

The Maine and Teddy Roosevelt

By Drew Pearson

This week, Feb. 15, marks the anniversary of the sinking of the Maine, an event which precipitated the United States into an unnecessary war.

There's only one member of the House of Representatives remaining who served in that war — the redoubtable 81-year-old Barratt O'Hara, Democrat of Chicago.



Pearson

And since the United States now faces an emotionally dangerous crisis over Cuba and Guantanamo, it might be well to recall some of the events which precipitated the unnecessary war in which O'Hara fought.

1. President McKinley had on his desk an offer from the King of Spain to give us Cuba. Spain did not want a war. At heart, neither did McKinley. However, popular opinion, whipped up by certain newspapers and certain politicians, was too strong. McKinley never made public the note from the King of Spain. Instead, we went to war.

2. The politician who chiefly wanted war was Teddy Roosevelt, then Assistant Secretary of the Navy, who shortly after the sinking of the Maine resigned from the Navy to organize the 1st Vol-

unteer Cavalry regiment and become a hero at the battle of San Juan Hill.

As a result of his heroism, T. R. later became Vice President and a courageous President. But there's no question that he contributed to an unnecessary war. I'll probably get in wrong with my wife for reporting this because she was his cousin. Nevertheless, it was true.

Old-Fashioned Base

Regarding the present crisis, the Air Force and the Army recommended long before the showdown with Castro that we get rid of Guantanamo. They pointed out that modern missiles had made Guantanamo out of date and it could become a political liability. Furthermore, it was an old-fashioned, unnecessary expense.

However, the Navy vigorously disagreed. Guantanamo has long been a pleasant place for Navy personnel in ill health and a wonderful spot for senior officers nearing retirement.

So Guantanamo was retained. Today and for the past four years, ever since Castro took over Cuba, we could not give it up without appearing to retreat.

Despite all his past forensics, and his frequent blasts against Uncle Sam, Castro never cut off Guantanamo's water until last week. His

action now probably stems from three factors:

1. Castro feels stronger today as a result of renewed Russian aid, the purchase of British buses, and the promised purchase of French trucks and railroad cars; also the expected visit of President de Gaulle. Though Khrushchev has carefully stayed away from Cuba, reportedly to keep from inflaming U.S. opinion, de Gaulle is expected to stop in Havana in mid-March.

2. Castro knows the United States is on the spot in Panama and wanted to multiply American troubles in Latin America.

3. The four Cuban fishing boats were actually watching CIA operations on the Dry Tortugas Islands where CIA had set up a spy base in a decrepit old pirate's fortress from which agents were being smuggled into Cuba with fake passports to undermine Castro.

Castro was fully aware of this operation and had sent the four alleged fishing boats to report on the CIA and if possible intercept the agents before they landed in Cuba. The four boats were equipped not for fishing but with radio apparatus and the CIA had picked up some of their conversations with Havana and put them on tape.

This was the real reason why the Coast Guard took the four boats into custody and

why they were turned over to Florida authorities when no Federal law could be found to hold them.

Thus both sides were spying on each other. Castro had caught the CIA cold with its spy base and CIA had caught Castro cold with his radio-equipped fishing trawlers.

So indignation over CIA espionage plus more security over Russian-British-French support probably led to the crackdown on Guantanamo water.

CIA Luxury

It's now leaked out that many of the intelligence surveys for the disastrous Bay of Pigs invasion were prepared by private corporations, including General Electric, Radio Corporation of America, Aerojet, and Rand.

Despite the Bay of Pigs fiasco, these same companies were hired to prepare intelligence surveys for another possible invasion of Cuba during the October 1962 Cuban missile crisis.

Since then, Government experts have complained privately that these corporations merely take out old intelligence reports and rewrite them, bringing them up to date. Despite this, private companies in 1963 wangled another \$29 million worth of secret intelligence contracts.