

9 M 7/26/64

The Outcast Island

This July 26 dawns grimly on a Cuba that is celebrating the anniversary of a runaway revolution. The island is hungry, the economy disorganized, and popular morale more dispirited than at any point since Fidel Castro took power in 1959. At the same time, hemisphere foreign ministers have now voted new sanctions against an outcast country that has never seemed more friendless and alone in Latin America.

In these circumstances, it seems to us that President Johnson should not allow himself to be placed on the defensive by bellicose attacks on this country's policy of restraint. For what is happening in Cuba and in the hemisphere is a vindication of the general lines of United States policy.

Its major aim has been to loosen the tie that binds Cuba to the Soviet Union. In fact, the tie has perceptibly slackened. Russian soldiers and technicians have been steadily withdrawn from the island — even to the point of causing concern in Washington that Prime Minister Castro may have *too* much control over anti-aircraft missiles capable of downing our photo reconnaissance aircraft.

At the same time, and for a variety of reasons, the Soviet Union itself has been encouraging the Castro regime to moderate its policies. The cause for this appears to lie in Soviet disenchantment with the revolutionary potential in Latin America, in an unwillingness to pump endless millions into a mismanaged Cuban economy, and in fear that Cuba could block the road to further progress on

an East-West detente.

Conceivably it is a ruse, but nevertheless it is true that to some extent Castro has damped the fires. In newspaper interviews, the Cuban Prime Minister speaks with implausible mellowness about the past and even allows that Cuba itself may have shared in the responsibility for the break with this country. He speaks of a settlement of property claims and of a bargain whereby he would halt his aid to revolutionaries abroad in return for a halt of U.S. help to Cuban exiles. Whether he is sincere is debatable; what is not debatable is that there has been a change in Cuban tactics if not Cuban goals.

In the larger hemisphere context, there has also been a marked shift that accords with long-held U.S. policy wishes. The meeting of foreign ministers last week differed in an essential respect with previous Organization of American States sessions on Cuba. The debate did not center on whether sanctions should be taken against Cuba, but rather on what kind of sanctions should be adopted.

A complete embargo on the hemisphere's trade with Cuba was adopted, and member-states were urged to break diplomatic relations with Castro. The OAS was closer to a consensus on Cuba than at any time since the missile crisis of October, 1962.

In sum, the United States is now in a position of undoubted strength as it copes with Castro. The question is how this strength should be used. It may be that in the near future there can be no real initiative in Cuba policy for obvious political reasons. But looking ahead, the time may be approaching when our bargaining power can be used to help liberalize, humanize and render less menacing the revolutionary regime on the hemisphere's outcast island.