

**Waging
Peace—XIX**

Ike Describes the Rise

This is the nineteenth of a series of excerpts from the book, "The White House Years: Waging Peace, 1956-1961," published by Doubleday and Co. In this part, Gen. Eisenhower discusses the rise of Castro.

**By Dwight D.
Eisenhower**

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The threat of communism in Latin America, though none of us knew it at the time, was to be thrust into the open first, not on the Latin American mainland, but on the island of Cuba. There a bearded young man named Fidel Castro had succeeded in gathering together a band of about a thousand guerrillas in the Escambray Mountains, a force promising to throw out the self-enriching and corrupt dictator Fulgencio Batista and end the suppressions and brutalities of his police state.

Throughout 1958, the United States carefully followed a policy of nonintervention in Cuba, although sentimental support for Castro was widespread. We repeatedly seized cargoes of arms headed for Castro and in March suspended the delivery of arms to Batista. We would not take sides or intervene. I told a news conference on Nov. 5, 1958, except to protect American citizens in Cuba. A month later Castro launched a major attack against Santa Clara, in central Cuba. Batista's local forces, unable to defeat Castro, decided to join him. Obviously Castro had won the emotional, and now the significant material support from the Cuban people.

During the rush of these last events in the final days of 1958, the Central Intelligence Agency suggested for the first time that a Castro victory might not be in the best interests of the United States. (Earlier re-

ports which I had received of Castro's possible communism were suspect because they originated with people who favored Batista.)

Radicals in Movement

"Communists and other extreme radicals appear to have penetrated the Castro movement," Allen Dulles said. "If Castro takes over, they will probably participate in the government."

When I heard this estimate, I was understandably provoked. Even if we could find proof of his Communist beliefs, our task would be many times harder with Castro in power.

One of my advisers recommended that the United States should now back Batista as the lesser of two evils. I rejected that course. If Castro turned out to be as bad as our intelligence now suggested, our only hope, if any, lay with some kind of non-dictatorial "third force," neither Castroite nor Batistiano.

On New Year's Day, 1959, Batista sought refuge in the Dominican Republic, and Fidel Castro's forces prepared to enter Havana in triumph.

It is easy now to look back and read communism into Castro's actions. But at the time, conclusive evidence was lacking.

Castro's first moves gave some observers cause to hope for the best. But then mass executions of Castro's enemies were under way.

Election Postponed

On the last day of February, 1959, Castro announced a two-year postponement of the election he previously had promised, and on March 26 Allen Dulles reported that "The Castro regime is moving toward a complete dictatorship. Communists are now operating openly and legally in Cuba."

And though Castro's government is not Communist-dominated Communists

of Castro

have worked their way into the labor unions, the armed forces, and other organizations."

We had learned that the American Society of Newspaper Editors had invited Castro to come to Washington to give a speech at the National Press Club. I was more than irritated by the news.

Having personally become highly suspicious that Castro was a Communist and deeply disgusted at his murderous persecution of his former opponents, I inquired whether we could not refuse him a visa. Advised that under the circumstances this would be unwise, I nevertheless refused to see him.

In Washington, Castro held a three-hour confer-

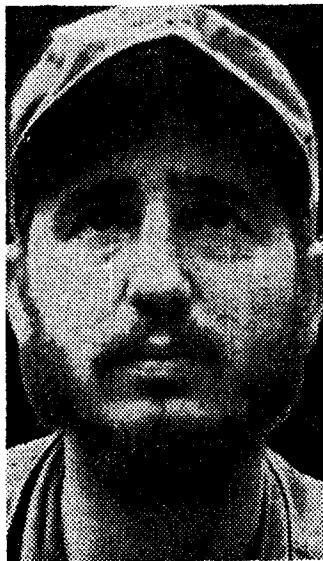
ence with the Vice President. At the end of this the Vice President wrote a long memorandum for the State Department and the CIA which had one clear conclusion: that Castro was "either incredibly naive about communism or under Communist discipline." Such a statement about a government we had recognized, could not, without corroboration, be made public at that time. Subsequent events more and more confirmed the Vice President's opinion.

Restraints Examined

Though our intelligence experts backed and filled for a number of months, events were gradually driving them to the conclusion that with the coming of Castro, communism had penetrated this hemisphere.

Within a matter of weeks after Castro entered Havana, we in the Administration had begun to examine measures that might be effective in restraining Castro if he should develop into a menace. By the end of 1959, we were seriously discussing a change in the law that, reflecting the protective attitude the United States had maintained toward Cuba for six decades, required the United States to buy about half of Cuba's sugar crop annually at premium prices. Another suggestion was to begin efforts to induce all Latin American governments to counter any move of his to promote revolution in the Western Hemisphere.

Even though, at times, Castro's public performances appeared to be the acts of a man mentally unbalanced, it was clear we would have trouble getting



FIDEL CASTRO

"...a bearded young man"

unanimous agreement that Castro posed in fact any threat to an American nation.

One suggestion was that we begin to build up an anti-Castro force within Cuba itself. Some thought we should quarantine the island, arguing that if the Cuban economy declined sharply, Cubans themselves might overthrow Castro.

Doubt Disappears

In any event, by early 1960 there was no longer any doubt in the Administration that "something would have to be done"—the questions were what, when, and under what circumstances?

We knew that precipitate, unilateral action could easily be fatal to our hopes of strengthening the Organization of American States. For one thing we did know: Fidel Castro was a hero to

the masses in many Latin American nations. They saw him as a champion of the downtrodden and the enemy of the privileged who, in most of their countries, controlled both wealth and governments. His crimes and wrong-doings that so repelled the more informed peoples of the continent had little effect on the young, the peons, the underprivileged, and all others who wanted to see the example of revolution followed in their own nations.

* * *

On March 17, 1960, I ordered the Central Intelligence Agency to begin to organize the training of Cuban exiles, mainly in Guatemala, against a possible future day when they might return to their homeland. More specific planning was not possible because the Cubans living in exile had made no move to select a leader from among their numbers.

Che Guevara, now the economic power in Cuba, announced the State would own and operate all industry.

The possibility that Cuba's government might definitely become a Communist satellite, though still discounted by most of my advisers, was disturbing. I remarked in one meeting that if the Soviet Union had the temerity to make a mutual security treaty with Cuba, we would have a situation that the United States could not tolerate.

It continued to be difficult to get a consensus among the American governments as to the true significance of Castro's actions.

But there were moves we

could make. It was silly, for example, to continue to give Cuba favored treatment. Therefore, on July 6, 1960, I signed legislation authorizing presidential action to fix the quota on Cuban sugar imported in the United States until March 31, 1961. I signed a proclamation cutting the 1960 quota by 700,000 short tons. (Later I set the quota for the first three months of 1961 at zero.) "This action," I remarked on the day I signed, "amounts to economic sanctions against Cuba. Now we must look ahead to other moves—economic, diplomatic, strategic."

But before we could intervene, we would first have to prove to the OAS beyond any shadow of doubt, that Cuba had become a Communist base; otherwise, resentment at "arrogant intervention" could lead to serious difficulties for us in Latin America. It was certain that public opinion in the Americas would not condemn Castro until we had moved against Trujillo who, in July, was accused of attempting the assassination of President Betancourt.

Manifestly our hands were tied until we knew for certain that a Castro-type would not succeed Trujillo, and this was difficult to determine in a nation that had for so many years lived under absolute, ruthless dictatorship. We continued, however, to keep emergency plans for Cuba ready. These included such possibilities as blockade, military action, and joint action with Latin American countries.

During the next months, we continued to get significant reports out of the Caribbean. On July 9, Khrushchev had threatened to use rockets to protect Cuba against a military attack by the United States, a threat that we dismissed. But in the middle of July, Allen Dulles said to me: "As you know, Khrushchev has publicly ridiculed the idea that the Soviet Union would ever put missiles in Cuba when he can launch them from the Soviet Union. But recently a number of large, unidentified packages have been brought into Cuba, and one military base has been put off bounds. It may be that the Soviets are putting

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Blockade Of Cuba Considered

up a short-range missile base somewhere on the island."

CIA Keeps Watching

All through the summer the CIA kept watching, but no solid evidence was obtained that the Russians were transporting any major items to Cuba. However, our Army attache in Havana had gotten hold of photographs of Czech semiautomatic rifles in the hands of Cuban soldiers. These photographs, for the first time, confirmed reports of the entry of Communist arms into Cuba.

We had reports that Castro was not well, that he was increasingly nervous and susceptible to lapses of memory. We continued to hear of Dominican agents lurking in Venezuela with a determination to assassinate Betancourt. And my reaction to Trujillo's "resignation" — when he installed Vice President Joaquin Balaguer in the Presidency but retained power in his own hands—was "Whom does he think he is fooling?"

Constantly before us was the question of what could be done about the revolutionary ferment in the world. We knew, for example, that we could not indefinitely support governments that refused to carry out land and social reforms. We needed new policies that would reach the seat of the trouble, the seething unrest of the people, but without causing bloodshed and more suppression.

Aug. 20—in response to United States leadership—the American foreign ministers, meeting in San Jose, Costa Rica, passed a resolution condemning the Dominican government's actions against Venezuela — includ-

ing the attempt to assassinate Betancourt—and calling on all members of the OAS to break diplomatic relations with the Dominican Republic and to impose a partial economic blockade, beginning with a blockade on the shipment of arms. The vote was 19-0, with the Dominican Republic and Venezuela abstaining.

Diplomatic Ties Broken

In accordance with this resolution, I asked the Congress to cut most of the Dominican Republic's sugar quota. Three days later we broke diplomatic ties with Trujillo. These actions contributed to the downfall of the Trujillo dictatorship.

At the same conference, after reports that Castro had been trying to bribe delegates to the meeting and that several of them were taking a weak-kneed stand against Castroism, the foreign ministers agreed on a Declaration of San Jose. This farsighted indictment

condemned "emphatically the intervention or the threat of intervention . . . from an extra continental power in the affairs of the American republics . . . Rejects, also, the attempt of the Sino-Soviet powers to make use of the political, economic, or social situation of any American state . . . (and) Reaffirms that the inter-American system is incompatible with any form of totalitarianism."

On Sept. 13 the OAS Special Committee (Cuba dissenting) adopted the historic Act of Bogota. This specified cooperative measures for the improvement of land, of housing and community facilities, educational systems, tax reform, and public health facilities. For the first time the delegates declared their recognition that the preservation and strengthening of free and democratic institutions required the speeding up of social and economic progress in Latin America. "Nonintervention" had given way to a new idea—the idea that all American nations had an interest in ending feudalism, the vast hereditary gulf between rich and poor, the system that assured to a handful of families opulence without labor and condemned millions to near-starvation without opportunity.

Thus was launched a new program which the succeeding Administration enthusiastically carried on, giving it a bright and dramatic new label. On March 13, 1961, at a White House reception, President Kennedy called "on all the people of the hemisphere to join in a new Alliance for Progress . . .

The Alliance for Progress carries forward the progressive departure from the traditional American doctrine which we began as early as 1957 and carried on intensively upon my return from Latin America, through the Act of Bogota in 1960. In my judgment the basic agreements in the Act of Bogota are right. Whether the noble purposes proclaimed there will be realized, only the Latin American nations themselves can determine.

NEXT: *The U-2 incident.*

U.S. Intelligence Reports on Cuba

From the intelligence digest prepared in my office during the early weeks of 1959:

Jan. 2, 1959: The Fidel Castro rebels are consolidating their control in the country. Santiago has fallen to them. An interesting facet which the State Department considers partly cheerful is the turning over of the armed forces by Cantillo to a Colonel Ramon Barquin, who has aided the rebels in their consolidation. Favorable aspects of the turnover are (1) that Barquin is an apparently well-thought-of officer, and (2) his opportunity to take a hand may strengthen the military's position, vis-a-vis Castro, and add a certain amount of stability to the situation. Castro is short on experienced and responsible personnel. The Communists can be expected to exploit a fast-moving situation, perhaps by supporting a general strike.

Jan. 6, 1959: Provisional President Urrutia established himself in the Presidential Palace in the early evening on Jan. 5 after a delay of several hours caused by a non-Castro rebel group known as the Directorate. The Cabinet announced on Jan. 3, however, contains three or four members of this Revolutionary Directorate, a fact which our Embassy believes will add to the prospects for stability. The foreign minister is a man named Agromonte, who is a leading figure and is considered friendly to the U.S. Urrutia has agreed to give protection to the Embassy in Havana, in accordance with requests of a committee of ambassadors. Meanwhile, we have received requests for recognition from the Urrutia government and are assessing the situation. Costa Rica, Ecuador, Peru, Honduras, and Mexico have extended recognition.

Jan. 7, 1959: President Urrutia has announced additional appointments to his Cabinet, including Prime Minister Jose Miro Cardona, who is a highly respected

former dean of the Havana Bar Association. He has announced that he will dissolve Congress and criminal courts and rule by decree for 18 to 24 months. American businessmen meeting in Havana are urging rapid recognition on the basis that his government appears far better than anything they had dared hope for.

Jan. 9, 1959: The Cuban Communist Party has obtained a minority voice in the organized labor movement. The Party is attempting openly to create an impression of legality, although Urrutia has not recognized the Party. Mean-

while, speculation on the orientation of the Urrutia government remains doubtful.

Jan. 12, 1959: Castro and other leaders of the July 26 movement have declared the Communist Party will now be permitted to operate legally.

Jan. 21, 1959: CIA reports several responsible men in the new Cuban government are being disillusioned over

the delays and inefficiency occasioned by the constant deferral of decisions to Fidel Castro, whose time has been spent largely in public appearances. Prime Minister Miro Cardona, for these reasons as well as his anger over Castro's inflammatory attacks on the U.S., has submitted a letter of resignation.

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