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It is time to normalize relations with Cuba:

A scene that Senator Kennedy would like to see (at right)

By Edward M. Kennedy

After a quarter century of hostility, the United States cast off its cold-war veil last year and acknowledged the existence of the People's Republic of China. Now it is time to lift the veil once more and begin the process of normalizing relations with Cuba.

For more than a decade, United States-Cuba relations have been characterized by mutual hostility, mutual suspicion and the sterile symbolism of cold-war rhetoric. Whatever may have been their validity in the past, the arguments used to justify the policy of isolating the regime of Fidel Castro now have lost their link to reality. What remains is an anachronistic policy that no longer serves our own best interests.

Ongoing negotiations for an agreement to halt the savage wave of airline hijackings provide an unexpected opportunity for the United States to begin charting the diplomatic road away from the policy of isolation. It is an opportunity we should seize. For it is bizarre to see the United States maintain an archaic cold-war policy toward Cuba when we are committed to a policy of détente and negotiation in every other corner of the globe.

We permit, and in fact this Administration has substantially encouraged, trade with the Soviet Union. Over \$200-million was involved in that trade in 1971 and the figure for 1972 is far higher, following the wheat agreement. Nor is the Soviet Union an exception. We allow trade with Albania, Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia, East Germany, Hungary, Poland, Rumania, the People's Republic of China and even Outer Mongolia. In addition, we maintain diplomatic relations with almost the entire Warsaw Pact bloc. And the new Number 2 man in the State Department has said that he expects diplomatic relations with East Germany to be established shortly. At a time when we are demanding at the European Security Conference that the East European Communist countries permit their citizens freedom of travel and free access to Western ideas, it is ironic to see us denying our own citizens the same rights with respect to Cuba.

China has been actively supporting North Vietnam with guns, money, and belligerent counsel for a decade in a war that has drained the human,

physical and spiritual resources of our nation. Cuba, at the most, has furnished training and aid to a handful of men whose efforts have never been directed at this nation and whose every attempt at violent revolution in Latin America has met with failure. China is a nation of 800 million persons compared to Cuba's 8 million. China also is a nation with the future potential to assault the security of America. Cuba can never aspire to that capacity. One wonders, therefore, at the stark contrast in the policies of the present Administration toward these two nations.

With regard to China, the Administration has proudly and rightfully taken credit for breaching the wall that divided our two nations. Travel, trade and exchanges of scientists and scholars have followed President Nixon's visit. The process of normalization is in full swing. What better evidence can be found than the recollection of President Nixon toasting Chairman Mao in the Great Hall of the People and later applauding and praising the "revolutionary" ballet, "The Red Detachment of Women." Toward Cuba, on the other hand, we maintain a dogmatic posture of hostility that extends even to the seizure of internationally acclaimed Cuban films by U.S. Treasury agents.

I would contend today, as I have for the past three years, that just as the goal of world peace justified bridging the 9,000 miles to Peking, so the goal of hemispheric peace and stability is worth spanning the 90 miles to Havana.

As with China, normalizing relations with Cuba would not in any way imply approval of the internal policies of the Cuban Government, policies which have produced 500,000 refugees and an untold number of political prisoners. Clearly, we cannot endorse those Cuban policies that have carried such heavy costs in human suffering. But the artificial policy of diplomatic and economic isolation is not an appropriate response. And it is perhaps most hypocritical when we glance around the world at other governments with which we not only maintain diplomatic relations but also to which we frequently offer both economic and military aid, despite their disregard for human rights and their continuing political oppression.

But to understand fully why it is now time to change a policy that has cast Cuba as the pariah of the hemisphere, it is necessary to examine both the historical context in which that policy was formed and the rationale by which we perpetuate its existence today.

Diplomats representing the United States and Spain signed a peace treaty ending the Spanish-American war and ending the Spanish empire in the Western Hemisphere. That treaty assured both independence for Cuba and a permanent role for the United States in Cuban affairs. Military intervention, virtual control over the Cuban economy and support for a variety of undemocratic Cuban Governments characterized the history of our relations in the following decades. We enjoyed tremendous power and privilege and assumed little or no responsibility. And the result was to create an underlying resentment toward us among many Cuban people.

So when Fidel Castro came to power, the possibility of an accommodation depended upon both Havana and Washington exhibiting a degree of caution and tolerance that neither side proved able to muster. By the end of 1960, Castro had opened trade and diplomatic relations with the Soviet Union, nationalized all United States and Cuban commercial holdings and watched as the United States retaliated by cutting Cuba's sugar quota and by training exiles for an invasion of the island. In January, 1961, responding to what were seen as Castro's provocative acts, President Eisenhower broke off diplomatic relations, and three months after President Kennedy took office, the Bay of Pigs invasion took place.

As President Kennedy acknowledged, the Bay of Pigs represented a failure of policy. It gave substance to the idea that the United States would not rest until it had purged the Western Hemisphere of the Communist regime that Castro had established. And a predictable result of the adventure was a growing reliance by Cuba on economic and military aid from the Soviet Union. As Soviet military advisers and equipment landed on Cuban shores, the United States engineered the exclusion of Cuba from the Organization of American States in early 1962.

The rationale for the policy of isolation was now established: First, the introduction of a Soviet military presence which extended to the emplacement of intermediate range ballistic missiles; second, increasingly strident rhetoric and support for revolution and guerrilla warfare throughout the hemisphere; and finally, the spread of Communist ideology into the hemisphere.

The exclusion of Cuba from the O.A.S. was the first result of the policy. The second came in 1964

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When we are committed to negotiation in every other corner of the globe, why continue the cold war with Cuba?

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when Venezuelan charges of Cuban aggression prompted the rupture of diplomatic relations between Cuba and virtually all of the nations of Latin America. The final triumph for that policy came simultaneously when the United States successfully urged adoption of a hemispheric boycott against trade with Cuba by O.A.S. members.

Today, eight years later, the Administration continues to deny that conditions which originally prompted the policy of isolation have changed. President Nixon recently told an interviewer: "There will be no change, no change whatever, in our policy toward Cuba unless and until—and I do not anticipate this will happen—Castro changes his policy toward Latin America and the United States." That status quo posture was reaffirmed only a few weeks ago when the State Department criticized the decision by four Caribbean nations to open diplomatic relations with Cuba and issued a statement that the policy of isolation was "still justified."

I think President Nixon's judgment on this matter is wrong. The original rationale for the policy has lost all validity. It is one of the few remaining dinosaurs of American foreign policy, unable to adapt to a changing environment and doomed in the end to extinction.

The Soviet strategic threat to the United States and the hemisphere from Cuba was aborted at its inception by the decisive actions taken by President Kennedy a decade ago. The Cuban missile crisis produced an accord that the Soviet Union reaffirmed in 1970 in response to United States fears that the port of Cienfuegos might become a permanent Soviet nuclear submarine base. The Soviet Union acknowledged then that the United States would neither ignore nor tolerate substantive military threats to its physical security.

Recent reports from the Defense Intelligence Agency (D.I.A.) estimate that some 3,000 Soviet military personnel are in Cuba as advisers and technicians, approximately the same number as had been there in the past three years. Maj. Gen. Richard Stewart, D.I.A. Deputy Director for Intelligence,

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told a House Committee last September: "The Cuban threat to the United States, which was not very great several years ago, has not increased. So, there is not a serious Cuban military threat to the United States." He also said, "The Soviet weapons systems which are in Cuba have a good defense capability, but they do not give the Soviets or the Cubans an offensive capability."

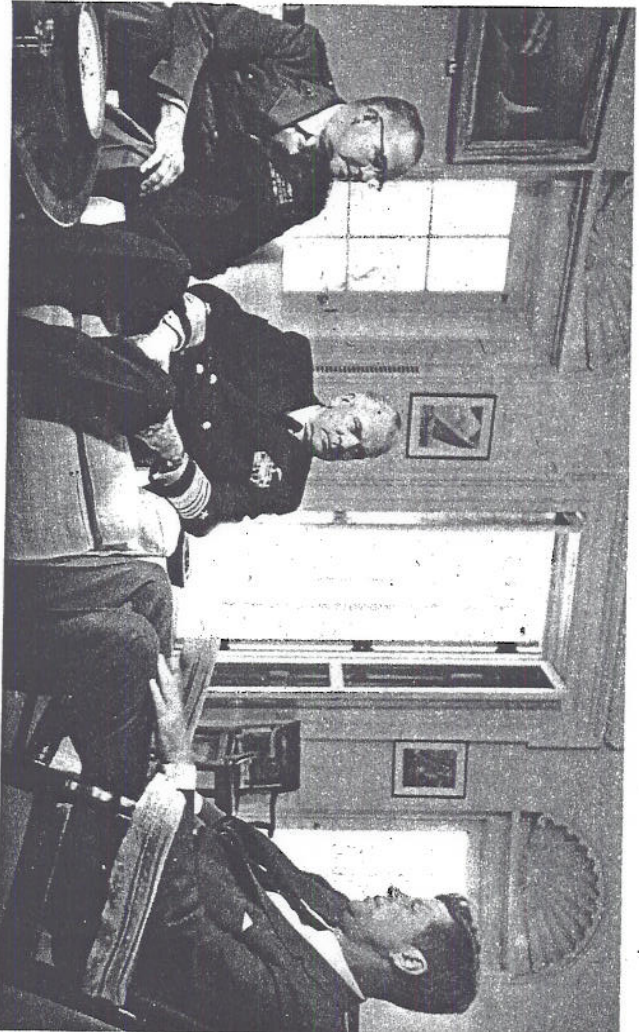
The Soviet military threat to the United States does not rest on its presence in Cuba. It rests instead on the Soviet Union's own arsenal of I.C.B.M.'s and missile-launching submarines which approach far closer than 90 miles to our shores. Thus, a Soviet military threat from Cuba can no longer justify our present policy. The converse may well be true since it is our policy of isolation that has been used by Castro to justify the presence of Soviet troops on Cuban soil.

Another pillar of the policy of isolation also has crumbled

with the passage of time. Cuban intervention in the hemisphere has diminished almost to the point of insignificance, and the Cuban call for guerrilla movements to spring up like "many Vietnams" throughout the hemisphere has become muted and vague. The death of Che Guevara symbolized the failure of Castro's dramatic effort to export revolution. If the winds of revolution are blowing in Latin America, they are caused by national conditions and circumstances, and the bands of agitators trained in Cuba can no more succeed in fanning those winds than the presence of United States military aid missions can succeed in calming them. Hunger, poverty, disease and injustice create unrest, not the revolutionary rhetoric of Fidel Castro.

In Congressional testimony released recently, a Defense Intelligence Agency consultant acknowledged that Castro support to "subversive groups" was "at a low level." The same assessment was reported to come from such an unlikely source

Cuban policy, 1962



President Kennedy, at the height of the missile crisis, with Gen. David Shoup (left), then Commandant of the Marine Corps, and Adm. George Anderson Jr. who was Chief of Naval Operations.

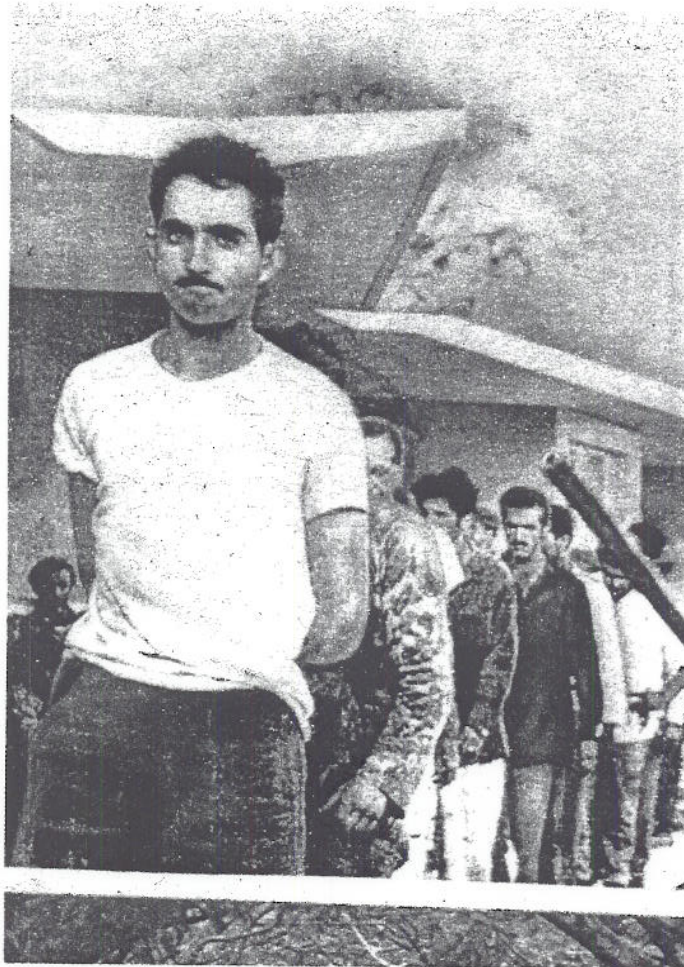
as Venezuelan guerrilla leader Douglas Bravo, who claimed that Castro has abandoned Latin America guerrilla movements. The diminution in Castro support for guerrilla

activity reflects more vigorous Soviet objections, hostility from indigenous Communist leaders and Cuba's own growing economic difficulties, which require all of the is-

land's limited resources to resolve. Castro is turning inward, concentrating on Cuba's domestic difficulties. Thus, the export of revo-

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Cuban policy, 1961



Invaders, captured in the abortive attack on Cuba at the Bay of Pigs, are marched off to prison.

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lution no longer can be used to justify the political, economic and diplomatic isolation of Cuba.

The final element to the rationale was the natural antagonism to the presence of a Communist regime in the hemisphere. Yet it, too, is out of joint with the times. There is no longer any real fear that the Castro model for development will prove attractive to other Latin leaders. Its widespread economic difficulties and increasing reliance on the Soviet Union have substantially tarnished the model. Also, as we have seen, the policy is not matched by our attitudes toward other Communist governments around the world. Even in the hemisphere, there is a contradiction. For Cuba is no longer the only Marxist government. And although this Administration has unwisely exerted economic and political pressure against Chile in both bilateral and international forums, those efforts in no way approach the magnitude of the total exclusion that we have visited upon Cuba.

The most obvious consequence of our policy is surely least of all in our national interest—namely, the growing dependence of Cuba on the Soviet Union, and not only militarily. Since the imposition of the boycott, Soviet trade has increased by more than 100 per cent, Soviet economic aid has surpassed \$500-million.

Let us acknowledge, too, that the efforts to have other Western nations abide by the policy of isolation has never been successful. Britain, France, Germany, Japan and virtually every other major ally trade freely with Cuba, and most maintain diplomatic relations with her. Now, even within the hemisphere, the diplomatic and economic boycotts have begun to lose support. Mexico has never accepted the policy, nor has Canada. Chile, under President Frei, opened trade with Cuba, and now under President Allende, has exchanged ambassadors. Peru has done the same. A few weeks ago, Barbados, Guyana, Jamaica and Trinidad and Tobago announced that they

were following suit. Panama and Ecuador reportedly are studying similar actions.

A policy whose goal was to isolate Cuba may well conclude as a policy whose result is to isolate the United States. For the trend is clear. Seven O.A.S. members voted last June 9 to authorize states to normalize their relations with Cuba. Even Venezuela, which originally protested Cuban intervention eight years ago, has expressed a willingness to see the process of normalization begin. When so many of our Latin American allies are taking the initiative for the renewal of relations with Cuba, the United States cannot benefit from an image of recalcitrance, an image of trying to hold back the sea. If we aspire to any legitimate leadership in the hemisphere, the opportunity is before us now to demonstrate that leadership.

I hope that we will actively and aggressively pursue agreement on the hijacking issue and then use that improved climate to undertake other steps to secure more normal relations with Cuba. It would be sad indeed if we were to let this opportunity slip through our fingers.

We must consult with our Latin American neighbors and inform them of our desire to end the policy of isolation. We could then endorse a resolution similar to the one introduced by Peru in June giving all O.A.S. members freedom to make individual decisions as to their relations with Cuba. I believe it would receive the support of a substantial majority of Latin American nations. And its approval would effectively end the economic boycott.

We should then move to tear down the travel barriers between our two countries and restore commercial air service. That step would remove a major contributing cause of airline hijackings and it also would open the way to the speedy reunification of refugee families.

We should carry out in our own hemisphere what we are preaching to others at the European Security Conference—the free exchange of people and ideas. This would include the interchange of scientific and cultural programs and the exchange of leaders in the fields of education, health and scholarship.

Building on the reduced hostility that would follow the success of the previous steps, we should move to re-estab-

lish formal relations, perhaps first expressing a readiness to open consular offices.

Finally, we should explore the potential for a mutual reduction of foreign troops on Cuban soil. Today, Cuba is unfortunately unique in having substantial military forces of both superpowers on its land: the large Soviet presence and the U. S. Naval Base at Guantánamo. Not only would the reduction of the Soviet military presence be in our own security interests and be welcomed throughout the hemisphere; but the removal of foreign troops undoubtedly would be welcomed by the Cuban people as well.

These are all steps which will require patient negotiation. But the end result would be far more in our interests and in the interests of peace within the hemisphere than any foreseeable result of our current policy. The Cuban Government's attitude toward reaching a hijacking accord is an indication that it might be receptive to such initiatives. Cuba has stated its willingness to open relations with other Latin American nations, regardless of their political color. There have been hints in Premier Castro's speeches that talks leading to reconciliation might be possible once the economic boycott ended. These and other signs perhaps indicate a mellowing of the Castro Government's traditional hostility toward the United States.

We cannot know beforehand whether the enterprise of normalizing relations with Cuba will meet with success or failure. But we can be sure that our current policy is out of touch with reality. We can be sure that a growing number of our Latin American allies are rejecting that policy. And we can be sure that there will be no opportunity to know whether Castro is ready to respond to our initiatives unless we try them.

Dag Hammarskjöld once wrote: "History places a burden on our shoulders. . . . It is for all of us, denying neither the good nor the ills of that past, to look ahead and not permit old conflicts to envenom the spirit of the creative work before us."

It is time now to end an old conflict whose causes have faded with time and whose perpetuation is neither in our interests nor in the interests of peaceful development in the Western Hemisphere. ■