemingly so concrete, is actually pompous and vague, showing little knowledge of the present state of affairs to the south. Neither candidate is aware, apparently, that a Princeton University poll in Cuba as late as August showed 85 per cent of the people behind Castro and the revolution.

Indeed, the baiting of Castro's Cuba by both candidates represents an interesting reversal of the tradi-

tional political situation. Washington has always discounted criticism from Latin American politicians as demagoguery designed to win Latin American votes. Now, as Cuba's Foreign Minister, Raul Roa, has pointed out, Cuba is being used as a scapegoat by U.S. politicians busy garnering U.S. votes. Considering the relative strength of the two countries, it is a pathetic spectacle.

Of course, Castro is doing considerable baiting of his own; and by virtue of the very size of the Goliath he is defying, he is probably getting more mileage with the maneuver than either Kennedy or Nixon. Castro probably knows this, and it may be that he has deliberately whipped up a war scare in Cuba. At a time when the opposition to him — financed generously by funds from abroad — is getting organized, he might very well find public demonstrations in his favor a useful weapon.

The Presidential candidates quibble about prestige. Prestige with whom? Franco's Spain? Duvalier's Haiti? Somoza's Nicaragua? The stooge governments of Asia? Our cold war against Castro is losing us the battle for all the neutral and independent new countries of the world. Cuba, indeed, may be our last chance to prove that we intend something better than a Hungary, a Cyprus, an Algeria; Cuba could be our last chance to save face, and also prestige, with the people of Latin

America. Unhappily, the signs are that we intend to proceed on our present path of folly.

We shall fail in Cuba even if we do manage to put in a counter-revolutionary government. Such an anti-Castro regime would either fall to a "revolution of the streets" which would make Fidel seem pale pink, or it would maintain itself on the basis of a terror worse than that of Batista. Will we then support a bloody dictatorship of the Right, despite our protestations that we are against dictatorship of all kinds? For that matter, if we are really against dictatorship, why do we pick exclus-

ively on Cuba? What about Trujillo? What about Franco? Why do we pick on a government which promises, for the first time in Cuban history, to make possible a decent living for its people?

It would seem that there are wiser policies open to us. Egged on at long last by the Cuban revolution, we have promised Latin America some aid, at present a piddling \$500 million (we've given nearly \$2 billion to Franco alone). But at least this money now is to be used not for private enterprise, but for land reform and social welfare. If we really believe in land reform for Latin

America, and intend to help pick up the tab for it, then why not pick up the tab for Cuba and guarantee her agrarian bonds? This gesture would cost us little more than what we should have paid for the use of the Guantánamo Naval Base all these six decades. It would certainly be cheaper and more sensible than bringing a possible world war close to our shores, breaking the hearts of the Cuban people, and perhaps fomenting a dozen Cuban revolutions elsewhere in Latin America. The whole deal would cost us less than the development of one of our new-fangled moon-rockets.

Perspective on the Sobell Case . . . by William M. Kunstler

SOME MONTHS ago—June 20 to be exact—a half-page ad in *The New York Times* asked for the release of Morton Sobell, currently ending the first decade of a thirty-year sentence for conspiracy to commit espionage. Sponsored by a group of distinguished Americans which included Max Eastman, Maxwell Geismar, the Rev. Donald Harrington, the Rev. John Haynes Holmes, Dr. Horace Kallen, Murray Kempton and Dr. Reinhold Niebuhr, it reproduced excerpts from the remarks of seven speakers who, a month earlier at New York's Community Church, had urged the commutation of Sobell's sentence. What made the appeal particularly significant was the fact that its participants included an Indiana Congressman, an erstwhile perennial candidate for the Presidency on the Socialist line, a writer of national prominence and a well-known civil-liberties lawyer. At long last, the cause of the electrical engineer who had been convicted with the Rosenbergs was being espoused by a varied—and increasingly respectable—body of opinion. In the light of this metamorphosis, perhaps a long and

searching look should be taken at the substantive case against Sobell.

Ten years to the day before the appearance of this ad, one William Danziger, who had attended City College with Sobell, visited him at his home in Flushing. Sobell informed Danziger that he was taking his family, which consisted of his wife and two children, to Mexico City "for a vacation." Two days after this visit, the Sobells left the United States by air. Several weeks later, Danziger received two letters from Mexico City in Sobell's handwriting which contained enclosures which he was requested to forward to certain of his former classmate's relatives. Each envelope had a different name in the return address box—"M. Sowell" on the first and "M. or Morty Levitov" on its successor.

During his stay in Mexico, Sobell visited the coastal cities of Vera Cruz and Tampico, calling himself first "Sand" and then "Salt." He registered for the flight from Tampico back to the capital as "M. Solt." A Mexico City neighbor, Manuel Giner de Los Rios, remembered that Sobell had, toward the middle of July, asked him for directions to both seaports. Sobell told de Los Rios that he wanted to leave Mexico "because he was afraid to return to the Army . . . since he has already seen a war, has experi-

enced a war." Specifically, Sobell said that he was fearful that he would be picked up by the American military police if he remained in Mexico any longer.

Early on the evening of August 16, four Mexican security policemen seized Sobell in his Mexico City apartment. Eight hours later, he found himself seated between two armed guards on the rear seat of a large Packard which headed northward and crossed the border at Laredo, Texas. There, he was handcuffed and taken to the office of James S. Huggins, a United States Immigration inspector. Although Huggins could not remember who gave him the information, he wrote the words "Deported from Mexico" on Sobell's record card. The prisoner was then turned over to FBI agents who had been waiting in Huggins' anteroom. Five days later, Sobell was transferred to the Tombs in New York City where, on October 10, he was indicted, with Julius and Ethel Rosenberg, for conspiring "to communicate, deliver and transmit [to] . . . the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics . . . documents, writings, sketches, notes and information relating to the National Defense of the United States."

This, in short, was the "flight" evidence against Sobell. Although, upon

WILLIAM M. KUNSTLER teaches law at New York University Law School and is the author of First Degree and other books.

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