

Burning the Cigar at Both Ends: The Hypocrisy of the United States Government in the Crusade against Castro.

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“The United States has used many different pretexts for not lifting the “blockade” and normalizing relations. At one time, when we were in Africa, they used to say if the Cubans withdrew from Africa, then relations would improve. They said that when links with the Soviet Union were cut off, then our relations would begin with the United States. Now the Soviet Union is not supporting us anymore and nothing has changed. They keep moving the goalposts. Before it was Latin American subversion, the situation in Central America...and when they talked about “reforms” in Cuba, it is a precondition that we cannot expect because it has to do with independence and the sovereignty of our own nation....I wish I were the problem. But the problem is our ideas. The United States, or some people in the United States, do not just want Castro’s retirement. They want the total destruction of the revolution and that is what the majority of Cubans will not accept....

Fidel Castro, *Cigar Aficionado*, Summer 1994.

Over the past forty years, the United States has used an economic embargo, enacted through related policy initiatives and laws, to force Fidel Castro and his communist government into submission. The supposed aim of the embargo has been to maintain, and promote, justice and peace in the Western Hemisphere -- by eradicating the communist "menace." In practice though, the U.S. embargo against Cuba has actually helped to foster injustice and violence, especially in the post-Cold War era. The unprecedented political and economic scope of the embargo has had the effect of forcing the island's inhabitants into a life of poverty and desperation, as the Cuban people not only suffer from a lack of sufficient food and medicine, but must struggle under an oppressive regime -- which is paranoid over the thought that the United States intends to strip Cuba of its independence. The United States government insists that its "demonization" of Fidel Castro, and abhorrence for his regime, is based strictly on ideological grounds. However, an analysis of the historic relationship between the United States and Cuba proves otherwise. Before Cuba fell under Castro's communist clutch, the United States virtually controlled the political and economic orders on the island. Castro simply revolted against these dominant political and economic orders perpetuated by the United States, which he saw as unequivocally imperialist -- analogous to a parent-child relationship -- wherein Cuba was not able to determine its own destiny as a legitimate nation-state. Thus, Castro purported a revolution that was more of a nationalist movement than an ideological one. Nevertheless, as evidenced by the embargo, the United States -- much like the imperialist "parent" country that it has been -- believes it has a responsibility to exercise its authority over Cuba so that the island may one day "mature" into the capitalist paradise that it ought to be. True, the United States has a vested interest in Cuba, but the embargo ought to be lifted because it has clearly failed to destroy Castro's political and economic apparatus. The embargo will never succeed due to the

failure on the part of the United States government – the parent – to comprehend the intense suspicion Cuba – the child – has for the American military-commercial complex which has long been a threat to Cuban independence.

The United States has high hopes for Cuba, and Cuba wants the United States “to mind its own business.” Like any parent-child relationship, both parties have different conceptions and expectations of one another. The United States government – acting as the wise, steadfast parent – feels it is necessary to impress upon Cuba the virtues of a liberal democracy. On the other hand, Castro’s government – as the open-minded, independent-oriented child – has resisted the strong-arm tactics of the United States because it wants to assert its own national identity, and determine its own political and economic destiny. It is no surprise then that the United States continually changes the principle on which it bases the embargo – as a parent can always find a reason for involvement in the affairs of the child. Whether it is communism, the support for communist revolutions around the world, human rights violations, or Castro himself, the United States will use any front it can to avoid admitting that it basically wants control over Cuba. So the rhetoric today is different than yesterday, but the objective is still the same – to ensure that the “child” reflects well on the “parent.” This has been the major theme throughout the history of U.S.-Cuba relations.

Cuba and the United States have a history dating back to the early nineteenth century when President Thomas Jefferson sent a military envoy to Cuba to find out if the Spanish would consider ceding Cuba to the United States. Jefferson saw the potential to “adopt” and “rear” Cuba. Cuba was seen as the “golden child” that would fulfill the dream of American-style democracy throughout the Western Hemisphere. Spain, however, was not interested. Jefferson later would write to his

successor, James Madison, “I candidly confess that I have ever looked upon Cuba as the most interesting addition that can be made to our system of States” (Franklin 1997, 2-3)

Madison did not take any direct action against Cuba, but he knew that something had to be done indirectly in order to prevent any of Europe’s mighty imperial nations, especially Great Britain from establishing a presence in Cuba. Therefore, Madison instructed the American ambassador to Cuba to tell the British government that the United States would not tolerate British possession of the island (Franklin 1997, 3).

Interestingly enough, this action by Madison was the precursor to the Monroe Doctrine -- extending U.S. policy to forbid any further imperialist incursions into Cuba, and the entire Western Hemisphere – which was issued by Madison’s successor, James Monroe. The willingness of the United States to do battle with European countries over any new occupation of Cuba was due to the highly strategic position of the island as the gateway to the rest of the Caribbean region – which could act as a staging ground for European hegemony in the New World – and its overwhelming potential for economic growth.

In 1818, Spain finally allowed Cuban ports to open for international trade. Within two years of that happening, over half of Cuba’s trade was with the United States. Cuba’s sugar industry gradually became the most mechanized in the world, as sugar made up eighty-three percent of exports, with forty percent of that going to the United States. The slave trade was also linking Cuba and the United States (Franklin 1997, 4).

Throughout the 1840’s, as slave revolts in the European colonies of the Western Hemisphere increased, colonial landowners became alarmed. Many Spanish landowners fled to Cuba, where slaves were brutally repressed, and hundreds of owners of French plantations immigrated to Cuba

following the successful slave independence movement led by Toussaint L'Ouverture in Haiti. As a result, there was rising demand for African slaves in Cuba (Franklin 1997, 4).

To meet this demand, Spain allowed U.S. shipowners to play a major part in this lucrative business. As ties between American merchants and the Cuban elite became stronger, the number of Cubans in favor of U.S. annexation was growing, largely in part out of fear that Spain would grant Cuba independence, which they saw as a threat to the continuation of slavery. Therefore, Cuban landowners allied themselves with American slaveowners, who wanted Cuba to be admitted to the Union as a slave state (Franklin 1997, 4). The American resolve then, only became stronger in its attempt to seize the island.

With the United States winning the Mexican War, and once again expanding its boundaries, proponents of Manifest Destiny, including President James Polk, stepped up efforts to annex Cuba. He secretly tried to buy Cuba from Spain, but to no avail (Franklin 1997, 4). Years later, President Franklin Pierce would take more concrete steps to bring about Cuba's independence from Spain, and America's annexation of the island.

President Franklin Pierce commissioned his ambassadors to Spain, France, and England – who happened to be future president, James Buchanan – to draw up the Ostend Manifesto recommending that the United States purchase Cuba. The Ostend Manifesto warned against permitting “Cuba to be Africanized,” which was a direct reaction to the success of the slave rebellion in Haiti. It also claimed that if the Spanish government refused to sell the island, the United States would be justified in seizing Cuba from Spain -- “upon the very same principle that would justify an individual in tearing down the burning house of his neighbor, if there were no other means of preventing the flames from destroying his own home” (Franklin 1997, 5). Incidentally, the Ostend

Manifesto was not approved of by Congress. Following the rejection of the Ostend Manifesto, the U.S. government did little to meddle in the affairs of Cuba, as the Civil War and the ensuing period of Reconstruction were of primary concern. However, beginning in the early 1880's, the United States began to take a more active role in the international arena, and again "eyed" Cuba as an addition to U.S. territory.

By the latter part of the nineteenth century, the United States was preparing for overseas expansion, as evidenced by the building of an offensive Navy. The U.S. government again focused on the possibility of acquiring Cuba either through negotiation or by force. The opportunity arose for the United States to involve itself in Cuba once more when a Cuban independence movement broke out towards the end of the century. At the urging of Navy Assistant Secretary, and future president, Theodore Roosevelt, President William McKinley dispatched the *USS Maine* to the Cuban capital of Havana, in order "to protect U.S. citizens" there (Franklin 1997, 8). But U.S. action would not end there, as it soon became involved in Cuba's struggle to free itself from Spain.

On February 15, 1898, the *Maine* blew up in Havana's harbor, killing two hundred and sixty officers and crew. The United States quickly blamed Spain. "Remember the Maine" became a battle cry as the U.S. "yellow press," led by publisher William Randolph Hearst's media empire, shapes public opinion against Spain. President McKinley sent a message to Congress asking for authority to intervene militarily in Cuba. The message stated that "the only hope of relief and repose from a condition which can no longer be endured is the enforced pacification of Cuba" (Franklin 1997, 8).

The U.S. Congress declared that Cuba had the right to be free and independent and authorized the president to use military force to oust Spain. Supplementing this declaration was the Teller Amendment which added that the United States had no "intention to exercise sovereignty,

jurisdiction, or control over the island except for the pacification of it.” President McKinley declared a blockade of the northern coast of Cuba, which led Spain to declare war on the United States (Franklin 1997, 8).

The war lasted several months, and formally ended with the signing of the Treaty of Paris on December 10, 1898. The United States emerged from the war with control of four new territories: Cuba, Puerto Rico, the Philippines and Guam. Although the treaty officially granted Cuba independence, the U.S. flag, and not the Cuban, was raised over Havana. Consequently, the U.S. installed a military government to pacify Cuba (Franklin 1997, 9).

Interestingly enough, there was no delegation from Cuba representing the interests of the Cuban people throughout all of the negotiations in drawing up the treaty. It is no surprise then, that Cubans view the “Spanish-American War” as the United States’ intervention in Cuba’s War of Independence (Franklin 1997, 9). The dawn of the twentieth century, would also be the dawn of a new relationship between the United States and Cuba.

Over the next several decades, the relationship between the two nations evolved into one that resembled a parent unwilling to let go of its child – which had the consequence of impeding the child’s development and exercise of its free will. The child then will do nothing but rebel and attempt to break away from the constraining influence of the parent. Cuba, throughout the first half of the twentieth century, a victim of American hegemony, labored relentlessly in asserting its independence, but to no avail. The trials and tribulations undergone by the Cuban people during that particular time would later influence a generation of revolutionaries who vowed to realize the “dream of their ancestors” in ridding their beloved island of imperialists once and for all. The fulfillment of the dream, though, entailed a long and arduous struggle.

In the year 1900, General Leonard Wood, the U.S. military governor of Cuba called for a popular election in order to convene a Cuban constitutional convention. The convention eventually took place in November, and the Cuban Constitution was drawn up, specifically modeled after the U.S. Constitution. To the dismay of Cubans, the constitution did not delineate the terms of any future relationship between the United States and Cuba (Franklin 1997, 9). The reason for this would soon be made clear to all.

In March of 1901, with the aim of legalizing its control of Cuba, the U.S. Congress added the Platt Amendment to an Army Appropriations bill. The Platt Amendment affirmed that Cuba had only a limited right to conduct its own foreign, and debt, policy. Thus, the United States had the authority to intervene militarily at any time. Also, the amendment mandated the Cuban government to sell or lease to the United States “lands necessary for ‘coaling’ and naval stations at certain specified points to be agreed upon.” The U.S. government made it clear that its military occupation of Cuba would not end until the Platt Amendment was incorporated into Cuban law. This forced the Cuban government to capitulate and write the Platt Amendment into law (Franklin 1997, 9).

In fulfilling its obligations to the Platt Amendment, the Cuban government agreed to lease Guantanamo for two thousand dollars a year, in gold. In addition, Cuba and the United States ratified a treaty on commercial reciprocity, ensuring U.S. control of Cuban markets (Franklin 1997, 10). Around this time, President Theodore Roosevelt took action to further legitimize the United States’ involvement in Cuba, as well as any possible interventions in other nations in the Western Hemisphere, through the formulation of what is known as the Roosevelt Corollary to the Monroe Doctrine.

The corollary stated that since the United States did not allow European nations to intervene

in Latin American countries, the U.S. government had the responsibility of preserving order and protecting life and property in those countries (Franklin 1997, 10). The Roosevelt Corollary established a firm policy upon which the U.S. government could maneuver in its dealings with other countries of the Western Hemisphere, as the United States sought to expand its range of commercial and military authority. Any internal threat to a nation's security was a threat to the external assets of the United States – as stable markets were necessary for the expansion of the U.S. capitalist network. And the United States' most vital external market, within its sphere of influence, was Cuba. Thus there was little doubt as to why the United States government deemed it necessary to once again intervene militarily in Cuba, in the summer of 1906.

In August of 1906, Cuban president, Tomas Estrada-Palma requested U.S. intervention to put down an insurrection. President Roosevelt sent Secretary of War William Howard Taft as mediator. President Estrada-Palma objected to Taft's proposals for peace, and so he resigned in September. As a consequence, the United States exercised the Platt Amendment to send in U.S. Marines for the second military occupation of the island. In October, President Roosevelt appoints Charles Magoon as head of the provisional government of Cuba, initiating the more than two-year-rule of the United States' over the "independent" Cuba (Franklin 1997, 10).

Not until January of 1909 did a Cuban government assume the administration of the island, with Cuban Army General Jose Miguel Gomez taking over for U.S. Military Governor Magoon, after winning the presidency the previous November. Unfortunately, it was not long before another civil uprising took shape. This time it was led by Evaristo Estenoz of the Agrupacion Independiente de Color –Independent Colored Party, who opposed the Gomez government. The Gomez government wasted no time in subduing the rebels, but this did not stop the U.S. government from sending

Marines and two U.S. battleships into Havana (Franklin 1997, 11). After quelling the rebellion, the U.S. largely avoided any direct military intervention for a number of years. It was not until the latter part of the presidency of Woodrow Wilson that the U.S. military again became an issue in Cuba.

In the spring of 1917, President Wilson landed U.S. Marines to shore up the Cuban government of Mario Garcia Menocal against Liberal Party forces that contested the victory of the Conservative Party in the 1916 Cuban elections. Furthermore, when President Menocal joins the United States in entering World War I, the island is opened up as a training base for U.S. Marines – who remain long after the war is over (Franklin 1997, 11).

In January of 1921, during the last weeks of his presidency, Wilson sent General Enoch Crowder to supervise by-elections in Cuba. Crowder remained in Cuba, even with Warren Harding assuming the U.S. presidency. He is deemed the “personal representative” of President Harding.

In this role, Crowder used a financial crisis in Cuba to engineer changes in Cuban domestic affairs that were favorable to U.S. business interests (Franklin 1997, 11).

For instance, J.P. Morgan and Company, with the support of the U.S. government, agreed to loan \$50 million to President Alfredo Zayas’ administration in Cuba. This cemented a situation of debt dependency – where the U.S. government could continually claim legitimacy for interference in Cuban domestic and foreign policy (Franklin 1997, 12). With U.S. businesses forging a strong relationship with the Cuban elite, the U.S. government had more of an incentive to interfere with Cuban affairs to “ensure that American property and assets were protected.” With growing anti-American sentiment, the U.S. government had no other alternative but to support strong Cuban dictators that would ruthlessly protect U.S. interests – and those of the Cuban aristocracy. This military-commercial complex in Cuba would be the source of great hatred and scorn for years to

come.

In May 1925, General Gerardo Machado Morales, a friend of the U.S. business community assumed the presidency. Several months later, in opposition to the Machado dictatorship, the first Communist party of Cuba was formed (Franklin 1997, 12). Undoubtedly, Machado's administration was corrupt.

In 1928, Machado rigged the presidential election in order to remain in power. After claiming re-election, Machado declared that he was extending his presidential term to six years. This led to insurrections, which forced Machado to unleash his security forces, which became notorious for torture and killing. Incidentally, Machado's presidential term came to an untimely end just two years later, when his police force killed a leader of a popular student protest group, sparking widespread unrest (Franklin 1997, 12).

By 1933, Cuba was in a state of revolution. President Franklin Roosevelt dispatched Assistant Secretary of State Sumner Welles as an attempt to salvage the Machado dictatorship, but this was unsuccessful. In August, faced with a general strike and the defection of his own military, Machado resigned and fled to the United States. Just as Machado exited, the U.S. installed Carlos Manuel de Cespedes as provisional president, to the chagrin of the military and revolutionary groups. Consequently, the "Sergeants' Revolt" took place a month later, led by Sergeant Fulgencio Batista, and supported by the revolutionary student groups (Franklin 1997, 12-13).

A *junta* – dubbed the Pentarquia – was formed by members of the military, for the administration of the country. But Assistant Secretary of State Welles believed that the rebels in power supported a communist ideology and therefore asked President Roosevelt to intervene militarily. Roosevelt indeed began preparations to intervene, ordering warships to Cuba and to Key

West and putting the Marines on high alert. As the rebels made a last ditch effort to prop up their government by appointing Ramon Grau San Martin as president, the United States was already pressuring Fulgencio Batista – now a colonel in the Cuban military – to seize power. Thus, at the urging of the U.S. government, Batista overthrew Grau San Martin, in early 1934 (Franklin 1997, 13).

Over the course of the ensuing five years, Batista installed puppet rulers while he remained the *caudillo* – “strongman” – behind-the-scenes. By 1939 unrest was beginning to build. In an effort to quell the rumblings of the Cuban people, Batista cleared the way for a constituent assembly to write a new Cuban constitution. In 1940, the new constitution took effect, which coincided with the formal election of Batista as president.

In the ensuing years, Cuba played an important supportive role in the Allied war effort in Europe. Batista allowed the United States to use air and naval bases, and established diplomatic relations with the Soviet Union. Batista even legalized the operation of the Communist party in Cuba. Also, Cuba gave its support to the establishment of the United Nations, and later joined on the day the U.N. charter took effect. By the end of the war, though, Batista was succeeded as president, and he went into self-imposed exile in Florida (Franklin 1997, 14). But his retirement from Cuban politics did not last long.

In 1948, Batista got himself elected senator from Las Villas province in Cuba, after running his campaign from Florida. His presence in the Senate seemed mask his true ambition which was to once again be president of Cuba. So, in 1952, Batista ran for the presidency, but has little popular support. Thus, in March Batista staged a coup, suspended the constitution, canceled

the elections and became dictator. The Truman administration quickly recognized his government and sent military and economic aid. Organized resistance was rapid (Franklin 1997, 15).

In July of 1953, Fidel Castro – a recent graduate of law school and member of the Orthodox party – and other revolutionaries attacked the Moncada Army Barracks in Santiago de Cuba. Despite the deaths of at least seventy participants and the imprisonment of the rest – including Fidel and his brother Raul – the July 26 Movement became a rallying point for all Cubans. While in jail, Fidel wrote *History Will Absolve Me* – which later became the blueprint for the Cuban Revolution – which was his defense against the charges of the Batista government. In it he described the society he and his revolutionaries wanted to create (Franklin 1997, 15). Fidel became a national hero.

In response to the public demand, General Batista released Fidel Castro and the other captured revolutionaries in May 1955. Castro went into exile in Mexico and began to organize an expedition to return to Cuba in order to launch his revolution. But a year later Fidel, along with Raul, Ernesto “Che” Guevara and eighty revolutionaries landed in Oriente province, and sparked the popular revolt among the Cuban people (Franklin 1997, 15-16).

During this time, the United States supplied arms and training to Batista’s forces, even though the Eisenhower administration is under considerable pressure to stop sending arms to a government that is bombing its own people, and torturing and killing rebels and their suspected sympathizers. By December 1958, the U.S. made a last ditched attempt to protect its interests by trying to persuade Batista to accept exile, and leave the government in charge of a U.S.-approved junta. He rejected the offer. Subsequently, on January 1 1959, Batista fled the country after revolutionaries under the command of Che Guevara made inroads in Santa Clara and the surrounding area. They seized Havana, and a formed a new government (Franklin 1997, 17-18).

Speaking to the largest assembly ever gathered in Cuba, Fidel Castro stated that Cubans want not only political but economic freedom as well, and condemns U.S. interference in Cuban internal affairs (Franklin 1997, 23). Castro was well aware of the history between his homeland and the United States, and this history affected him in such a way that it had tremendous repercussions for the way in which he himself dealt with the United States. He would no longer allow his country to be exploited by American business interests and their Cuban cohorts, and the U.S. government that protected both of them.

The Cuban government took control and management of the Cuban Telephone Company, an affiliate of the International Telephone and Telegraph Corporation, and reduced rates. It demanded that the U.S. give up its base in Guantanamo.. It enacted the Agrarian Reform Law putting a limit on land holdings and expropriating the rest. But the final straw came in January of 1960, when Cuba expropriated 70, 000 acres of property owned by U.S. sugar companies, including 35000 acres of pasture and forest owned by United Fruit Company – a powerful organization and instrument of U.S. imperialism and connected to dozens of people in the U.S. government. Cuba continued with the nationalization of all U.S. business and commercial property (Franklin 1997, 23-26).

This action by Castro was clearly intended to illustrate to the United States that he was not going to be its puppet ruler who served to protect and defend American interests at the expense of the Cuban people. The U.S. government was directly responsible for the injustice and violence that plagued Cuba for decades. From the ills of slavery to the great disparities between social classes in Cuba, the United States government was there to perpetuate them. President Kennedy, when speaking about the role of the U.S. government in Cuba admitted that:

“We know perfectly well what happened in Cuba, for the misfortune of all. I believe that there is no other country, including those in Africa and others under colonial domination, where there has been more humiliation and exploitation than in Cuba, in part attributable to the policies of my country during the Batista regime” (Prada 1995, 8).

It is no surprise then that the vast majority of Cubans could find no compelling reason to oppose Castro and his Revolution. Most Cubans saw what capitalism and so-called democracy could do to the balance of political, social, and economic resources in an underdeveloped nation. The disillusionment of the Cuban people, and namely Castro, with any American political and economic institutions is key to understanding the increasingly divergent ends of the United States – the parent – and Cuba – the child – as it foreshadows Castro’s eventual espousing of communism, and the U.S. government’s inability to accept it.

Ironically, the U.S. government was initially unsure about Castro’s true political and economic leanings. But when Castro accepted Soviet military and economic assistance only a few months after assuming power, it left little doubt. Incidentally, as early as 1958, Castro wrote to his followers:

“I seek absolute sovereignty for the country in the face of all political and economic interference, and solidarity with peoples oppressed by dictatorships or assaulted by powerful nations....As the path of all great ideals is strewn with obstacles, my only future aspiration is to continue battling” (Franqui 1980, 326) .

To that end, the Cuban constitution reiterates Fidel’s implicit rebuke of the United States. It condemns imperialism and imperialist intervention and only within that context “guarantees the

liberty and full dignity of man, and the enjoyment of his rights, the exercise and fulfillment of his duties, and the integral development of his personality” (*Constitution of the Republic of Cuba*, Article 8; 12). The central issue of contention then which has emerged between the U.S. government and Castro, is whether political/civil rights take precedence over economic/social rights, and vice versa.

In Cuba, political rights are constrained in that, “none of the freedoms which are recognized for citizens can be exercised contrary to the existence and objectives of the socialist state, or contrary to the decision of the Cuban people to build socialism and communism” (*Constitution of the Republic of Cuba*, Article 61). That is, individual rights, or civil rights, cannot be used, or more accurately abused, when their use would lead to the erosion of the goals of the Cuban Revolution.(Schwab 1999, 8). “Citizens have freedom of speech and of the press in keeping with the objectives of socialist society (*Constitution of the Republic of Cuba*, Article 52). Political rights must, therefore, not be employed in any way that would further the cause of American “imperialism” or “intervention,” since that would be “contrary to the Cuban Revolution” (*Constitution of the Republic of Cuba*, Article 12; 38).

So if, as Castro said in 1958, sovereignty is to be maintained in the face of U.S. activity to encroach upon that independence, then political rights, in terms of what is outlined by the state as good for the larger collective whole, means that “the community of Cuba is always defined within the context of U.S. maneuvers against the island.” (Schwab 1999, 8). Individual human rights are not rejected out of hand but are placed within parameters that center on the larger political rights and economic needs of Cuban society. “Since the United States is hardly an innocent bystander, the advocacy of political and civil rights by internal dissidents is often seen by the state as merely a tool

through which some seek to advocate a revival of America's imperial tendencies in Cuba" (Schwab 1999, 8).

But criticism of the bureaucracy, and even of many domestic policies, is tolerated as anyone who has attended community meetings of the Municipal Assemblies of People's Power – the base of local governance – can attest to. Even Tomas Gutierrez Alea's Cuban film *Guantanamera* – released internationally in 1997 – was allowed in theaters as it riotously and caustically ridiculed Cuba's bureaucratic failures. Moreover, discussion in homes and at various dinner tables reflecting on the strength or weakness of certain aspects of Cuban socialism are common (Schwab 1999, 8-9).

However, there is a line, which everyone is aware of, that cannot be crossed. But the perception by Americans that no one inside of the country can criticize Cuba, or its policies, is false. Yet, Fidel Castro broadly defined the limits of criticism, when in 1961 he stated the famous phrase, "within the Revolution everything; outside the Revolution, nothing" (Camnitzer 1994, 129).

Castro at that time, with the decades of American rule over Cuba fresh in his mind, had to set some kind of parameter for public speech because he knew that the United States government was plotting to uproot him and his Revolution. From the time Castro took power and up to the present-day, Cubans have felt as if they are under siege. Castro understood that if there were no limits to free speech, the United States, through its sympathizers, would launch an internal propaganda campaign against him. There was no way that Castro, after having been successful in expelling the American military-commercial complex, was going to let them back in. Thus, the mindset of Castro and many Cubans is that it is necessary to abolish any sympathetic speech – pro-liberal democracy rhetoric – that benefits the parent country – the United States – and its imperialist aims in Cuba.

As Cuba's Ambassador Fernando Ramirez de Estenoy – the head of the Cuban Interests Section in Washington – said in 1998, when speaking about his nation:

“We have restrictions...but it's our own system...because it's the first time we have our own system. It's a different country than the U.S., with different traditions, and with a different history. And you have to consider the fact that we are facing a hostile condition from the U.S.” (Estenoy, April 30, 1998).

Cubans do have political rights. But these rights do not take precedence over economic and social rights. In Cuba, economic and social human rights are fundamental. The state, according to the Cuban constitution, is obligated to provide the essential elements required by an people for survival – medical care and employment. In turn, the Cuban people are obligated to accept that “the Republic of Cuba is a socialist state, and that the state organizes, directs and controls the economic life of the nation in accordance with the central plan of socioeconomic development (*Constitution of the Republic of Cuba*, Article 1; 16). Moreover, “socialist state property, which is the property of the entire people, becomes irreversibly established over the lands that do not belong to small farmers or to cooperatives formed by the same” (*Constitution of the Republic of Cuba*, Article 15). Interestingly enough, it appears as if Castro has borrowed “a page from the playbook” of the United States.

He “universalized” the Revolution through a constitution that establishes a particular system of resource organization and distribution – in this case, communism – as part of the very existence of the nation-state, while at the same time guarantees specific rights that are inextricably linked to that system. Clearly, the United States takes the same approach to its system of government, but differs from Castro in that it feels the need to impress its own system upon Cuba. This is not

surprising, as a parent continually strives to mold the character of a child, but the child never feels the necessity to attend to the development of the parent. Unfortunately, this is what the United States government is trying to do to Cuba.

But the United States government does not realize how overbearing it is in the eyes of Castro and the Cuban people. The United States government regards liberal democratic principles as the natural framework for a system of government, and wants Cuba to adopt them. Castro and the Cuban people feel differently.

The social contract between the Cuban citizenry and the state does not accept the premise of individual rights bestowed by natural law and played out competitively – as does the United States. On the contrary, it recognizes the state as being the repository of political and civil rights in order to fulfill the economic and social needs of the entire people. In this way, no one social class or group of people can take economic advantage of another – as was the case under the hegemony of the American military-commercial complex (Schwab 1999, 9). Consequently, only “under socialism and communism, when man has been freed from all forms of exploitation – slavery, servitude, and capitalism – can full dignity of the human being be attained” (*Constitution of the Republic of Cuba*, Preamble).

The human rights guaranteed to the Cuban people speak not to the individual’s pursuit of wealth but to certifying that all citizens have the opportunity to contribute to “the good of society and to the satisfaction of individual needs” (*Constitution of the Republic of Cuba*, Article 8). Individual needs and rights are categorized solely within the context of what is good for the overall society, and therefore their meaning is completely different from any Western conception.

Human rights regarding the individual are spurned, while rights within the collective are held up as the highest ideal. So, when the U.S. and Cuba speak to the concept of human rights their point of reference is marked by such a stark contrast that not only are they talking past one another, but also conceptually they are referring to two different doctrines (Schwab 1999, 11). The stalwart stance of Castro, even in the face of the damage done by the embargo, is due to the fact that he would rather see Cuba continue to struggle than allow the island to capitulate to the “empire.” This seems outrageous, but not when considering the dire condition of the Cuban people under American hegemony during the first half of the twentieth century.

Prior to Castro’s Revolution in January of 1959, Cuba was defined by profound inequalities between the capital city of Havana – the epicenter of American power on the island – and the rest of the country. The health care center was concentrated within Havana, where twenty-six percent of the population resided. The Batista dictatorship – during which Castro came of age – all but ignored the rural population and directed only slightly more attention to other urban areas (Schwab 1999, 55). Fully sixty percent of physicians and eighty percent of hospital beds were in Havana “while 4 out of 5 rural workers...had no access to health care” (Perez-Stable 1993, 29).

Rural populations were plagued by poverty, undernourishment, intestinal parasites, and such a complete lack of medical facilities that in 1958 there was but one single hospital in rural Cuba (Schwab 1999, 56). In the countryside Cubans were “living in unbelievably stagnant, miserable, and desperate conditions,” while Havana was prospering (Perez-Stable 1993, 31). The population of the poverty stricken had quadrupled over the first fifty years of the twentieth century (Sartre 1961, 41).

With the lack of proper water and sewage system, the almost total absence of teaching of the fundamentals of good hygiene, and with medical care for the rural masses often unobtainable, it is easy to understand health conditions in Cuba have been deplorably “bad” (Huberman/Sweezy 1960, 4-5). In general, but especially during Batista’s reign, public funds were squandered on the military, members of the upper and middle classes, and American investors. Cuba’s poor, then, suffered neglect and oppression at the hands of the political and economic elite, which furnished the military-commercial complex (Schwab 1999, 56).

At the time, Cuba was practically the property of the United States, which bore extensive responsibility for the economic condition of the country (Schwab 1999, 56). The United States owned the largest nickel plant in Cuba. Of the 174 sugar plantations, 67 were American-owned, as were 9 out of 10 of the largest sugar estates. Standard Oil, Republic Steel, U.S. Rubber, the King Ranch, and Pan American Land and Oil Royalty Company were among the corporations that owned huge tracts of land or major enterprises. They transferred the profits abroad while “most of the people had only the bare necessities of life” (Paterson 1994, 36; 40). The completeness of the ownership and the public “crowing” about it was historic. As former U.S. Ambassador Earl E.T. Smith remarked in 1960: “let me explain to you that the United States, until the advent of Castro, was so overwhelmingly influential in Cuba that...the American ambassador was the second most important man in Cuba – sometimes even more important than the Cuban president” (Matthews 1970, 49). As Ambassador Smith stated, with the emergence of Fidel Castro, things changed dramatically.

After January of 1959, Castro revolutionized the Cuban health care system. This was the first step in the cleansing of the old political and social orders in Cuba, which had failed to accommodate

the rural poor into the structure of society. A new framework was to be enacted in which social rights would be emphasized, so that Cuba's poor would be liberated from tyranny (Schwab 1999, 57).

Castro stood for Cuba's transition into adulthood, while the United States was the stingy parent unwilling to let go. Castro represented a new generation of Cubans that the United States government, and the interests it fought to protect, could not comprehend. "The colossal polemic" that was brought about through this generation gap, has consistently centered on the meaning and interpretation of human rights – as that appears to be the important ideological difference between a communist society and a liberal democratic one. Thus, any questions surrounding health care in Cuba – a hot-button issue for Castro -- have had implications for the battle between the United States government and Castro over whether social entitlements or civil freedoms are more important for the functioning of society (Schwab 1999, 60).

For Castro and his allies, there was, and is, no doubt that "political and civil rights appeared as tools" of the ruling elite for maintaining themselves in power. The conditions requisite for the internalization of concepts of individual human rights as defined by the West – as in the often referenced Universal Declaration of Human Rights – were totally lacking. Cuba's historical experience – cultural patterns, dependence on the West either as a colony or semi-colony, and its continued underdevelopment – did not bode well for the emergence of a Western conception of human rights – freedom of speech and opinion, the right of peaceful assembly and association, the ability to freely practice one's religion, and ownership of private property (Pollis 1981, 1011). Cuba, therefore, should be allowed to seek its own destiny.

In fact, the preamble of the charter of the United Nations refers to the determination of the U.N. to “practice tolerance and live together in peace with one another as good neighbors” (*Charter of the United Nations*, Preamble). Furthermore, Article 1 of the charter declares that among the U.N.’s purposes and principles is the development of “friendly relations among nations based on respect for the principle of equal rights and self-determination of peoples” (*Charter of the United Nations, Chapter 1, Article 1*). It seems odd that the United States, which often takes the moral high ground in conflicts by invoking the authority of the United Nations, would display such a lack of integrity by blatantly encroaching upon the sovereignty of Cuba.

However, the United States government which has imposed the embargo upon Cuba, continually claims recourse to the underlying precept of the Western perspective of human rights, which emphasizes political and civil rights as divinely inspired and “prior to and supreme over the sovereignty of the state” (Pollis/Schwab 1979, 2). With the United States government justifying its actions on such lofty principles, it would be difficult for any other Western nation to stand in opposition, considering that they would, in effect, be rejecting the foundation of Western civilization. Moreover, with Castro allying himself with the Soviet Union, there would be no question as to the intentions of the United States – for what country would not choose to defend itself against the value system of the Soviet Union, which was bent on destroying Western civilization.

Thus, the United States had at least a plausible argument in its ruthless determination to isolate Castro, since it was convinced that Cuba, as a dependency and ally of the Soviet Union, posed a threat to America’s vital interests. Continuing efforts by Moscow, even after the 1962 Cuban Missile Crisis, to increase its military leverage vis-à-vis the United States, as in 1969 when it

initiated but eventually aborted an effort to develop submarine facilities near the Cuban coastal city of Cienfuegos, gave Washington ample reason for concern (Schwab 1999, 14).

Also, through the 1970's and '80's, Cuba was seen by the United States government as a communist nation devoted to aiding the spread of Marxist revolutions in the Caribbean region, Central America, and Angola and Ethiopia -- where some thirty-six thousand Cuban combat troops were stationed and engaged in battles to support their respective governments. Although Cuba had every right to support the nations, especially since the United States was active militarily, largely through proxy forces fighting to overthrow both governments, the Cold War at least gave rationale to the American dogma (Schwab 1999, 15).

But those rationalizations evaporated in 1991, when the Soviet Union collapsed. In the absence of the Soviet Union, Cuba lost the source of 85 percent of its supplies and 90 percent of that trade almost overnight. The economy contracted by between 35 and 50 percent, while its import capability for food, fuel, and fertilizers plunged by more than 60 percent. Key foodstuff imports prior to the collapse of the Soviet Union included 100 percent of its wheat, 50 percent of its rice, 38 percent of its milk and dairy products, 99 percent of its beans, 44 percent of its fish, 33 percent of its poultry, 21 percent of its meat, 94 percent of its oil and lard, and 64 percent of its butter (Gunn 1993, 27-28). "When trade collapsed with the socialist bloc, the degree to which Cuba exhibited an essentially monocrop agriculture with the sale of sugar – which the United States is partially responsible for – proved to be a major weakness" (Rosset/Benjamin 1994, 13).

Thus, the island was forced to go through a total restructuring of its economy in a very brief and traumatic period. The United States, as the sole remaining superpower, could easily have dropped its "Great Power hubris" and initiated a process of accommodation and negotiation so as

to, as the U.N. charter stated, “practice tolerance.” Instead, spotting what it thought was the opportunity to finally “dump” a much-weakened Castro, the U.S. government in 1992 and then again in 1996 – both election years -- further “tightened the screws of the embargo” (Schwab 1999, 15).

It was in 1960 that a partial embargo was initiated and American exports to the island were prohibited. In 1961, diplomatic relations were severed, and a travel ban imposed. By 1962 a virtual total embargo on imports and exports was put in place, while in 1964 provisions regarding the licensing of food and medicine were developed that made it all but impossible for those items to reach Cuba from the United States (Schwab 1999, 15).

Nevertheless, the enforcement of the embargo was taken to the next level in the spring of 1992, when President George H.W. Bush signed the Cuban Democracy Act. The Cuban Democracy Act restricted trade by U.S. subsidiaries with Cuba, reduced the Cuban people’s access to all foods and medicines, and prevented third country ships that visited Cuba from docking in U.S. ports (Prada 1995, 6). Exactly four years later, more legislation was passed with the aim of bringing about the destruction of Castro’s regime.

In the spring of 1996, President Clinton signed the Cuban Liberty and Democratic Solidarity Act, which has come to be known as the Helms-Burton Act – after its primary sponsors in the U.S. Congress. The Helms-Burton Act gave U.S. citizens, and Cuban exiles who had become citizens since 1959, the right to sue non-American companies doing business in Cuba and deriving benefit from property, worth at least \$50 thousand, that was confiscated from them without compensation after the Cuban Revolution. It also allowed the United States government the right to deny U.S. visas to foreign businesspeople who derived benefit from confiscated property in Cuba. Access to the U.S. sugar quota was also denied to countries that did not certify that they were not importing

Cuban sugar -- which could find its way to the United States (*New York Times*, October 8, 1996, A1).

In an unprecedented move, the Helms-Burton Act basically invested an extraterritorial application to the U.S. embargo in trade with Cuba by creating a legal framework to force other nations to abide by it (*New York Times*, April 6, 1996: A3). In practice, the Helms-Burton Act created a world-wide blockade and developed “the notion that the U.S. can foist its foreign policy objectives on other nations through the threat and actual imposition of trade sanctions” (Cohn/Berlin 1997, 52).

By making the embargo a part of its legal framework, the U.S. government implied that Cuba was a hostile state, and in effect, was willing to declare war. It is ironic, since Cuba in no way threatens the supposed victim, violates no norm of international co-existence, and presents no challenge to world peace and security. For Cubans, the embargo is nothing more than a euphemism that hides the fact that its purpose is to place the island under siege. The embargo aims to exhaust Cuba’s resources, in order to force the civilian population to surrender (Prada 1995, 8). With the increasingly hostile nature of the U.S. embargo, there is little doubt about why it has raised suspicion among the Cuban people.

To go to such lengths, to the point where the United States is willing to starve the Cuban population in the hope that they will revolt against Castro, cannot be seen as anything but subversive. Fidel Castro is a national figure, who represents the aspiration of all Cubans to assert their national identity. The fact that the United States government refuses to respect Castro as a national hero among the vast majority of Cubans – whom it is supposedly fighting for – is a “slap in the face” to national sovereignty, and an illustration of how out of touch the U.S. government really is with the

Cuban people.

Dr. Olga Miranda Bravo, a Cuban citizen who is vice-president of the Cuban Society of International Law and member of the International Court of Justice in the Hague, argues that the embargo itself transcends the status of an “embargo” because of the incredible abundance of legislation “that forms the legal scaffolding” which supports what should actually be termed a “blockade” (Prada 1995, 8). She states:

“It cannot be considered an embargo – as the U.S. government publicly maintains – because Cuba is not indebted to the United States, nor has it committed a crime so punitive to justify the seizure and destruction of its assets by the U.S. government. With these measures, the United States has pursued a policy of asphyxiation and isolation of Cuba in order to cripple it – a policy of war being applied against Cuba in a time of peace” (Prada 1995, 9).

Dr. Miranda goes on to explain that:

“The Naval Conference of London in 1909 established as international law that a blockade is an act of war. This principle was invoked in 1916 by the United States itself in order to assert that no foreign power had the right to obstruct the exercise of free trade by non-involved countries, by imposing a blockade when no state of war has been declared” (Prada 1995, 9).

In accordance with precedent, it must be said then that the U.S. government has essentially declared war on Cuba. However, this seems extreme when Cuba does not pose any strategic threat to the United States, and has no intention of spreading its communist ideology across the United States. In any case, the U.S. government must have some method to its madness.

If the U.S. government has imposed the embargo, or more accurately, the blockade to prevent Castro from developing a communist “paradise,” it has won. If the United States wants to halt Cuban support for communist revolutions around the globe, it has succeeded – as Cuba does no longer has the resources to do so. The relationship between Cuba and the Soviet Union, which the U.S. government frowned upon, is over. Still, there is the issue over compensation for American property expropriated by the Cuban government. What is quite interesting about the issue of compensation, though, is that Cuba has offered to give in to this demand of the U.S. government. But the United States government has declined to accept the compensation.

The government of Fidel Castro committed itself to comply with Article 38 of the 1940 Cuban constitution – a document the United States used time and again to exploit Cuba -- which stipulated that compensation for expropriations be paid in twenty-year, fixed-term government bonds with an annual interest rate of four and a half percent. But the U.S. government refused to accept this proposal, due to the fact that the Joint Corporate Committee on Cuban Claims – formed by the U.S. government -- demanded compensation to the order of \$1.8 billion, plus a further six percent in interest payments – which almost doubled the original figure (Prada 1995, 9). Dr. Miranda explains:

“The government of Cuba has always been prepared to discuss its differences with the United States on an equal footing....However, the reply from the United States unfortunately reflected traditional big stick diplomacy, demanding prompt, adequate and effective compensation from Cuba, a principle long abolished in international relations....The form that post-war conventions have tended to adopt is a lump sum agreement. This involves diplomatic negotiations between governments which lead to

the fixing of the amount of compensation paid over several years, and distributed to the interested parties by the government that represents them” (Prada 1995, 9).

Cuba did pay compensation to property owners and to the governments of Great Britain, France, Canada, Italy, Sweden, Mexico, and Spain. It is clear that the United States does not want to negotiate to defend the interests of its citizens, as other countries have done. For forty years, successive U.S. presidential administrations have denied the rights of American citizens who had properties in Cuba, simply to maintain the blockade (Prada 1995, 9-10).

In support of Cuba, the U.S. Supreme Court in 1964, in an 8 to 1 judgment regarding the questions surrounding this issue, stated that:

“Every sovereign state is obliged to respect the independence of each and every other sovereign state, and the courts of a country must not judge the actions of the government of another country when they are carried out within that country’s own territory. Any compensation for damages caused by these actions must be obtained via channels that allow each country to exercise its sovereign powers” (Prada 1995, 10).

In effect, the Cuban government had the right to seize American property but was obliged to compensate the United States and its citizens through a process of negotiation. But the U.S. government has refused to negotiate and wants to settle the matter in a unilateral fashion. Not surprisingly, the U.S. government was able to quickly overrule the Supreme Court’s verdict with the passage of the Foreign Aid Law of 1964, which classified the Cuban "nationalizations" as being contrary to international law – since the U.S. government did not recognize Cuba’s compensation law (Prada 1995, 10).

Ever since, the United States government has conspicuously waived any principles of international law when it comes to Cuba due to its expected adherence to the legal framework it has put in place, concerning Cuba. Though the blockade against Cuba is written law, there is overwhelming evidence that the Cuban Democracy Act, and the Helms-Burton Act, were enacted for no other reason than to shed a profit for a specific elite group.

What is happening in the United States is that the descendants of the political and economic elite of the Batista era in Cuba are still exploiting the island and its inhabitants today, through the submission of legislation that is aimed at consolidating the military-commercial complex, which the Cuban people understandably fear. These elite, and the American politicians they pander to, use the old Cold War rhetoric in public to justify their actions, while in private they continue to plot to once again seize power in Cuba.

Those individuals whose ancestors were defeated by the Revolution and forced to the United States, have built a large power base in Miami where they have succeeded in taking the debate on Cuba out of the arena of international relations – where they would obviously lose, as the U.S is politically and economically engaged with other communist states such as China and Vietnam. -- by placing it on the U.S. domestic agenda. Since 1981, the Cuban American National Foundation (C.A.N.F.) has obtained some \$500 million to finance the political and economic war against Castro (Prada 1995, 11). C.A.N.F. resembles a government in exile, to the point of bestowing medals on visiting heads of state, warning foreign governments that they will be punished if they trade with Cuba, and writing a new Cuban constitution (*New York Times*, August 4, 1998).

Through a political action committee, C.A.N.F. has donated millions to congressional and presidential candidates of both the Democratic and Republican parties – like the donation of \$56

thousand it made to then Congressman Robert Torricelli (D-NJ), who was responsible for the introduction of the legislation that eventually became the Cuban Democracy Act (Prada 1995, 15). And with a membership of more than fifty thousand, while also claiming to represent more than 1.3 million Cuban-Americans predominantly in Florida and New Jersey, it wields extraordinary power (Schwab 1999, 138).

C.A.N.F. has been given funding of \$286 million from the U.S. government to operate Radio Marti and Television Marti as propaganda outlets, broadcasting reactionary Castro sentiment (Schwab 1999, 138). However, when the Soviet Union began to disintegrate, C.A.N.F.'s intent, according to a former director of Radio Marti, "was no longer limited to the 'liberation' of Cuba...instead the foundation became a political organization whose goal was to take power after Fidel Castro," and to regain control of all properties nationalized after the Revolution (*New York Times*, May 8, 1995).

C.A.N.F. has even been given funding by the U.S. government to resettle Cuban refugees who have found their way to Florida. The foundation then not only has a huge supply of available capital provided by Washington, but its direct access to the refugees have allowed it to consolidate a political base. In exchange for providing help in locating housing and a job, and in integrating into the larger Miami-Cuban community, as the exiles become citizens they are expected to vote as C.A.N.F. demands. So as more refugees arrive, more money flows from the U.S. government, additional votes are garnered, and the leverage of C.A.N.F. increases. Also, under the Cuban Exodus Relief Fund, C.A.N.F. also receives \$588 in federal support for each Cuban refugee it collects from a third country (Schwab 1999, 138-139).

Furthermore, Jorge Mas Canosa, the long-standing leader of C.A.N.F. – from 1981 until his death in 1997 – saw himself succeeding Castro as the president of Cuba. To that end, in 1991 he established a “Blue Ribbon Commission on the Economic Reconstruction of Cuba,” to develop a blueprint for a post-Castro Cuban economy. It was made clear to all foreign leaders and businesses that investment in Castro’s Cuba meant exclusion in his regime. Corporations joining the commission would, for a \$25 thousand fee be entitled to participate in establishing the new economic agenda for the island (Schwab 1999, 140). This action on the part of C.A.N.F. and the United States is inexcusable.

Basically, the members of C.A.N.F. are operating in the same shady, underhanded manner in which their ancestors conducted business during Batista’s regime. Like the political and social elite in Cuba prior to the Revolution, the members of C.A.N.F. are exploiting their fellow Cubans with the support of the U.S. government. C.A.N.F. gathers as many Cuban refugees as possible to collect large sums of money from the U.S. government, which enables it to bribe the vulnerable refugees who become citizens to vote for political candidates of its choosing – those who are going to pass more anti-Castro legislation so that the members of C.A.N.F. can reclaim Cuba. The association of C.A.N.F. with the U.S. government is akin to the old military-commercial complex that dominated Cuban society for decades. The difference is that this time, instead of directly contributing to the air of injustice and violence within Cuban society, it is done indirectly through the purchasing of votes in the U.S. Congress to strengthen the blockade, and the funding of terrorist activities by hired mercenaries.

As late as 1997, terrorist activity against Cuba inside the country was linked to Miami-based exile groups – such as Alpha 66, Union of Former Political Prisoners, and Brothers to the Rescue

– who are on the payroll of C.A.N.F., and also the remnant participants of the Bay of Pigs invasion (Schwab 1999, 135). Early in the summer of 1997, a former Salvadoran army paratrooper and sharpshooter who had, according to Cuban officials, attended U.S. army training courses in Georgia – at the School of the Americas – set off a series of explosions in Havana’s Hotel Nacional, Hotel Capri, Copacabana Hotel, and the La Bodeguita del Medio – Cuba’s most famous bar (Schwab 1999, 133).

Alpha 66, the militant anti-Castro organization headquartered in Miami, claimed “that it was in contact with clandestine terrorist cells inside Cuba that were responsible” for organizing the explosions (*New York Times*, September 5, 1997, A14). According to the Cuban government, the perpetrator was part of a “network of mercenaries operating out of El Salvador, dedicated to terrorism and international drug trafficking, closely linked to counterrevolutionaries in Miami” (*New York Times*, September 12, 1997, A6). So not only is the United States government entangled in a questionable association with C.A.N.F. but is promoting terrorism – violating international and domestic laws -- due to the fact that it does not monitor the large amounts of money it appropriates to C.A.N.F. -- which funds terrorist groups. The inability of the world community to come down hard on the United States for this irresponsibility has led Castro and his government to take drastic security measures, which often violate the set of “human rights” advocated by many Western countries.

In Cuba, preventive detention for as long as four years is often imposed for “anti-social” acts, while stiff prison sentences are handed down for those who produce “propaganda” and try to distribute it publicly. Since requests for legal status for political and “human rights” organizations are always rejected, virtually all those who press for change or apply to register their associations with the state

are immediately marked and monitored. The security networks and community surveillance groups are then utilized to isolate and identify individuals, which earmarks them to the community at large as political pariahs (Schwab 1999, 148).

Moreover, if an arrest is not made, surveillance, wire taps, loss of employment, refusal of social services, the denial of travel visas, and overall ostracization are instruments used to harass and intimidate individuals (Schwab 1999, 148). Prison conditions, according to Human Rights Watch – a nongovernmental organization established in 1978 – violate the U.N.’s Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners. Beatings, harsh confinement in isolation cells, denial of medical attention, and incarceration far from places of residence are the norm (*Human Rights Watch/Americas*, 1995, Volume 7, No. 10, 25). Understandably, Human Rights Watch is clear in pointing out that, “the Cuban government’s justification for repression can be largely encapsulated in the three words: the United States” (*Human Rights Watch/Americas*, Volume 7, No. 10, 10).

Carl Johan Groth of Sweden, who is the U.N. Special Rapporteur on Human Rights in Cuba, admitted to the U.N. Human Rights Commission that while Castro’s government did repress its domestic critics, the U.S. blockade was partly to blame since it caused a “tragic shortage of material goods and untold hardships” (*New York Times*, April 22, 1998, A5). No doubt Castro’s Cuba has suffered much over the past forty years.

In reality, Castro has actually never had the chance to fulfill the goals of the Revolution because of the economic hardships – whereby it is estimated that losses to Cuba as a result of the blockade are close to \$60 billion -- and constant paranoia over the schemes being devised by the Cuban exiles and the U.S. government – which has not given the Cuban people peace of mind or a

real feeling of independence (Prada 1995, 23). In fact, the blockade has had a major impact on Cuban society as a whole.

The breadwinners of households are forced to practically pimp themselves economically to Western tourists, having to give up solid professions in the process. Family life is disrupted and distorted. Mental health is affected as adults develop psychological problems because they are unable to fulfill responsibilities that were experienced as intrinsic to their self worth and fulfillment. Children experience anger toward parents for being unable to furnish food and other essentials. Overall, workers cannot work, parents cannot provide, children's needs cannot be met, and most ironically the U.S. dollar has become more important and far more necessary to survival than the Cuban peso (Schwab 1999, 89).

Like many parent-child relationships, the relationship between the United States and Cuba is incredibly complex. Cuba is much like an abused child who has ventured out on his own, and come of age, after years of being bruised and battered. Cubans are optimistic about the future but the past still haunts them. For this reason, the United States, like a parent that wants to once again be a part of the child's life, is trying hard to make a connection with the old Cuba, but that will never happen.

Cuba has been away from the watchful eye of the United States for far too long, and so is unwilling to digress into the helpless nation-state it once was. Both the United States and Cuba can only hope to grow with one another, and find away to heal the wounds of the past. But that may be hard considering that Castro and the Cuban people are well aware of the burgeoning military-commercial complex in Miami, and are obviously anxious about it. Consequently, the U.S. government must lift the blockade in order to prove to Cubans that it has no ulterior motives.

Metaphorically speaking, if the United States really wants what is best for Cuba, it will cease in “burning the cigar at both ends” – meaning that it will no longer allow the blockade and the growing military-commercial complex to overshadow Cuba’s spirit for democracy. The United States government knows full well that political and economic reform in Cuba will not happen unless the Cuban people fight for it. For this reason, the United States government must give them time and space so that they can come to terms with the fact that things on their island need to change somehow, somehow.

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