
WHY ARE WE LOSING IN LATIN AMERICA?

by Harold Lord Varney

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Committee On Pan American Policy

EVEN THE MOST HOPEFUL SUPPORTERS of Jimmy Carter are finding themselves appalled by the consequences of his exploits in foreign relations, as the bad news rolls in unceasingly from every part of the world.

Iran, our staunchest Mideastern ally and our most reliable source of foreign oil, collapses before our eyes, abandoned by us to a regime that is enthusiastically hailed by Moscow. Our nationals flee ignominiously for their lives.

In the Far East, Carter invites World War III by embracing a potentially deadly enemy, Communist China. In Africa, he watches approvingly as the Dark Continent is sliced up into Communist zones, while his favorite African advisor, U.N. Ambassador Andrew Young, hobnobs with the guerrillas. In Red-ruled Afghanistan, he seeks no redress when the U.S. Ambassador is

brutally murdered by Communists. And his administration continues to play Kissinger-invited SALT games with the Soviet Union — games that our opponent is obviously to be allowed to win.

Amid this welter of defeats and retreats, wishful-thinking Americans attempt to find a single ray of hope. At the worst, they protest, the United States is still supreme in its own hemisphere.

But just how supreme is it?

We have recently witnessed a show of hands by our neighbor nations to the south. The United States has surrendered without a struggle to a campaign mounted by one of the feeblest nations in the hemisphere, the Republic of Panama, and has given up part of its own territory — the \$6 billion Panama Canal and Canal Zone. In this campaign, Panama and its Communist-stooge dictator, Omar Torrijos, were

supported unanimously by other Latin American nations. It was one of our traditional friends, Venezuela, that actually led the fight on behalf of Torrijos.

It was a frightening revelation of our friendlessness in our own hemisphere.

That the super-powerful United States should accept such an unnecessary defeat does much to explain the dwindling of Latin America's respect for what it once knew as "the Colossus of the North."

But the Panama debacle was only the climax of a long series of retreats from greatness by Washington. Each successive administration in at least the last three decades has made a great showing, when it came to power, of seeking to remake our wavering image by adopting "new" and "better" Latin American policies. All have dismally failed of their alleged purpose.

Let us glance at some of them.

There was the enthusiastic launching back in 1948 of the Organization of American States (fathered by General George Cattle Marshall when he was Secretary of State). The O.A.S. was to end dissidence in the hemisphere. It was to be the accepted voice of a united hemisphere, and it set up for itself an imposing and expensive headquarters in Washington. In its thirty years of existence it has achieved nothing.

Of course, the O.A.S. could not have. From the beginning it lacked any enforcement authority. Only once — at the time of the Castro challenge — did it even attempt to impose sanctions. The sanctions turned into a farce when seven or eight nations openly disregarded

them, and the attempt was never made again. When the whole idea of sanctions was finally abandoned, the United States, which had been the prime mover, didn't even put up a fight.

Today, the O.A.S. is regarded by all as merely a forum.

With the advent on the Washington scene of President Kennedy and his cocksure advisors, something more spectacular was wanted. The birth of the so-called Alliance for Progress was hailed by the controlled press and a gullible public as a major achievement. The atmosphere became electric with proposals for exciting new projects. The American purse gaped widely open and Latin American politicians scrambled to dip their itchy hands into it. But the Alliance soon proved to be little more than a ploy to win Latin American friends with American money.

The Alliance for Progress won us no lasting friends, but it did create in the "Third World" an insatiable appetite for more Washington hand-outs. Like all freeloaders, its beneficiaries quickly became righteously convinced that "they had it coming to them." The Alliance example has since been imitated by all our foreign aid programs, not only in Latin America but in the whole undeveloped world.

The Alliance itself, after ladling out \$11 billion of American money in grants and costs, died a slow and reluctant death. But meanwhile, a much graver problem was gathering momentum in the hemisphere. It was the problem of Fidel Castro.

The Castro Story

Any attempt to pinpoint responsibility for the low estate into which

our image has sunk in the hemisphere must inevitably bring us to Castro. Our continuing unwillingness to come to grips with the Cuban revolutionary, even though we have always had the power to stop him, has fastened the contemptuous "paper tiger" label upon us in the minds of Latin America. A brief review of the Castro story will explain why.

The startling fact about this tireless disturber of our peace is that it is we who made him. He started his career as our protégé; he has become our Frankenstein monster.

As an unkempt, unprepossessing schoolboy, Castro found his way into the Cuban Communist underground. Years later, when he had come to power and American "Liberal" apologists were trying to whitewash him, he embarrassed them by stating publicly, "I have been a Communist since my school days."

Castro first attracted attention when, as a student participant in the 1948 Communist uprising in Bogotá, Colombia, he boasted of having killed a priest. Next he made his way to Mexico, where he recruited a small following.

In Mexico he also made the acquaintance of the immensely wealthy Cuban ex-President, Dr. Carlos Prío Socarrás, who gave him the money to buy a small ship to transport his revolutionary band to Cuba. Castro made the trip, lost more than half his men when the regular Cuban army met and attempted to repel the invasion, and holed up in the Sierra Maestra mountains with the remnant that survived.

All this, of course, is history. At this point make-believe enters the picture.

In New York, one Herbert L. Matthews, a frustrated writer on the staff of the *New York Times*, heard the story of Castro and conceived the idea of writing a series of sensational stories about the man that would bring fame to their creator.

Throughout his venture, Matthews insisted that Castro was not a Communist, merely a sort of "agrarian reformer." But he was sufficiently "in the know" to be able to contact the secret Communist underground in Cuba and to obtain its guidance and protection for a hush-hush trip to Castro's base in the Sierra Maestra. Apparently Matthews saw no dishonesty in proclaiming the Communist-sponsored revolutionary to be the savior of Cuba and building him up into a front-page story in the prestigious *New York Times*.

The hoax caught on. The American press, following the lead of the *New York Times*, outdid itself in day-after-day publicity for this newly discovered "hero." Jack Paar, then in his heyday on American TV, filled the air waves with the gushing pronouncement that Castro was "the George Washington of Cuba."

The politicians scrambled to get into the act. The State Department swallowed the media's myths without a thought of checking their truth.

In Havana, American Ambassador Earl E.T. Smith was well aware of all Cuban President Batista's faults, but he still regarded Batista as the best bet to keep Communism out of Cuba. To his dismay, he received instructions from Washington to order Batista out of Cuba and to forbid his sizeable army to oppose a Castro takeover. Batista

obediently left, and Castro made his triumphal march across the island, picking up followers as he advanced. He took over the government unopposed, as a full-fledged dictator. Smith, of course, was recalled to Washington, and a more compliant ambassador was appointed in his place.

Napoleon is said to have boasted, "I make my Marshals out of mud." The United States made its Cuban Frankenstein monster out of a gaggle of newspaper lies. In all his early writings, Matthews continued to tout as a non-Communist this hero whom he had discovered. Castro himself, through all the myth-making, kept a straight face. For a time, he described himself as a "humanist."

During his first few months in power, Castro played along comfortably with Washington. The break came when he began to make demands upon the U.S. for financing. Doubt began to thicken when Castro paid a visit to New York, with an escort of thugs, to attend a United Nations session. Nikita Krushchev was in New York at the same time for the same purpose, and won much publicity by his shoe-thumping performance at the U.N. In a moment of exuberance, the Soviet dictator "broke Castro's cover" by embracing the bearded Cuban before the world press.

What was happening behind the scenes has never been fully disclosed. Washington, just entering the Kennedy period, rebuffed Castro's demands for money. To shore up his sinking economy, Castro turned to Krushchev for subsidies, which were willingly granted — with certain strings attached: Castro the

tutelage of Moscow. He has been on Moscow's payroll ever since. If we can accept the figures of our Moscow-watching statisticians, his take from the U.S.S.R. last year aggregated \$1.8 billion, exclusive of African spendings.

The deadly thing about Krushchev's initial deal for aid to Cuba was the condition he imposed: that, along with Soviet money, Castro must also accept sophisticated Soviet nuclear weapons, to be pointed menacingly at the U.S. from Cuban bases only ninety miles away from our shores. This demand was a gamble by Krushchev. Had the United States handled the situation with resolution, the way was open for complete annihilation of the whole Castro regime.

When our intelligence agencies first reported the presence of Soviet missiles in Cuba, we were actually prepared to retaliate. A secret army of anti-Communist Cuban exiles had already been trained in Guatemala for a knock-out attack on Castro. Kennedy took over this project when it was well under way. And then came the foul-up.

With success within our grasp, we walked straight into what was probably the most humiliating defeat in American history. The whole outcome of the attack hung upon the provision of U.S. air support to the striking force at the moment of landing at the selected Bay of Pigs site. The U.S. did make a first strike, and the landing was begun. But at that crucial point the air cover was suddenly countermanded by Washington. The hapless invaders stepped right into the waiting arms of Castro's troops.

What had happened? The Presi-

dent, at the final hour, had listened to his dovish advisors, Adlai Stevenson and Chester Bowles. They persuaded him that the promised air cover was unnecessary, so it was countermanded and our Cuban friends were abandoned on the beaches to die or go to prison. Later, President Kennedy assumed responsibility for the debacle, and he commissioned his brother Bobby to raise from American business the \$40 million ransom demanded by Castro for the prisoners.

We handed the victory to our foe on a platter and had paid him to accept it. Was it a blunder?

Castro not only survived the crisis; he also extracted from Washington an iron-clad guarantee that the U.S. would never in the future attack Cuba. Krushchev got into the act, making the giving of the pledge to Castro a strict condition for removal of the Soviet missiles from their Cuban launching sites. The pledge was meekly given, though whether the missiles were actually removed has always been in doubt. And the American people are bound to this day to maintain a hands-off position toward Red-ruled Cuba.

A Conference To Turn Latin America Red

The Bay of Pigs affair raised Castro to the apex of his prestige. His success went to his head. The victory over Washington had been so complete that he decided the hour had come for a grand-slam strike against all Latin America. This would be carried out by activating all the scattered guerrilla bands throughout South and Central America.

The send-off signal was given by

a so-called Tri-Continental Conference held in Havana in 1966. Its slogan was, "Down with Yankee imperialism!" Delegations came to the conference from Brazil, Colombia, Venezuela, Peru, Uruguay, Guatemala, and other target nations, each of which already had an active Communist underground. There was a delegation from the Puerto Rican FALN organization, which had attempted to assassinate President Truman in 1950. Nicaragua's bloody-handed Sandinistas were there in strength. Panama sent a delegation, anticipating by twelve years the Panamanians' triumph over the United States. Dr. Salvador Allende, later to reach the summit of power in Chile, was present. And the world scope of the meeting was demonstrated by the presence of delegations of terrorists from both Africa and Asia.

Most significant of all was the forty-member delegation from the Soviet Union, headed by Sheraf R. Rashidov, who carried greetings from Andrei A. Gromyko, then as now Soviet Foreign Minister.

Despite all the fanfare, the conference brought no major successes to Castro. His terrorists scattered to all the "soft" points in the hemisphere, but they found few countries ready for Guevarism, Cuba's brand of Communism. Ernesto "Che" Guevara himself, Castro's top lieutenant, shortly afterward met with a miserable death in the jungles of Bolivia, where he was trying unsuccessfully to plant a guerrilla movement.

Attacking The United States From Another Angle

After the Havana conference,

Castro was shrewd enough to realize that if he could not succeed, except spottily, by terrorism, he could still win some of his objectives by finesse. A first step in this direction would be to establish a diplomatic relationship with the United States. Although it may still appear grotesque to most of our readers, he began to receive encouragement in such a course from important Americans. They emerged from the closet where they had been hiding since the Bay of Pigs disaster, uttering tentative sounds of goodwill for the Castro government. A Castro "lobby" made its appearance in Washington and began to attract some impressive names. Such Senators as George McGovern, Jacob Javits, Alan Cranston, Claiborne Pell, and, not surprisingly, Ted Kennedy, spoke out for "normalization" of relations with Cuba. In the House of Representatives they were reinforced by Jonathan Bingham, Charles W. Whalen, John Brademas, Michael Harrington, Morris Udall, and others. Prominent men in the business field, eager for profits from renewed Cuban trade, were also showing interest. They won the backing of the Rockefeller-supported Council on Inter-American Relations, and a "Committee on Just Treatment for Cuba" was launched.

Meanwhile, Henry Kissinger, in the State Department, was making explorations of his own. At first, there were no open conferences with Castro's representatives; meetings were held surreptitiously in New York, at Kennedy Airport or the Roosevelt Hotel. Two State Department officials, William D. Rogers Jr. and Terence A. Todman, repre-

sented the United States at these meetings.

By the closing days of the Ford Administration, it began to be clear that the White House was almost ready for an agreement with Havana. Castro's willingness to cooperate in a pact to curb the newly popular sport of sky-jacking was welcomed as an encouraging development.

Into the midst of this dangerous situation the incoming Carter Administration stepped confidently in 1977. Although Castro has already involved himself in African ventures, these were brushed off as of minor significance. In the warm glow of receptivity toward the proposed "normalization," the novice Carter Administration took its first brash steps. A corner of the blockade against Cuban trade, imposed back in 1962, was lifted; the new ground rules provided that American concerns wishing to sell their goods to Cuba could do so if the trade was conducted through subsidiaries in Canada and Argentina. Business and tourist travel to Cuba was restored, and the use of U.S. money in Cuba was authorized. A fishing agreement was negotiated.

But the most decisive step was taken by the setting up of quasi-diplomatic relations and the exchange of diplomats. Lyle Franklin Lane was sent to Havana to reopen the long-closed U.S. Embassy there and Castro's representative arrived to reopen Cuba's Embassy in Washington.

There was a flurry of enthusiasm among Washington Castro-lovers and American businessmen panting to make a big killing in trade with Communist Cuba. Sena-

tor McGovern lined up a delegation of Minnesota businessmen and herded them to Cuba to meet with Castro officials. A similar group from Massachusetts went junketing off to Havana under the leadership of Thomas P. O'Neill III, son of the Speaker of the House of Representatives. Applicants for Cuban contacts became so numerous that an enterprising New York public relations firm set up an office in Havana to sell interviews with Cuban top men.

That real business was near was strikingly shown when Castro himself gave personal interviews to representatives of such giant American firms as Goodyear, DuPont, Rockwell International, Westinghouse, Sperry Rand, Kodak, and Armco Steel. Action seemed just around the corner.

Unhappily for the American doves, Castro himself now threw a monkey wrench into the works.

The insatiable appetite of the Soviet Union under Leonid Brezhnev for the conquest of more African territory for Communism took precedence over the American deal. Already, since the takeover of Angola, Castro's African raiders with their Soviet-supplied arms had extended their smash-and-grab activities in Ethiopia. The next target was the huge territory of Zaïre, the one-time Belgian Congo. Opportunity presented itself when Zaïre's copper-rich Katanga province rebelled against the central government. Following the orders of his Moscow masters, Castro provided training for a sizeable body of Katanga rebels in next-door Angola. With arms supplied by Moscow, they crossed the border and made a

murderous strike at the border town of Shaba.

The C.I.A. got wind of this action and communicated the news to the uneasy President Carter. The United States flew in twelve planeloads of supplies. France, Belgium, and Morocco, realizing the exceptional importance of Zaïre, all sent in troops, who quickly got the situation in hand.

The news struck Washington's Castro-lovers like a bucket of ice water in the face. A dangerous rift in the hitherto solid bloc of support for Castro's Cuba regime seemed to be opening inescapably. In the upshot, this storm, which blew up in Zaïre and has since spread over most of Central Africa, seriously embarrassed the White House and may stall the whole planned "normalization" program. A deal with Castro at this time would be a grave political hazard for Carter as he heads into the difficult 1980 campaign.

The Present Outlook

What Carter's course in Latin America is likely to be from now on is a moot question.

If the United States is to regain even a part of the prestige that it has lost in the hemisphere, there must be unsparing revision of the deliberately losing policies pursued by this and the preceding administration. Definitely, Carter's evangelistic frenzy over "human rights" must be halted. With half of the hemisphere's supporters of their big neighbor to the north already alienated by his preachments and threatened sanctions, Carter must immediately stop rating Latin American nations according to the "hit list"

of Amnesty International, or lose what few friends we have left.

The cost in goodwill to the U.S. as a result of Carter's censoriousness and outright rudeness was demonstrated during Castro's recent important visit to Mexico. The organizations with which Carter has been cooperating chose this moment to issue a blast against Mexico's "human rights" violations. Brazil, whose friendship is absolutely essential to us, has not yet recovered from the insults which the President and his wife inflicted upon it during their separate Brazilian visits, when they held much-publicized conferences with the government's outstanding enemies and listened sympathetically to their "human rights" complaints. And the harassment of Chile by all branches of the U.S. government is gall and wormwood to a nation which, by destroying Allende, turned the tide in the whole hemisphere against Castroism after the Havana Conference.

Tragically, public opinion has been so distorted by the Charlie McCarthy press that it is extremely doubtful whether Americans will even recognize the looming political precipice that is sure to confront them if the administration continues on its present disaster course.

Even as this article is being writ-

ten, the *New York Times* has published as an editorial the words of Professor Miles Wortman, a "liberal" specialist on the hemisphere. Wortman, an admirer of Carter, exults because, he says, "The Carter Administration has altered the direction of American policy from conservative, semi-interventionist, to one that supports progressive and even leftist governments."

Where have we heard these sentiments before? This is the very same dangerous claptrap that was sold to the Kennedy Administration when it first entered the White House by Adolph A. Berle, Richard Goodwin, and Arthur M. Schlesinger Jr. It was Schlesinger who declared, on February 14, 1961: "The United States looks with favor on any social revolution free of foreign domination."

We tried this philosophy once, and the dire consequences of that experiment have plagued us and the whole hemisphere ever since. Now we are asked by another Liberal to try it again. It is no more valid today under Carter than it was under Kennedy in 1961.

Henry L. Mencken once wrote jestingly about the man who "rakes leaves in a cyclone." The cyclone rages about us and the leaves are still being raked, this time by the Carter Administration.

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