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on

## Cuba Once More



CUBA continues to be the one spot abroad about which our people are most concerned. Once again, let us take soundings and get our bearings to see where we are.

Castro's Cuba has been a triple threat to the United States and its interests. The greatest of these threats came from Mr. Khrushchev's bold and reckless gamble with the planting of his missiles. Had this succeeded, Cuba would be an advanced Soviet military outpost inside the nuclear defenses of the United States. This threat was successfully repelled by President Kennedy, and since October 1962 the Soviet Government has withdrawn from Cuba not only the missiles themselves, which might have been deadly, but also almost all the Soviet military personnel, which at one time numbered something like 16,000 officers and men. Very nearly all of them are gone now. They have left behind a much stronger defense, manned by Cubans who have been trained by Soviet instructors, than existed at the time of the Bay of Pigs.

Scarcely anybody thinks that Cuba is now in any measure a military threat to the United States, that it is capable of any sort of offensive military aggression against this country.

The second threat of Castro's Cuba has been that it is a base and a staging area for subversive activity in Latin America. The threat has been quite severe in Central America and in that part of South America, especially Venezuela, which is within reach of smaller ships coming from Cuba. This is a continuing threat in the sense that it has not been possible for the American republics, including the United States, to seal the shores of the Caribbean against gun-running, terrorists, and infiltrating agents from Havana. This is what impels those who want to end the Castro menace by invasion and occupation or by blockade. Those who feel this way have been listened to. But they are not being followed. The considered judgment in responsible quarters has been that while the danger of subversion is a real one, it is not so great and not so critical a danger that it must be dealt with by major surgery. Our judgment has been that the danger would yield to medicine—to economic, diplomatic, and political pressure.

**Castro's Influence.** The greatest threat presented by Castro's Cuba is as an example to other Latin American states which are beset by poverty, corruption, feudalism, and plutocratic exploitation. For while Castro cannot attack his neighbors openly, while he can only make some trouble for some of them, his influence in Latin America might

be overwhelming and irresistible if, with Soviet help, he could establish in Cuba a Communist utopia.

He is not doing that. In fact, there is no Communist utopia even in Russia.

Turning now to the other side of the balance sheet, there is reason for thinking that Castro's influence in this hemisphere may have reached and even passed its crest. I am able to say this because I do not share the idea that the Communist movement is irresistible and devilishly clever. I think there is evidence that Castro's Cuba is running into the kind of economic trouble which, if it is curable at all by Communist methods, can be overcome only after a long period of austerity and deprivation. The Russian people went through such a period under Stalin. There is no evidence that the Cuban people can be made to endure it under Castro. The trade restrictions which we and some other American republics are imposing on Cuba do not, of course, bring quick, spectacular results. But they are working deeply within the Cuban economy.

**Peace Feelers.** There is some important evidence of all this. It is no secret, for one thing, that we have been receiving for some time feelers through diplomatic channels in order to find out on what terms we would make peace with Castro. There are no negotiations, of course, but these feelers are a very strong indication of how the tide is running. Their importance is reinforced by the great Sino-Soviet schism within the international Communist movement. This gigantic conflict is bringing with it a movement in Soviet Russia for greater collaboration with the West. It is reasonable to believe that a necessary part of this collaboration would be pressure from Moscow on Castro to end his rebellion against the American community and to seek an accommodation with it.

There is ground also for thinking that the tide of Castro's influence in Latin America began to recede after the Venezuelan election, which he tried and failed to upset. It is too early to make a judgment about the counter-revolution in Brazil. But if it shows nothing else, it shows that the latent forces of resistance against Castroism are very strong—so strong, indeed, that they could engender a Fascist reaction. Brazil, however, for all its troubles and antiquated social order, has a notably civilized political tradition, and so we must wait and see.