

Part 11/16/64

New Look at Cuba

The fascinating reports from Cuba by C. L. Sulzberger of the *New York Times* suggest that some fretful soul-searching is taking place on Dr. Castro's isle. The Cuban Premier has suffered some hard knocks in his relations with the Communist world and with Latin America; his country's economic problems are grave. Though Dr. Castro still blusters—as he did in asserting that he now controls the anti-aircraft missiles that could down a U-2 plane—his threats, Mr. Sulzberger found, have a hollow tone. He gave the impression of a leader looking less for a fight than for a way out of an immensely difficult situation.

Now that the election here is over, some similar soul-searching is also in order. Our Cuban policy has been a bundle of negations. We have opposed Fidel Castro at every turn, and with good reason, since he has been bent on the total destruction of United States influence in Latin America. When Dr. Castro loomed large and menacing—when he allowed Soviet missiles to be stationed on his soil—then our total opposition was surely warranted.

In large part, U.S. policy has succeeded in curbing the influence of Castroism. The hemisphere is united in opposition to Cuba; in Latin America, only Mexico—for historical reasons largely unrelated to the present conflict—maintains diplomatic relations with Cuba. The Alliance for Progress, however imperfect, has offered an alternative to the Castro formula for violent change. The question now is, where do we go from here?

On the ultimate goal, there will be little dissent.

That goal remains the encouragement of free government in Cuba. Dr. Castro may find our partiality for democracy offensive, and our concern with political prisoners in Cuba and with refugees abroad a matter of absurd sentimentality. But he himself once professed to share these values—indeed, his past promises to the people of Cuba remain the bitterest reproach to the police state he has established.

Yet what is desirable is not always possible, and in the immediate future there seems no alternative to Castro unless the United States assumes the risks of an invasion and military occupation of the island. These are not risks our Government or people have been willing to undertake. What then?

We can either ignore Castro or try to define our differences in the hope that there would be some possibility of easing the pain caused by the Cuban cyst. Four points are basic in any talks with Castro. There can be no progress to a new relationship unless the Cuban regime is prepared (1) to redefine its relations with the Soviet Union; (2) to agree not to foment revolution elsewhere in Latin America; (3) to provide an amnesty to anti-Batista Cubans who are now in prison or who wish to return safely to Cuba; (4) to agree in principle to some compensation for confiscated foreign property.

Of the list, the first point is both the most basic and most difficult. If Dr. Castro has learned any lesson in the past four years, it is that geography imposes some limits on the absolute exercise of sovereignty. A Cuba permanently allied with the Soviet Union is as unthinkable in this hemisphere as a Finland permanently allied to the West would be to the Russians. If the United States is expected to disavow the possibility of an invasion of Cuba—thereby, in effect, assuring Dr. Castro's continuance in power—then the Cuban regime must be prepared to disavow those ties with the Soviet Union that have been justified by the fear of a supposed U.S. plan to invade the island. These points seem to us fundamental to any reappraisal of Cuban policy, here or in Havana.