Former U.S. Envoy Hits Early

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BUENOS AIRES—The last American ambassador to Cuba has just written a book on the collapse of U.S. relations with Fidel Castro, and the present ambassador to Chile has asked the State Department to send him a copy forthwith.

Retired Ambassador Philip W. Bonsal argues, in "Cuba, Castro and the United States," that Castro's early provocations triggered unjustifiably harsh U.S. reprisals, beginning with a crucial decision implemented by the Secretary of the Treasury.

The decision was that the two American oil companies operating in Cuba should refuse to refine Soviet crude oil that the Castro government imported, and Bonsal says that the American government informed him of this critical turn in policy only by way of an oil company executive.

This reprisal against Castro's dealing with the Soviet Union was the first overt act in an unannounced policy that climaxed with the Bay of Pigs invasion.

". . . We in the Havana embassy became aware only gradually and imperfectly, and without real opportunity for comment and discussion, of the new policy of our government," says Bonsal.

Eerie Similarities

Although the career diplomat makes no comparisons, there are some eerie similarities between the events of 11 years ago and the uneasy state of present U.S. relations with Chile's socialist government.

For instance, it is generally assumed in Santiago that U.S. policies unfavorable to President Salvador Allende's government are generated by Treasury Secretary John Connally rather than by the State Department.

The decision to deny Export-Import Bank financing for Chilean purchase of Boeing jets is considered by some observes to have driven Chile to the Russians in the same way that, Bonsal shows, the 1960 oil decision did the Cubans.

More militant Communists and Socialists backing Allende assume that the other key decision-making center outside the Treasury is the CIA, as Bonasl implies was the case in 1960.

Nixon's Role

Of course, today the ultimate decisions lie with President Nixon. By his own account, then Vice President Nixon was the prime advocate of the 1960 decision to arm Cuban exiles for their eventual invasion which was carried out, in April, 1961, under President Kennedy.

While Bonsal's spare, 225-page chronicle makes it clear that Cuba and Castro were far different from Allende and Chile, the main events are worth recalling for their possible pertinence—the more so since there is mounting pressure in the hemisphere to end against Cuba.

Bonsal was named Ambassador to Cuba in January, 1959, to replace Earl E. T. Smith, who had been deeply committed to the Batista dictatorshop that Castro overthrew earlier that month.

Davis was named early in Allende's term to replace Edward M. Korry, whose analysis of Allende's electoral victory supported those in Washington who consider Chile to be "lost." Korry stayed at his post through the first year of negotiations over the fate of nationalized American copper investments.

By Bonsal's account, his counsel against what he saw as Castro's efforts to use the United States as a whipping boy was to negotiate quietly and to reassert U.S. pledges not to intervene in Cuban affairs.

Soviet-Cuban Sugar Deal

As late as January, 1960, President Eisenhower made just a public pledge. The next month, Soviet Vice Premier Anastas Mikoyan, visiting Havana, signed a deal for Cuban sugar. According to Bonsal, the agreement, did not endanger the traditional U.S.-Cuban sugar trade.

Then Cuban agreed to take Soviet oil in part payment for the sugar—enraging traditional suppliers Texaco and Esso, whose profit remittances Castro had already frozen.

Bonsal says that the companies had decided to refine the Soviet oil under protest. Then an oil executive visited him, at the request of

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Assistant Secretary of State Roy Rubottom. Bonsal recalls:

"My visitor went on to tell me that on the previous day representatives of the two American companies . . . had been summoned to the office of the Secretary of the Treasury, Robert Anderson, and had been informed by the Secretary that a refusal to accede to the Cuban government's request would be in accord with the policy of the United States government toward Cuba and that the companies would not incur any penalties under American antitrust laws should they take a joint stand in this matter."

Bonsal adds that State Department authorities do not seem to have been consulted on Anderson's move. The ambassador then warned Rubottom that "What we were doing was to present a situation to the Cuban revolutionaries and their presumably then reluctant Russian friends which involved the fate of the Cuban government."

But the oil companies refused the Soviet crude oil, and were confiscated by Cuba. A month later, in July, came the next step in the attempt to close out Castro — suspension of the all-important Cuban quota for export of sugar to the United States at preferential prices.

Congress authorized the suspension, Bonsal recalls, after secret hearings, on the basis that the step was "a necessary weapon to overthrow Castro and defeat Communist penetration of the territory of American's former staunch friend and ally." The ambassador says he saw no basis for such a contention.

Bonsal later learned that the decision to do in Castro, had been made in March, and the CIA had been authorized to start recruiting and training the exile army. "It became common knowledge in Havana that summer that the CIA was helping the anti-Castro guerrilla fighters who appeared sporadically in a number of rural areas."

With the oil and sugar decisions, Castro began wholesale expropriation of American holdings. He drew closer to the Soviets, and by October, Bonsal was permanently recalled to Washington.

Bonsal concludes that adherence to nonintervention must be the basis of present U.S. approaches to Cuba, and of any revival of American influence and integrity in the hemisphere as a whole.

For all his travails under a U.S. policy on which he had little influence, Bonsal's major thesis is that Castro was able to establish a dictatorship in Cuba because the country's traditional rulership classes abdicated — believing that the United States would step in to rid them of the Marxist authoritarian.

Bonsal believes that normalization is unlikely as long as Castro—whom he calls, with bitterness and irony, "the maximum leader" remains in power. But he thinks that the mutually beneficial sugar trade is the basis for an eventual resumption of ties.

Chile, of course, offers only limited comparisons. U.S. economic influence there was never so complete as in Cuba. Allende is no dictator but a democratically elected president. Only the most strident Marxists profess to believe that the Americans will intervene in

Still, the advent of Castro communism brought forth a concerted anti-Marxist U.S. policy in the hemisphere, and the coming of Allende is being watched for changes in American reaction.

Those who say that present policy is made at the Treasury pointed to threats issued through Secretary of State William P. Rogers to cut off Chile's credit as a result of the Chilean decision to pay no compensation for the major U.S. mine properties taken over by the government.

Since those cross-recriminations of September, no further U.S. policy development has been noted. In view of Bonsal's experience, one could ask whether Davis knows what is to come next, or if he is more likely to get an inkling by reading the book.