

If JFK Made a Deal on Cuba, The Refugees Were Betrayed



DID THE late President Kennedy and Russia's Nikita Khrushchev make a deal in October of 1962 which gave Fidel Castro an absolute grip on Cuba?

The former premier, now living in enforced retirement, said on a National Broadcasting Co. interview that the Soviets agreed to withdraw their rockets from Cuba in exchange for Kennedy's pledge that the United States would not invade the island.

Mr. Khrushchev added that President Johnson is bound by this agreement. The State Department denies that any commitment exists.

Since many people did not see the Khrushchev interview last Tuesday evening because of the 15 inning All Star game, excerpts from Nikita's observations are worth repeating.

Khrushchev said: "If rockets had not been installed, would there be a Cuba today? No, it would have been wiped out . . . our transportation of rockets was justified. It cost us money but we did not lose a single man.

"We took our rockets and

bombers away in exchange for President Kennedy's promise not to invade Cuba. . . . We told comrade Castro that if Kennedy broke his word, all the means which we had, are still in our possession . . . so that if the situation required, we could use it.

"We must give credit to the United States, and first of all to President Kennedy who also showed sense and coolheadedness. He gave us his promise to carry his part and we carried out ours.

"After President Kennedy's death, President Johnson . . . assured us that he would stick to promises made by President Kennedy. So far they have not been violated. We brought the breath of war closer to the American warmongers. We also demonstrated a clear understanding of when one can avoid a war and solve a question by negotiation."

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IF KHRUSHCHEV'S allegations are true—and thus far no one has wholly refuted them—his words will ever torment our statesmen, past and present, who promised "positive action" to restore a free Cuba.

On April 20, 1961, President Kennedy told the American Society of Newspaper Editors that Cuba must not be abandoned to the communists. The same promise was given at Miami's Orange Bowl to Cubans who had participated in the Bay of Pigs invasion.

A joint resolution of the Senate

and House of Representatives was adopted in September of 1962 which gave authority "to prevent by whatever means may be necessary, including the use of arms, the Marxist-Leninist regime in Cuba from extending... its aggressive and subversive activi-

ties in any part of this hemisphere."

Sen. George Smathers of Florida said in a speech on May 20, 1964, that we must unequivocally reaffirm the pledge made by "our beloved and martyred President John F. Kennedy not to abandon Cuba to the communists."

Similar speeches were made by Sens. Milward L. Simpson of Wyoming, who retired this year, Gordon L. Allott of Colorado, Strom Thurmond of South Carolina, Thruston Morton of Kentucky and innumerable other members of the House and Senate.

Sen. Simpson thought Cuba "can still be freed without direct U.S. military intervention" but failed to say how. Sen. Allott thundered that "the attempt to sweep Cuba under the rug will never succeed." Sen. Thurmond believes "any nation or nations in the Western Hemisphere are free to assist in the overthrow of the communist-satellite regime in Cuba." But he didn't spell it out. Sen. Peter Dominick of Colorado urged in 1964 that the administration "develop a positive policy on Cuba."

These are all patriotic men. Their speeches have the ring of sincerity. Yet, as the old refrain goes, "they don't mean a thing."

For our government does have a Cuba policy though it could hardly be described as "positive."

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CORRESPONDENCE between fighters for Cuba's freedom and the State Department reveals this statement on July 23, 1965, by Robert A. Stevenson, deputy coordinator of Cuban affairs:

"This government does not regard the Castro regime as a military threat either to the United States or to Latin America and therefore, under present circumstances, we do not advocate, as you do, the use of armed force."

Mr. Stevenson quite accurately pointed out that a policy of aiding hit-and-run attacks against Cuba or equipping from United States territory would involve violations of U.S. law.

This is very thin gruel indeed to sustain the cause of the Cubans who have lost their homeland.

As the State Department says: "This government shares with Cubans and others in the hemisphere the desire for a return of freedom to Cuba, but the issue of war or peace is one to be decided by the governments of the hemisphere and by their people."

And, as David Lawrence has written: "Intervention by the

Soviet government in the internal affairs of a country in this hemisphere was a blatant disregard of the Monroe Doctrine."

Yet the Cuban refugees and their well wishers in this country will never forget John F. Kennedy's stirring pledge to members of Brigade 2506 at the Orange Bowl in December of 1962: "I can assure you this flag will be returned to this brigade in a free Havana."

Now the doctrine is dead and Kennedy's emotional phrases are as ashes in the mouth.

Such, and sadly, are the ways of international diplomacy.

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