

Interpreting the New Good Neighbor Policy: The Cuban Crisis of 1933

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I N HIS INAUGURAL address on March 4, 1933, President Franklin D. Roosevelt departed long enough from a consideration of pressing domestic problems to avow his Administration's determination to be a good neighbor in foreign affairs. Though stated in carefully vague terms, this pronouncement aroused considerable interest because of its possibly revolutionary implications for United States relations with Latin America. The Good Neighbor Policy, as it quickly came to be called, faced its first major test in the summer and fall of 1933, when unrest, violence, and ultimately revolution in Cuba led to demands for old-style American intervention to restore order. The unhappy events in Cuba forced the Roosevelt Administration to spell out more precisely just what the new policy of neighborliness meant.

The Cuban crisis had been building up for several years, feeding on widespread dissatisfaction with the iron dictatorship of General Gerardo Machado. Through his tight control of the Army and manipulation of a compliant Congress, Machado had held the presidency since 1925, relying more and more on naked force to sustain his rule. The deterioration of the Cuban economy under the impact of the worldwide depression after 1930 intensified the growing popular discontent with the corrupt and ruthless Machado regime. In fact, only the day before Roosevelt's enunciation of the good neighbor doctrine, Washington had received a report from the American Embassy in Havana anxiously calling attention to "the increasing state of unrest prevailing in Cuba."¹

United States interest in Cuban affairs stemmed not only from the large American economic stake in the nearby island republic, but also from the unique treaty obligations imposed upon Cuba at the time of her independence following the Spanish-American War.

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¹ Harry F. Guggenheim, Havana, to Secretary of State, February 28, 1933, Department of State, *Foreign Relations of the United States, Diplomatic Papers, 1933* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1952), V, 272-274. Hereafter cited as *Foreign Relations*.

Under the terms of the so-called Platt Amendment, which was embodied both in the Cuban Constitution of 1902 and in a treaty between the two nations the following year, Cuba had consented "that the United States may exercise the right to intervene for the preservation of Cuban independence, the maintenance of a government adequate for the protection of life, property, and individual liberty, and for discharging the obligations with respect to Cuba imposed by the Treaty of Paris on the United States."² In the past this had sometimes meant close American supervision of Cuban finances and politics and even military occupation for a time.

To deal with the tense Cuban situation, President Roosevelt called upon a top American diplomat, Assistant Secretary of State Sumner Welles, who in April of 1933 temporarily left his Washington post to take over the Embassy in Havana.³ Before leaving for Cuba, Welles declared himself "a convinced believer in the policy of the 'good neighbor.'" He was nevertheless careful to refer to the "treaty relations" between the two nations as one reason for his deep interest in Cuban well-being.⁴ Moreover, his official instructions from Secretary of State Cordell Hull stressed the Platt Amendment as justification for the United States' offering "friendly advice" to the Cubans in order "to prevent the necessity of intervention."⁵ Clearly good neighborliness did not as yet signify abandonment of the American right to interfere in Cuban affairs under the Platt Amendment.

Once in Havana Ambassador Welles quickly made himself the mediator between the Machado regime and the various opposition groups. Alternating soft persuasion and flattery with tough-minded firmness, he sought energetically and tirelessly to induce all factions to agree on some formula of constitutional reform that would alleviate popular unrest through the promise of genuinely free elections in 1934. Welles was convinced this would require the resignation of General Machado well before the elections and the normal expiration of his presidential term. To sweeten this unpalatable prospect for the Government, the Ambassador hinted at the possibility of increased American quotas for Cuban sugar under a favorable reciprocal trade

² *Foreign Relations, 1904* (1905), pp. 243-244.

³ Welles and the President had been friends for years, and in the weeks before Roosevelt's inauguration Welles had helped to formulate the new administration's policy toward Latin America. See "Welles to Roosevelt: a Memorandum on Inter-American Relations, 1933," Charles C. Griffin, ed., *Hispanic American Historical Review*, XXXIV (May, 1954), 190-192.

⁴ Sumner Welles, press statement, April 24, 1933, *Foreign Relations, 1933*, V, 278.

⁵ Cordell Hull to Sumner Welles, May 1, 1933, *ibid.*, pp. 279-286.

agreement. Such action would not only aid Cuba's prostrate economy, but would also, he reminded the State Department, "give us practical control of a market we have been steadily losing for the past 10 years." At the same time, Welles relied on the obvious fact that the Machado regime could not, as he bluntly put it, "for long remain in power were the support of the United States to be even negatively withdrawn from it."⁶

Welles' program did not contemplate intervention. "I can imagine nothing more prejudicial to our whole Latin American policy," he told President Roosevelt shortly after he got to Cuba, "than the need for the United States to intervene in Cuba, either by force of arms or by open diplomatic action. It would create grave disquiet throughout the Continent at a moment when every Republic of Latin America has confidence in you and your policy, and it would militate strongly against the building up in a relatively brief time of that sane and beneficial Latin American policy, commercial and political, which you have often discussed with me."⁷

President Machado was understandably reluctant to step down, however, and Welles had made only limited progress toward a compromise political solution when early in August a violent general strike against the government paralyzed the island. The Ambassador now redoubled his efforts to persuade General Machado to retire, raising the specter of American armed intervention under the Platt Amendment if conditions grew worse.⁸ He also asked Washington for authority to withdraw diplomatic recognition from the Machado Government should the President refuse to resign, confident that this would force Machado to quit. He recommended, in the event Washington decided to withdraw recognition, that two American warships

⁶ Sumner Welles, Havana, to Secretary of State, May 13, 1933, 6 p.m., *ibid.*, pp. 287-290.

⁷ Sumner Welles, Havana, to Franklin D. Roosevelt, Washington, May 18, 1933, Franklin D. Roosevelt Papers, OF 470 (Roosevelt Library, Hyde Park).

⁸ Sumner Welles, Havana, to Secretary of State, August 7, 1933, noon, *Foreign Relations, 1933*, V, 336-337. Even before the general strike, Welles may have hinted at military intervention. The Cuban Ambassador in Washington told Undersecretary of State William Phillips late in July that Welles had informed Cuban officials that he had Roosevelt's authority to land Marines if President Machado did not agree to restore constitutional liberties. Welles reportedly had declared that he was acting under direct instructions from the White House, and was not responsible to the State Department. William Phillips, memorandum of conversation, July 25, 1933, Department of State records, file no. 837.00/35-82 ½ (National Archives of the United States). There is little other evidence to support this charge, and the State Department, which considered the Cuban Ambassador rather unreliable, apparently put no stock in the report.

be dispatched to Havana harbor to be available in case of grave emergency.⁹

Meanwhile, across the Caribbean in nearby Mexico, another United States diplomat was watching the developments in Cuba with disquiet and even alarm. Like Sumner Welles, Ambassador Josephus Daniels had arrived at his post the previous April professing devotion to the new Good Neighbor Policy. But he was not at all sure that it was being applied properly in Cuba. The Cuban crisis would, in fact, show that Daniels and Welles had rather different conceptions of the requirements of good neighborliness, differences that were to become evident again in subsequent years when Mexican expropriations of American property gave the Good Neighbor Policy its most severe test.

Josephus Daniels could not claim Welles' long experience in professional diplomacy, but he was no stranger either to high government service or Latin American affairs. For eight important years under Woodrow Wilson he had run the Navy Department, aided by his sometimes impetuous assistant, young Franklin D. Roosevelt. Like his chief, Secretary of the Navy Daniels had vociferously denounced previous United States imperialism and Dollar Diplomacy in Latin America. Yet paradoxically, it was Daniels who issued the order for American naval forces to occupy Veracruz in 1914, and it was Daniels' Marines who pacified Nicaragua, Santo Domingo, and Haiti in these years.

During the Republican twenties Daniels had gone back to editing his newspaper, the *Raleigh News and Observer*, but he had demonstrated his continuing interest in Latin American affairs in occasional editorials. Often these took the form of sharp attacks on current United States policies for lacking the disinterested idealism which Daniels believed was the basis of Wilsonian diplomacy. In 1933, after helping to secure the nomination and election of his good friend and former assistant to the presidency, the seventy-year-old North Carolina editor was offered his choice of an ambassadorship. With scant regard for local sensibilities, he chose Mexico, doubtless because ever since Veracruz he had taken an interest in that country, and had never regarded the Wilsonian intervention as anything but a well-meaning effort to help the Mexican people achieve a stable and prosperous democracy.

Ambassador Daniels went to Mexico determined to act, as he told a probably skeptical President Abelardo L. Rodríguez when he pre-

⁹ Sumner Welles, Havana, to Secretary of State, August 8, 1933, 9 p.m., and August 9, 1933, 10 a.m., *Foreign Relations, 1933*, V, 340-345.

sentent his credentials, "in the spirit of mutual understanding which always characterizes Good Neighbors."¹⁰ At first, however, he was no more willing than his superiors in Washington to set out in precise terms the practical application of the new Good Neighbor Policy. Indeed, it was perhaps revealing that only recently he had made a strong plea to give the Filipinos "the same independence as was given Cuba, with the Platt Amendment attached so as to aid them and keep them free from serious errors in the formative days of their government."¹¹ Yet as a sincere and militant anti-imperialist, Daniels deplored United States interference in the affairs of its smaller neighbors. He even regretted the Wilsonian intervention in Haiti, he confessed to President Roosevelt in the summer of 1933:

You know that the things we were forced to do in Haiti was [*sic*] a bitter pill to me, for I have always hated any foreign policy that even hinted of imperialistic control. Frank Lane knew my feeling, and during the Haitian direction, with mock seriousness, he would rise at the Cabinet meetings and say to our colleagues "Hail the King of Haiti." The danger of that pivotal country, so near our shores, falling into the control of some European nation, added to the business of assassinating presidents, made it imperative for us to take the course followed. . . . I never did wholly approve of that Constitution of Haiti you had a hand in framing or the elections we held by which our hand-picked President of Haiti was put in office. I expect, in the light of experience, we both regret the necessity of denying even a semblance of "self-determination" in our control of Haiti, when we had to go in and end revolutions or see some European government do so. Your "Good Neighbor" policy will not, I hope, be subjected to any such emergency as we were up against. . . ."¹²

Ironically, Roosevelt had scarcely had time to read this letter before the emergency Daniels feared had arrived. From Havana, where the general strike threatened to topple the Machado Government, Ambassador Welles called for American warships and sought to play the role of kingmaker in Cuban politics. Was this to be the practical meaning of the new Good Neighbor Policy—old fashioned restraint and benevolent supervision?

Ambassador Daniels in Mexico fervently hoped not. In a private letter of August 9, the same day Welles asked for warships, Daniels urged Secretary Hull to consider the adverse psychological effect on Latin America if the United States should intervene in the Cuban

¹⁰ Josephus Daniels, *Shirt-Sleeve Diplomat* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1947), p. 520.

¹¹ Josephus Daniels, undated statement [May, 1927], Josephus Daniels Papers, Box 615 (Manuscripts Division, Library of Congress).

¹² Josephus Daniels, Mexico City, to Franklin D. Roosevelt, Washington, July 15, 1933, Daniels Papers, Box 17.

crisis under the Platt Amendment. "Something ought to be done to get rid of Machado," he admitted. But Washington should not try to do the job alone. "Would it not be better," he argued, "for us to ask the cooperation of the ABC countries or a representative of Mexico and nearby Latin American countries, with a view to securing peace in Cuba than to act alone?"¹³ After conferring with the Mexican Foreign Minister the next day, Daniels telegraphed a warning that Mexico believed unilateral intervention by the United States not only "would not be approved by Latin American countries," but "might indeed militate against agreements by the Montevideo Conference" which was scheduled for December. Again he recommended Pan American participation in reaching a Cuban settlement.¹⁴

Ambassador Daniels and the Mexicans were not alone in questioning the bent of American policy in Cuba. As the Cuban political situation deteriorated, another Latin American Embassy also warned the State Department that United States intervention would be badly received.¹⁵ At his vacation retreat in Hyde Park President Roosevelt twice told reporters that Ambassador Welles would not go further than to offer his good offices in trying to mediate the Cuban dispute. "We are acting as *amicus curiae* to the Cuban people," Roosevelt declared. "And, certainly, we cannot be in the position of saying to Machado, 'You have to get out.' That would be obvious interference in the internal affairs of another nation. . . . I have to be terribly careful not to be in a position of intimating that the Cubans get rid of their President."¹⁶ By the afternoon of August 11 Secretary

¹³ Josephus Daniels, Mexico City, to Cordell Hull, Washington, August 9, 1933, Daniels Papers, Box 750.

¹⁴ Josephus Daniels, Mexico City, to Secretary of State, August 10, 1933, 4 p.m., *Foreign Relations, 1933*, V, 350-351.

¹⁵ Edwin C. Wilson, memorandum of conversation, August 11, 1933, Department of State records, file no. 837.00/3714.

¹⁶ Presidential press conferences 41 and 42, Hyde Park, August 7 and 9, 1933, Roosevelt Papers, II, 148, 149-152. Roosevelt was hardly candid here. He was well aware that Ambassador Welles was energetically trying to persuade President Machado to step down, and he had, in fact, specifically approved Welles' recent proposal that Machado appoint an impartial Secretary of State, after which the unpopular Cuban President would take an indefinite leave of absence while the government was reorganized. Several hours after telling his press conference that the United States could not advise the Cubans to get rid of their President, moreover, Roosevelt, at Welles' request, called in the Cuban Ambassador and informed him that Welles had his full authority to suggest that Machado retire. See especially Sumner Welles, Havana, to Franklin D. Roosevelt, July 17, 1933; Welles, Havana, to Secretary of State, August 7, 1933, noon and 11 p.m., August 8, 1933, 8 p.m. and 9 p.m., August 9, 1933, 10 a.m., and 5 p.m.; Cordell Hull, Washington, to Welles, August 7, 1933, 7 p.m., and August 9, 1933, 6 p.m., in *Foreign Relations, 1933*, V, 323-325, 336-348; J[efferson]

Hull felt constrained to advise Welles: "Some misapprehension has arisen as to what you are doing, and there has been some adverse comment, both here and in Latin America, that the United States is attempting to coerce rather than to persuade." Hull asserted that both he and the President had the utmost confidence in Welles' discretion and put no stock in the critical reports. But he suggested that the Ambassador "bear them in mind and do what you can to correct them."¹⁷

Mounting violence in the Cuban general strike, however, led Welles to continue his strenuous efforts to get President Machado to retire. "I shall insist upon prompt action," he told the State Department in describing a new plan of his whereby Machado would step down in favor of a provisional government headed by his Minister of War, General Herrera. The General was a suitable choice, Welles observed, because, among other things, he was "exceedingly amenable to suggestions which represent the interest of the United States Government."¹⁸ However desirable this might be as a qualification, Welles' backing of Herrera showed that he hoped the Cuban strikers and opposition groups would be mollified by a mere reshuffling of the old regime rather than by any major changes in the social and political order. It also suggested that Welles was out of touch with Cuban popular sentiment, as opposed to the established political leadership. As chief of the Cuban Army for the past twelve years, Herrera was closely identified in the public mind with the Machado dictatorship. Even Army leaders eventually concluded that it would be out of the question for him to head the new government. After a number of anxious conferences between Welles and Cuban officials, it was finally decided that General Herrera would take over the government and immediately appoint as President Dr. Carlos Manuel de Céspedes, a former diplomat and cabinet officer. Welles was convinced that Céspedes would be regarded as "thoroughly impartial by everybody in Cuba." Thanks to this solution, which had been "worked out solely by the Cubans themselves," he reported, "no further action on the part of the United States Government will be necessary."¹⁹

C[affery] to William Phillips, August 9, 1933, Department of State records, file no. 837.00/3621 $\frac{3}{4}$; Gerardo Machado, Montreal, to Franklin D. Roosevelt, Washington, September 5, 1933, Roosevelt Papers, OF 159.

¹⁷ Cordell Hull, Washington, to Sumner Welles, Havana, August 11, 1933, 1 p.m., *Foreign Relations, 1933*, V, 354.

¹⁸ Sumner Welles, Havana, to Secretary of State, August 11, 1933, 3 p.m., *ibid.*, pp. 355-356.

¹⁹ Sumner Welles, Havana, to Secretary of State, August 12, 1933, 1 p.m., *ibid.*, pp. 358-359.

President Céspedes took office on August 13, and for a time it seemed as if the crisis were over. Some scattered violence persisted, as Cuban mobs hunted down members of Machado's hated secret police. This forced a number of high officials of the old dictatorship, including General Herrera (who Welles had hoped would at least be able to continue as Minister of War), to go into hiding or flee the country. Welles was enough concerned about the continuing disorder to ask for naval support, and in an emergency Sunday afternoon conference on August 13 Roosevelt and Hull decided to send two destroyers to Havana. They specified, however, that the move was "solely for the purpose of safeguarding and protecting the lives and persons of American citizens in Cuba," and that there was "no possible question of the slightest interference with internal affairs of Cuba."²⁰

The arrival of the two American warships at Havana on August 14 had a decided quieting effect. Welles was now quite optimistic for the future, and he told Washington that the Céspedes Government represented "a thorough new deal for Cuba."²¹ He suggested that one of the two destroyers could safely be removed to the American naval base at Guantánamo, on Cuba's southeastern tip. The United States could then announce that the ship had been withdrawn, yet it would be nearby in case of emergency.²²

Within a week the situation seemed calm enough for the Ambassador to recommend that he return to Washington soon. Not only would he like to help with plans for the forthcoming Pan American Conference, but now that Cuba was relatively quiet he was becoming somewhat embarrassed over the extent to which government leaders relied on him for advice and approval. "It is unwise," Welles reminded the State Department, "not only from the point of view of our relations with Cuba but with the whole of Latin America as well for the American Embassy here to possess the measure of control over the Government which it now does possess owing to the peculiar developments of the past 2 months."²³

Not all Cubans considered the Céspedes Government a "new

²⁰ Cordell Hull, handwritten statement, August 13, 1933, 6 p.m., Roosevelt Papers, PSF, Box 4, Cuba file.

²¹ Sumner Welles, Havana, to Secretary of State, August 14, 1933, 11 a.m., *Foreign Relations, 1933*, V, 363-365.

²² Transcripts of telephone conversations between Cordell Hull and Sumner Welles, August 14, 1933, 4:05 p.m., and August 15, 1933, 10:30 a.m., Department of State records, file no. 837.00/3646 ½.

²³ Sumner Welles, Havana, to Secretary of State, August 19, 1933, noon, *Foreign Relations, 1933*, V, 367-369.

deal," however, and by August 24 Ambassador Welles worriedly noted that a "general process of disintegration" was taking place.²⁴ American businessmen in Cuba blamed the continuing strikes and unrest on a Communist plot to overthrow the new Government, but Welles discounted this theory, mindful that "the conditions of distress and actual destitution which exist cannot be exaggerated." The Cuban masses were not so much interested in Communist ideas as they were in bread. "I cannot see any indications of the 'red menace' which certain Americans doing business here are fearful of," he told Washington. What was needed was quick action by the United States to set "a fair sugar quota" and provide other economic assistance.²⁵

But the situation was fast getting out of control. On the night of September 4 soldiers of the Cuban Army under the leadership of Sergeant Fulgencio Batista deposed their officers, seized control of the Army, and overthrew the Céspedes Government. In its place they set up a new provisional regime led by civilians Welles described as "frankly communistic" and "extreme radicals." As before, the Ambassador's reaction was to call for American warships, not only at Havana but at Santiago de Cuba and possibly other ports as well. And as the extent of the coup became apparent, Welles decided that destroyers were inadequate and he would need a cruiser or even a battleship. In a series of anxious cables and telephone conversations with the State Department on September 5, he suggested that a small detachment of Marines be landed to protect the Embassy and the National Hotel in Havana, where he and other Americans were living. He also sounded out Washington on the idea of sending a larger force to maintain order until the formation of an acceptable government.²⁶

Welles' cabled request for naval support reached Washington at 3:45 a.m. on September 5. Secretary Hull moved quickly, sending a radio message to President Roosevelt, who was enjoying a brief vacation cruise on the yacht *Nourmahal*:

In view of situation as reported I feel it essential to comply with Welles' recommendation as to war vessels and ask your approval. In order to save time I have requested Navy Department to issue immediate orders for ships

²⁴ Sumner Welles, Havana, to Secretary of State, August 24, 1933, 5 p.m., *ibid.*, pp. 371-373.

²⁵ Sumner Welles, Havana, to Secretary of State, August 30, 1933, 11 a.m., *ibid.*, pp. 376-378.

²⁶ See various despatches and memoranda of telephone conversations between Ambassador Welles and the State Department, September 5, 1933, *ibid.*, pp. 379-388.

to proceed subject to your subsequent approval. I beg to request immediate reply.²⁷

Roosevelt approved of the dispatch of warships, but both he and Hull counseled caution. They decided to permit Welles to order the landing of Marine guards if he and his staff were in actual danger, but otherwise they thought such a move would be imprudent. "While we will not hesitate to go in if compelled to, we do not want to unless compelled," Hull telephoned. "Because if we have to go in there again, we will never be able to come out and we will have on our hands the trouble of thirty years ago."²⁸

President Roosevelt, too, soft-pedaled the talk of armed intervention in Cuba. He told reporters on September 6 that the United States was not sending any massive naval force to Cuba, only "three, four, five little fellows." When informed that the Marine Commandant had ordered a number of Marine companies to Quantico, Virginia, Roosevelt did not deny that the move might be related to the Cuban crisis, but he advised: "Lay off on this intervention stuff. As you know, that is absolutely the last thing we have in mind. We don't want to do it."²⁹ Later in the day the President called in various Latin American representatives in Washington and assured them that the United States was "seeking every means to avoid intervention."³⁰

Like Roosevelt and Hull, Ambassador Daniels in Mexico was greatly concerned about the effect of the Cuban crisis on United States relations with the rest of Latin America. In fact, as soon as he learned of the Cuban Army revolt, Daniels wrote Roosevelt urging that instead of unilateral action under the Platt Amendment the United States seek a Pan American solution of the crisis. "Wilson did this, you know, but belatedly," he reminded the President. "To be effective, it should be done promptly."³¹ Daniels repeated this advice to Secretary Hull the next day, after conferring with Mexican Foreign Minister Puig Casauranc. Dr. Puig denied reports that the four principal leaders of the revolutionary junta were Communists.

²⁷ Cordell Hull, Washington, to Franklin D. Roosevelt, at sea, September 5, 1933, Department of State records, file no. 837.00/3747.

²⁸ Transcript of telephone conversation between Cordell Hull and Sumner Welles, September 6, 1933, 10 a.m., *Foreign Relations, 1933*, V, 389.

²⁹ Presidential press conference 49, Washington, September 6, 1933, *Roosevelt Papers*, II, 233-235.

³⁰ Presidential press conference 49A, Washington, September 6, 1933, 5:45 p.m., *Roosevelt Papers*, II, 240-241. See also Edwin C. Wilson, memorandum, September 6, 1933, *Foreign Relations, 1933*, V, 392-393.

³¹ Josephus Daniels, Mexico City, to Franklin D. Roosevelt, Washington, September 5, 1933, *Daniels Papers*, Box 17.

“Puig believes and I concur that intervention would impair Pan American friendly relations and might in advance destroy the hopes in connection with the Montevideo Conference,” Daniels cabled. “If situation in Cuba demands outside action I strongly urge that Mexico and ABCP countries of South America be asked to cooperate in restoring peaceful conditions and giving Cubans help in setting up a stable government.”³² In his diary the Ambassador observed: “Any suggestion of sending Marines into Latin American countries stirs the people of Mexico as nothing else could do.”

In Havana, meanwhile, Ambassador Welles was in touch with leaders of the deposed Céspedes Government, one of whom informed him of plans for a counterrevolution and suggested that its success would be materially advanced by the strategic landing of American troops. Welles made no commitments, but his report of the conversation made clear that he considered such support “most decidedly . . . in the best interest of the United States Government.” He therefore proposed a “strictly limited intervention” to help restore the Céspedes regime, estimating that it “would presumably entail the landing of a considerable force at Habana and lesser forces in certain of the more important ports of the Republic.” Such a move, he conceded, would certainly incur “the violent animosity of the extreme radical and communist groups in Cuba,” and there would undoubtedly be charges that the United States supported Céspedes because he protected American interests. But Welles believed that to the rest of Latin America “the landing of such assistance would most decidedly be construed as well within the limits of the policy of the ‘good neighbor’ which we have done our utmost to demonstrate in our relations with the Cuban people during the past 5 months.”³⁴

The response in Washington to this interventionist scheme was decidedly chill. Cordell Hull agitatedly conferred with President Roosevelt, and then cabled Welles to maintain a policy of “strict neutrality,” lest his actions have “disastrous effects” on current

³² Josephus Daniels, Mexico City, to Secretary of State, September 6, 1933, 9 p.m., *Foreign Relations, 1933*, V, 394. In a letter to Secretary Hull on September 7, the Mexican Foreign Minister repeated his assertion that the leading members of the Cuban revolutionary junta were “not Communists, but persons of undoubted preparation, intellectual capacity and social responsibility.” *Ibid.*, pp. 394-395.

³³ Josephus Daniels, Diary, September 6, 1933, Daniels Papers, Box 6; Daniels, *Shirt-Sleeve Diplomat*, pp. 324-25.

³⁴ Sumner Welles, Havana, to Secretary of State, September 7, 1933, noon, *Foreign Relations, 1933*, V, 396-398. See also Welles to Secretary of State, September 7, 1933, 3 p.m. and 6 p.m., *ibid.*, pp. 400-401.

United States consultations with Latin American representatives. The President himself sent a blunt message:

We feel very strongly that any promise, implied or otherwise, relating to what the United States will do under any circumstance is impossible; that it would be regarded as a breach of neutrality, as favoring one faction out of many, as attempting to set up a government which would be regarded by the whole world, and especially throughout Latin America, as a creation and creature of the American Government.³⁵

Nettled by this veiled reproof, Welles quickly denied that he favored any particular group of faction in Cuba. He reminded Washington that the legally constituted Céspedes Government had not resigned, but had been overthrown by a revolutionary movement under the leadership of "extreme radicals." Of course, the United States should do nothing to create the impression of having installed any Cuban government; "my previous cables will make plain that I have strictly followed this policy," he remonstrated. All he had proposed was "lending friendly assistance at its request to a Cuban Government presided over by an impartial President and supported by every element of importance in the Republic." If the United States, at the request of the legal Cuban Government, were to send "a small number of Marines" to help maintain order, "such assistance should be construed as just as much of a friendly act as the facilitating of a loan. In the one case we would lend the Cubans police and in the other money, neither of which they possess."³⁶

Later the same day Welles telephoned to ask authority to issue a statement that the United States had not and would not consider recognizing the present revolutionary regime. After some discussion with Secretary Hull, President Roosevelt was cut into the conversation, and he decided to limit Welles to a more neutral declaration to the effect that up to the present time the United States had not considered the question of either recognition or non-recognition.³⁷ Clearly Washington had a somewhat different view of the requirements of good neighborliness than did its more impetuous representative in Havana.

The orders to American ships patrolling Cuban waters reflected the Roosevelt Administration's anxiety to avoid full scale military intervention. Rear Admiral Freeman, commander of the Special

³⁵ Cordell Hull, Washington, to Sumner Welles, Havana, September 7, 1933, 8 p.m., *ibid.*, p. 402.

³⁶ Sumner Welles, Havana, to Secretary of State, September 8, 1933, 2 p.m., *ibid.*, pp. 405-407.

³⁷ Memorandum of telephone conversation, September 8, 1933, 11 p.m., *ibid.*, p. 410.

Service Squadron operating in and near Cuban ports (COMSPERON), radioed Washington that he fully understood his limited role:

All operations are being conducted with utmost discretion and with view that no intervention is intended. Am cooperating fully with American Ambassador. He however has indicated desire for wide distribution of ships in Cuban ports for moral effect and COMSPERON will accomplish such distribution as Ambassador advises unless otherwise directed.³⁸

To the commander of one of the destroyers of his squadron, Freeman stressed that the Navy's mission was purely precautionary:

On visit to Cuban ports be ready to send boats ashore to take off American citizens whose lives may be endangered. Consult consular authorities before action when possible. Actual use of guns or small arms is to be avoided except as last resort and only if you are definitely fired upon first.³⁹

At the same time, President Roosevelt continued to remind his press conference that most of the American ships off Cuba were "little bits of things."⁴⁰

Nevertheless, by September 11 the Navy Department had assigned no less than thirty ships to Admiral Freeman's Special Service Squadron, including the battleship *Mississippi* and the cruiser *Richmond*.⁴¹ In addition, the cruiser *Indianapolis*, with Secretary of the Navy Claude A. Swanson aboard, stopped briefly at Havana before proceeding on to Panama and California. Swanson was not sure of protocol under the circumstances, and he radioed Washington to ask whether the *Indianapolis* should fire the customary national salute upon entering Havana harbor. He was advised that Ambassador Welles had requested that "no national salute to Cuban flag be fired while present leaders are in control of Cuban Government."⁴²

The restraint of the Roosevelt Administration was due at least in part to mounting evidence that unilateral American intervention would be highly unpopular in Latin America. Ambassador Daniels had cabled from Mexico on September 7 of a Mexican effort to line up

³⁸ COMSPERON to OPNAV, September 8, 1933, Roosevelt Papers, OF 159.

³⁹ COMSPERON to U. S. S. J. Fred Talbott [September 8, 1933?], Roosevelt Papers, OF 159.

⁴⁰ Presidential press conference 50, Washington, September 8, 1933, Roosevelt Papers, II, 247.

⁴¹ Naval Operations, Distribution of vessels in Cuban waters, September 11, 1933, Department of State records, file no. 837.00/3866. See also Cordell Hull, Washington, to Sumner Welles, Havana, September 6, 1933, 8 p.m., *ibid.*, file no. 837.00/3777A.

⁴² SECNAV to OPNAV, September 8, 1933; COMSPERON to OPNAV, September 8, 1933, Roosevelt Papers, OF 159.

support from the ABC powers of South America for a Cuban settlement, and the Argentine Government had made clear the next day that it would frown on United States intervention under the Platt Amendment.⁴³ On September 9 Secretary Hull telephoned Daniels to get more information on Mexico's attitude. "They are very tense down here," Daniels told him. "They feel that if we intervene it will destroy the Montevideo Conference." When Hull mentioned the "very persistent reports" of "more or less communistic influences" in the Cuban revolutionary regime, Daniels commented that the Swedish Minister in Mexico knew two of the leaders and considered them "high-class."⁴⁴

Later in the day Daniels wrote Hull privately cautioning him against being stampeded by the talk of Communist activity in Cuba. "My information here is that the report of communistic influence in Cuba is very much exaggerated," he declared. "If I were you I would accept with many grains of allowance the attempt to saddle on the comparatively few Communists all that goes awry." As Daniels saw it, the initial overthrow of the Machado dictatorship had merely removed the corrupt civil leaders; the sergeants' revolt aimed at purging the Army, too. "Can you blame the men who risked all for a change to wish to be rid of reactionary military leaders as they ousted civilian leaders?" he asked.

I do not know enough about Cuba to assert that such is the case there, but I do know that Machado and his associates, civil and military, were very close to high financiers in Cuba and the United States, and had no sympathy for reforms that would give bread to the hungry Cubans whose needs were not cared for by those in power. Army officers under a Machado are often the agents of repression and have no heart-beat for the oppressed and distressed. May not the rich and powerful in Cuba, and their allies in the United States, and imperialistic army officers, be behind the attempt to hide behind exaggerating the lawlessness of Communists? I do not know, but I submit the question for your consideration.⁴⁵

⁴³ Josephus Daniels, Mexico City, to Secretary of State, September 7, 1933, 6 p.m., *Foreign Relations, 1933*, V, 401 and Roosevelt Papers, OF 237; Argentine Ministry for Foreign Affairs, Buenos Aires, to Department of State, September 8, 1933, *Foreign Relations, 1933*, V, 409.

⁴⁴ Memorandum of telephone conversation, September 9, 1933, 1 p.m., *Foreign Relations, 1933*, V, 412-413. Several hours later, after conferring with Mexican Foreign Minister Puig Casuarane about Latin American sentiment, Daniels cabled that "the feeling against intervention by the United States is deep-seated and unanimous." *Ibid.*, p. 413.

⁴⁵ Josephus Daniels, Mexico City, to Cordell Hull, Washington, September 9, 1933, *ibid.*, pp. 414-415. See also Cordell Hull, *The Memoirs of Cordell Hull* (New York, Macmillan, 1948), I, 316.

Ambassador Daniels also advised President Roosevelt to move cautiously. "It is difficult for the average American to understand the deep-seated resentment of action by our government in countries south of the Rio Grande," he told his former Navy Department assistant. "They still remember with resentment Pershing's expedition, the Tampico incident, and that 'taking' of Veracruz." Latin Americans under Mexico's leadership were straining every nerve to stabilize the Cuban situation so as to avert United States intervention. Argentina had even proposed to Mexico the postponement of the Montevideo Conference if the United States intervened in Cuba. "That suggestion is proof of the deep feeling," Daniels emphasized. Yet he was sure the prospect of intervention was no less distasteful to Washington. "Our country has all to lose, both in the cost of intervention and in the loss of those growing friendly relations which mean so much to our country both in sentiment and in increased commerce." This last point was particularly important in view of the drastic decline in American foreign trade under the depression. Old-style policies were worthless, for "we have had too much Dollar Diplomacy on this hemisphere." Of course, if anarchy prevailed in Cuba, the Ambassador conceded that Roosevelt's "hard duty" under the Platt Amendment was plain. But once again he recommended acting jointly with the leading Latin American states. "Such united action would remove the sting," he asserted.⁴⁶

President Roosevelt was enough impressed by Daniels' ideas to pass this letter along to Secretary Hull.⁴⁷ Hull had already informed Daniels that although the Administration was anxious for Latin American cooperation in Cuba, only Mexico seemed willing to go very far in helping to establish a stable government. "It would seem," he said, "that any special steps will have to be taken by our Government virtually alone, in the event a state of anarchy should finally develop."⁴⁸ Two days later, after Roosevelt had referred Daniels' letter to the State Department, Hull wrote Daniels again, stressing that the sole mission of the limited naval forces off Cuba was to safeguard American lives in an emergency. "We do not refer

⁴⁶ Josephus Daniels, Mexico City, to Franklin D. Roosevelt, Washington, September 9, 1933, Daniels Papers, Box 17.

⁴⁷ Franklin D. Roosevelt to Cordell Hull, September 13, 1933, Roosevelt Papers, OF 237.

⁴⁸ Cordell Hull, Washington, to Josephus Daniels, Mexico City, September 12, 1933, Daniels Papers, Box 750.

to property," he pointed out. "We shall undertake to keep entirely away from all phases of so-called 'dollar diplomacy,' etc. etc."⁴⁹

In the meantime, the situation in Cuba had changed. Early in the morning of September 10, the revolutionary junta had designated as Provisional President one of its members, Dr. Ramón Grau San Martín, a university professor whom Ambassador Welles had earlier characterized as "utterly impractical," and an "extreme radical."⁵⁰ According to Welles, the revolutionists apparently hoped this move to create a regular presidential government would win them immediate United States diplomatic recognition. He strongly advocated discussing such action with the other Latin American states, stressing that "no government here can survive for a protracted period without recognition by the United States."⁵¹

By the next day, however, the Ambassador had decided against President Grau San Martín. Leaders of the old Cuban political parties had come out against the new government, and Welles therefore considered it "evanescent," supported only by left-wing students and a few radical groups of no importance. "In my judgment," he cabled Washington, "it would be highly prejudicial to our interests to intimate in any manner that recognition of the existing regime was being considered by us." In fact, to make the American position crystal clear, he suggested a public declaration that the United States could not and would not recognize anything but a legitimate and constitutional government in Cuba unless there was conclusive evidence that it represented the will of a majority of the people.⁵² This was a little too categorical for Washington, and after conferring with the President, Hull merely announced that the United States was "prepared to welcome any Government representing the will of the people of the Republic and capable of maintaining law and order throughout the island."⁵³

Yet even without Ambassador Welles' backing or blessing, the Grau San Martín Government proved surprisingly durable. Indeed, within a few days the Mexican Government concluded that the new

⁴⁹ Cordell Hull, Washington, to Josephus Daniels, Mexico, September 14, 1933, Daniels Papers, Box 750. See also Hull to certain diplomatic and consular missions, September 11, 1933, 6 p.m., *Foreign Relations, 1933*, V, 422.

⁵⁰ Sumner Welles, Havana, to Secretary of State, September 5, 1933, 4 p.m., and 9 p.m., *Foreign Relations, 1933*, V, 384, 388.

⁵¹ Sumner Welles, Havana, to Secretary of State, September 10, 1933, 2 p.m., *ibid.*, pp. 416-418.

⁵² Sumner Welles, Havana, to Secretary of State, September 11, 1933, 6 p.m., *ibid.*, pp. 422-424.

⁵³ Cordell Hull, Washington, to Sumner Welles, Havana, September 11, 1933, midnight, *ibid.*, p. 424.

President had succeeded in forming a stable regime capable of maintaining order. Mexico consequently abandoned its mediation efforts and suggested privately that the time had come for the United States to withdraw its naval forces from Cuban waters lest their presence merely encourage counter-revolutionary moves.⁵⁴ The Mexicans might well be suspected of a myopic Yankeeophobia on the subject of American gunboats and revolutions, but over the next few weeks other Latin American governments pointedly sounded out Washington on the subject of recognition of the Grau regime.

Ambassador Daniels refrained from giving advice on this point, but he left no doubt that he agreed with the Mexican view that Cuba was undergoing a healthy social revolution. Privately he advised Secretary Hull that President Grau San Martín seemed to be leading a movement of intellectuals and workers on behalf of the forgotten man in Cuba. "It looks to me," he said, "as if in Cuba we should hope and pray that there may be a compact organization of those who think and those who suffer against the selfish politicians and those who have used government to enrich themselves, taking away the patrimony of the great bulk of the people."⁵⁵ Daniels suspected that "if our Government had shown more interest in the rights of the Cuban workers than for the profits of American investors, the Machado reign of terror would have been ended before the present uprising."⁵⁶

But in Havana Ambassador Welles continued gloomy about the prospects of the Grau San Martín Government. Opposition political leaders confirmed his belief that the President was dominated by a minority of radical students and assorted leftist malcontents, and that the Government's hold over Batista and the Army was insecure. He nevertheless now recommended a policy of "hands off," even though this might mean that "the social revolution which is under way cannot be checked."⁵⁷

After a conference with Batista on September 21, however, Welles reported a compromise plan to replace Grau San Martín with a provisional president acceptable to all factions, including those opposed to the revolutionary regime. To give backing for such a

⁵⁴ Jefferson Caffery, memorandum, September 13, 1933, *ibid.*, pp. 428-431.

⁵⁵ Josephus Daniels, Mexico City, to Cordell Hull, Washington, September 22, 1933, Daniels Papers, Box 750. See also Daniels to Hull, September 18 and 20, 1933, Daniels Papers, Box 750.

⁵⁶ Josephus Daniels, Mexico City, to Cordell Hull, Washington, September 25, 1933, Daniels Papers, Box 750. [Apparently not sent]

⁵⁷ Sumner Welles, Havana, to Secretary of State, September 18, 1933, 1 p.m., *Foreign Relations, 1933*, V, 446-448.

change, he urged President Roosevelt to declare publicly that the United States did not believe conditions for stable government currently existed in Cuba, and that it therefore was "imperative in this moment of grave crisis" to secure "the immediate cooperation of all groups in Cuba."⁵⁸ If Washington neglected this opportunity to influence developments, Welles foresaw only another revolution, which would "inevitably entail damage to American and foreign properties," or a military dictatorship even "more radical" than the present Government. "You know how sincerely I believe in the policy of non-intervention in Cuba," he reminded President Roosevelt:

But you also appreciate the psychology of the peoples of the Caribbean Republics. We have been generous and we have shown the utmost patience. The impression is fast growing that our attitude is due to fear of public opinion in Latin America and that we will countenance a complete disregard by the Cubans of any international or individual rights we may possess here. Respect for us is diminishing and the belief is rising, sedulously fostered by the radicals, that the United States can be flouted with complete impunity.⁵⁹

But despite two strong pleas, Roosevelt declined to interfere, and Hull informed Welles that thus far the President had "not felt justified in sending another message."⁶⁰

Secretary of State Hull none the less shared at least part of Welles' concern that the revolutionary movement in Cuba was under Communist or radical control, and from time to time he sent Ambassador Daniels in Mexico copies of reports that seemed to bear out this contention.⁶¹ Daniels was still inclined to be skeptical, though, for he noted that Communists usually tried to take credit for "the activities of the hungry masses." "I have found that rarely do the claims of numbers made by Communists materialize," he told Hull. "Hungry mobs are dangerous and need to be suppressed—and fed—but swaggering militarists are more dangerous."⁶² Daniels distrusted not only Cuban militarists. He complained to presidential aide

⁵⁸ Sumner Welles, Havana, to Secretary of State, September 21, 1933, 7 p.m., *ibid.*, pp. 451-453.

⁵⁹ Sumner Welles, Havana, to Secretary of State, September 25, 1933, 1 a.m., *ibid.*, pp. 457-458.

⁶⁰ Cordell Hull, Washington, to Sumner Welles, Havana, September 26, 1933, 5 p.m., *ibid.*, p. 459.

⁶¹ See, for example, Cordell Hull, Washington, to Josephus Daniels, Mexico City, September 25, 1933; Herschel V. Johnson, Washington, to Daniels, October 9, 1933, Daniels Papers, Boxes 750 and 699.

⁶² Josephus Daniels, Mexico City, to Cordell Hull, Washington, October 3, 1933, Daniels Papers, Box 750. See also Daniels to Herschel V. Johnson, Washington, October 16, 1933, Daniels Papers, Box 699.

Louis M. Howe, whom he had known since their Navy Department days, that the *American Army and Navy Journal* was predicting "prompt restoration" of order in Cuba once United States forces occupied the island. Howe passed the letter on to Roosevelt as "well worth reading," and suggested, "I think the editors of the *Army and Navy Journal* should be talked to, as statements such as these do not help very much."⁶³

Ambassador Daniels still believed that the wisest course for the United States was to maintain a strict hands off policy in Cuba. "Your patience and wisdom are being justified in a situation where it was easy to take a false step," he told President Roosevelt early in October. "I believe you will escape intervention and give Cuba the opportunity to work out its own destiny."⁶⁴ To Cordell Hull he repeated his concern, based on personal experience, lest the United States be maneuvered into actions reminiscent of old-style imperialism:

During my years as Secretary of the Navy I was forced, as policeman, to send ships and Marines into weak countries to carry out some State Department policies with which I was not wholly in sympathy. I learned then that Mr. Lansing held to a policy that was semi-imperialistic and at one time would have welcomed war with Mexico. Wilson repudiated an act of Lansing's which might have led to hostilities between the two countries. It was humanity that sent our soldiers into Cuba, but the monopolization of Cuban resources and land by Americans since Cuba has been under our protection has not been wholly in keeping with the unselfish spirit of sacrifice displayed by the men who fought to free Cuba from Spain and selfish domination (both of us were ardently for Cuban liberty then). It was due to a like conception of high duty that sent us into Haiti, but we overstayed our time. Knowing my feeling about imperialism, Secretary Franklin Lane would mockingly refer to me at Cabinet meetings as "the King of Haiti." I know that we both wish to see our country wholly free from anything that savors of Dollar Diplomacy, and I am writing in jealous zeal that the New Deal in this part of the world will have no connection with former policies which have caused some of our actions to be viewed with suspicion south of the Rio Grande.⁶⁵

During the next several months, despite continuous behind-the-scenes maneuvering, the Cuban situation remained relatively unchanged. The Grau San Martín Government managed to maintain and even consolidate its uneasy grip on power by suppressing several abor-

⁶³ Josephus Daniels, Mexico City, to Louis M. Howe, Washington, October 5, 1933; Howe to Franklin D. Roosevelt, undated, Roosevelt Papers, PPF 5415.

⁶⁴ Josephus Daniels, Mexico City, to Franklin D. Roosevelt, Washington, October 5, 1933, Roosevelt Papers, OF 237.

⁶⁵ Josephus Daniels, Mexico City, to Cordell Hull, Washington, October 4, 1933, Daniels Papers, Box 750.

tive revolts. By November several nations—Spain, Mexico, Panama, and Uruguay—had extended diplomatic recognition to the Grau regime, and Argentina, Chile, and Mexico had begun a quiet campaign to persuade other Latin American nations to do so.⁶⁶ Ambassador Welles, however, continued to argue against United States recognition, believing that President Grau had only minority radical support and that ex-Sergeant Batista, anxious to keep his new colonelcy and position as Army Chief of Staff, would ultimately throw his weight behind a move to form a more moderate and representative government.⁶⁷ Recurring strikes and violence in Cuba convinced Washington that Welles' estimate of the instability of the Grau San Martín regime was sound. The United States consequently maintained a diminished naval force off Cuba and withheld diplomatic recognition, privately urging other nations to do the same.

The approach of the Seventh Pan American Conference, scheduled to take place in December at Montevideo, Uruguay, eventually led Washington to review its stalemated Cuban policy. The Cuban Provisional Government planned to send a delegation to Montevideo, and there were reports of heavy pressure in Latin America for a concerted move to recognize it before the Conference opened. An unyielding stand by the United States against recognition might thus be embarrassing and possibly even react against the success of the Conference. Secretary Hull had learned with "some anxiety," moreover, that Mexico contemplated raising at Montevideo the question of modifying the Monroe Doctrine so as to exclude not only European but American intervention in the affairs of Pan American countries.⁶⁸ Ambassador Daniels reported that Mexican Foreign Minister Puig Casauranc, who was slated to head the Mexican delegation at Montevideo, strongly believed that "the Monroe Doctrine as to intervention should apply to every country on this continent as well as to European nations."⁶⁹ After several exploratory conferences with Dr. Puig, Daniels secured from him a memorandum outlining his view that the Monroe Doctrine needed to be recast in broader and more popular terms. Mexico proposed that the nations attending the Montevideo Conference should formally accept the Doctrine as a

⁶⁶ Cordell Hull, Rio de Janeiro, to Acting Secretary of State, November 24, 1933, 9 p.m., *Foreign Relations, 1933* (1950), IV, 40-41.

⁶⁷ See, for example, Sumner Welles, Havana, to Secretary of State, October 4, 1933, 7 p.m. and October 7, 1933, midnight, *ibid.*, V, 469-472, 477-478.

⁶⁸ Cordell Hull, Washington, to Josephus Daniels, Mexico City, September 28, 1933, 8 p.m., *ibid.*, IV, 17.

⁶⁹ Josephus Daniels, Mexico City, to Cordell Hull, Washington, September 29, 1933, *ibid.*, pp. 18-19, and Daniels Papers, Box 750.

cardinal element of their foreign policies. At the same time, they would "proclaim the inviolability of the principle of national autonomy," and "proscribe absolutely all interference among themselves which does not emanate from national treaties freely concluded." But, in order to make this proposal work, the Mexican memorandum pointed out tactfully, "it is necessary for the President of the United States to speak the words which shall definitely restore full confidence; it is necessary for him to be the one to offer the safest guarantee of the success of this Pan American Conference."⁷⁰

The State Department reacted to this suggestion, and to a Mexican proposal for a general moratorium on foreign debts, with disquiet and annoyance. Daniels' second-in-command, Counselor Arthur Bliss Lane, reported after a visit to Washington that the Department felt Puig had "let us down badly." Some officials even believed that "unless Mexico plays ball with us it would be far better not to have a conference."⁷¹ On October 17 Daniels and Secretary Hull discussed the matter by telephone. In their conversation, and in an eight-page letter he dispatched the same day, Daniels argued in favor of the Mexican plan to convert the Monroe Doctrine into a multilateral hemispheric policy. Latin Americans, he noted, were apprehensive about the Monroe Doctrine because it seemed to them designed to strengthen United States economic and political influence in their countries. Daniels recommended that President Roosevelt publicly renounce the Doctrine as a unilateral American policy, "in order," he said, "to allay all suspicions and give full force and effect to the rights of small nations." Such a bold step would not only "clear the atmosphere at Montevideo," he told Hull, but would be "another declaration that will be heard around the world, and which will cheer and hearten all who wish Pan American understanding and solidarity."⁷²

Hull was evidently not persuaded, for he replied that he did not see "any real opportunity for large accomplishments at Montevideo just now." The United States could "only move gradually," especially "where adverse public sentiment must first be educated."⁷³

⁷⁰ Josephus Daniels, Mexico City, to Cordell Hull, Washington, October 5, 1933, Daniels Papers, Box 750; and October 6, 1933, *Foreign Relations, 1933*, IV, 20-27.

⁷¹ Arthur Bliss Lane, New York, to Josephus Daniels, Mexico City, October 15, 1933, Daniels Papers, Box 700.

⁷² Josephus Daniels, Mexico City, to Cordell Hull, Washington, October 17, 1933, Daniels Papers, Box 750.

⁷³ Cordell Hull, Washington, to Josephus Daniels, Mexico City, October 24, 1933, Daniels Papers, Box 750.

Secretary Hull's instructions to the American delegation to the Montevideo Conference revealed both his concern over the Mexican proposal and the State Department's reluctance to see any change in the Monroe Doctrine. Washington hoped there would be no discussion of the Doctrine at the Conference, he said, because it was "essentially a national policy of the United States." The Doctrine had its unselfish aspects, of course, but overall the United States had always been "governed primarily by its own interests, involving its conception of what was essential to its security and its distinctive position in this hemisphere." There would probably be no objection to having Latin American nations formally ratify the Doctrine's principle of continental independence, but the second part of the Mexican proposal was "wholly unacceptable," since it was apparently aimed at existing United States treaty rights in certain Latin American countries and at the right under international law to protect one's nationals in the event of a breakdown of local government.⁷⁴

Undiscouraged, Ambassador Daniels made one further attempt to convince the Secretary of State of the wisdom of modifying the traditional American interpretation of the Monroe Doctrine. Writing to Hull at Montevideo, Daniels declared:

I take it you do not have in mind any declaration at Montevideo, but you never can tell in advance what the exigencies of the occasion may suggest. . . . I still believe that if our country would declare that we accept for ourselves the same self-renunciation in Latin America which the Monroe Doctrine imposed upon European nations, it would be worth more than anything we have done since Monroe issued the document, and Wilson at Mobile October 27, 1913, made this declaration: "The United States will never seek one additional foot of territory by conquest."

To dispel any Latin American notion that the Monroe Doctrine merely reserved for the United States what it forbade Europe, Daniels recommended a new Good Neighbor corollary: "This country will never on its own motion send troops into any country in this hemisphere and if cases arise where it is needful that neighbor countries assist in the preservation of orderly government in any Pan American country, the United States will confer with other nations and cooperate with them for preservation of peace and order."⁷⁵

Mexico's threat to discuss the Monroe Doctrine at Montevideo seemed unquestionably inspired by the Cuban crisis and the possi-

⁷⁴ Cordell Hull, Instructions to delegates, November 10, 1933, *Foreign Relations, 1933*, IV, 137-141.

⁷⁵ Josephus Daniels, Mexico City, to Cordell Hull, Montevideo, December 4, 1933, Daniels Papers, Box 750.

bility of United States intervention under the Platt Amendment. Consequently, the Roosevelt Administration felt obliged to restate its Cuban policy in order to minimize as much as possible the appeal of the Mexican proposal, as well as to head off any general Latin American move to recognize the Grau San Martín Government before the Conference. On November 19, while Secretary Hull was en route to Montevideo with the American delegation, Ambassador Welles conferred with President Roosevelt at Warm Springs, Georgia. Afterwards, the President issued a statement explaining again why the United States had thus far withheld recognition from the Cuban Government. As soon as Cuba had a stable provisional government enjoying broad popular support, Roosevelt said, the United States desired to commence negotiations for mutually beneficial commercial and economic agreements. More significantly, he also declared his Administration's willingness to discuss "a modification of the permanent treaty between the United States and Cuba." This could only mean that Washington contemplated relinquishing some of its rights under the Platt Amendment. The President also announced that Ambassador Welles would very shortly return to his Washington post, and that his successor in Cuba would be Jefferson Caffery, a career diplomat currently serving as Assistant Secretary of State.⁷⁶ Roosevelt evidently still accepted Welles' view of the unsatisfactory character of the Grau San Martín Government,⁷⁷ but he also recognized that the United States' stand against it was increasingly unpopular in Latin America. "I cannot but feel," Undersecretary of State William Phillips advised Hull, "that the President would now like to find some excuse to alter his policy if a way can be found to do so without prejudice to his former position."⁷⁸

The presidential statement expressing a willingness to consider changes in the Platt Amendment gave Secretary Hull a timely assist at Montevideo when the Mexican proposal was under discussion and a number of delegates bitterly attacked the United States for its past meddling and intervention in Latin America. In what Hull described as a "more or less wild and unreasonable" session, the Conference adopted a list of the Rights and Duties of States, the most

⁷⁶ *Foreign Relations, 1933*, V, 525-526; cf. William Phillips, Washington, to Franklin D. Roosevelt, Warm Springs, November 22, 1933, 4:25 p.m., Roosevelt Papers, OF 159.

⁷⁷ Presidential press conference 72, Warm Springs, November 24, 1933, 4 p.m., Roosevelt Papers, II, 486-487.

⁷⁸ William Phillips, Washington, to Cordell Hull, November 25, 1933, 7 p.m., *Foreign Relations, 1933*, IV, 41-42. See also Phillips to Hull, November 28, 1933, 6 p.m., *ibid.*, V, 527-528.

significant of which was specified in Article 8: "No state has the right to intervene in the internal or external affairs of another." Hull surprised the critics by casting the United States vote in favor of this limitation, subject to a future definition of terms, and he used the occasion to stress that the Roosevelt Administration was dedicated to a policy of strict non-interference and non-intervention. The most recent evidence of this, he pointed out, was President Roosevelt's offer to negotiate a modification of the Platt Amendment. "Every observing person," Hull reminded the Conference, "must by this time thoroughly understand that under the Roosevelt Administration the United States Government is as much opposed as any other government to interference with the freedom, the sovereignty, or other internal affairs or processes of the governments of other nations."⁷⁹

President Roosevelt reaffirmed this pledge in even stronger terms a few days later in a speech that closely followed the lines of Ambassador Daniels' earlier suggestion to Cordell Hull. Addressing the Woodrow Wilson Foundation on December 28, Roosevelt recalled President Wilson's promise at Mobile in 1913 that the United States would "never again seek one additional foot of territory by conquest." Despite this policy of unselfishness, he noted, Latin America was suspicious of United States motives and intentions, and in the past sometimes justifiably so. If he were a Latin American, the President admitted, he might on the basis of the record find it "difficult to believe fully in the altruism of the richest American Republic."

It therefore has seemed clear to me as President that the time has come to supplement and to implement the declaration of President Wilson by the further declaration that the definite policy of the United States from now on is one opposed to armed intervention.

The maintenance of constitutional government in other Nations is not a sacred obligation devolving upon the United States alone. The maintenance of law and of the orderly processes of government in this hemisphere is the concern of each individual Nation within its own borders first of all. It is only if and when the failure of orderly processes affects the other Nations of the continent that it becomes their concern; and the point to stress is that in such an event it becomes the joint concern of a whole continent in which we are all neighbors.⁸⁰

⁷⁹ Cordell Hull, Montevideo, to Acting Secretary of State, December 19, 1933, midnight, *ibid.*, IV, 201-202; Hull, *Memoirs*, I, 333-335.

⁸⁰ *The Public Papers and Addresses of Franklin D. Roosevelt*, Samuel I. Rosenman, comp. (New York: Random House, 1938), II, 545-546. In his Annual Message to Congress on January 3, 1934, Roosevelt observed: "We have, I hope, made it clear to our neighbors that we seek with them future avoidance of territorial expansion and of interference by one Nation in the internal affairs of another." *Ibid.*, III, 11.

To a delighted Ambassador Daniels in Mexico City, the President's explicit renunciation of the role of self-appointed policeman in Latin America signified without doubt that the Good Neighbor Policy would be much more than a slogan. "The Monroe Doctrine, the Wilson Mobile utterance and your declaration," Daniels immediately telegraphed Roosevelt, "constitute the trinity embodying a noble American policy on this continent which confers glory upon our country."⁸¹ The speech would have historic importance in ending Latin American suspicions of the Colossus of the North. "To allay that fear was the duty of 'the good neighbor,'" he told the President in a letter the same day, "and you have done it in the right way and at the right time."⁸² Latin American diplomats and reporters in Washington speculated that Daniels himself had inspired Roosevelt's dramatic pledge.⁸³

Actually, there is no conclusive evidence linking Daniels with the President's address to the Wilson Foundation. Nor did the speech originate with the State Department, for Roosevelt apparently did not consult the Department until shortly before he delivered his address, when it was in virtually final form. Daniels had proposed precisely such a presidential declaration several times to Cordell Hull, but the record does not indicate that he ever made the suggestion specifically to the President. His frequent letters to Roosevelt during the Cuban crisis left little doubt, however, that Daniels believed the time had come to abandon unilateral United States intervention in Latin America in favor of more neighborly joint action. The President's pledge demonstrated that Daniels' interpretation of the Good Neighbor Policy was also that of the Administration, but just what role, if any, Daniels had in shaping Roosevelt's views is unclear.

In Cuba, meanwhile, the governmental crisis was at last moving toward a solution. Assistant Secretary of State Jefferson Caffery had replaced Ambassador Welles in Havana on December 18, where he continued, though somewhat more circumspectly, Welles' efforts at conciliation of the various Cuban factions. Caffery agreed with Welles that the Grau San Martín Government was inefficient, inept, and unpopular "with all the better classes" of the country. "It is supported only by the army and ignorant masses who have been

⁸¹ Josephus Daniels, Mexico City, to Franklin D. Roosevelt, Washington, December 29, 1933, telegram, Daniels Papers, Box 17.

⁸² Josephus Daniels, Mexico City, to Franklin D. Roosevelt, Washington, December 29, 1933, Daniels Papers, Box 17.

⁸³ C. P. Nutter, Washington, Associated Press dispatch, December 29, 1933, Daniels Papers, Box 700.

misled by utopian promises," he reported to the State Department. "However, unless Dr. Grau decides voluntarily to give up power it is my opinion that he can be forced to do so only by the armed intervention of the United States unless there is a break in the army which is now standing strongly behind the government."⁸⁴

As it became apparent, however, that the change in American representatives did not signify any change in American policy, President Grau's support weakened. Ever a realist, Colonel Batista was willing to trade President Grau for United States recognition. Accordingly, after several conferences with Caffery, who made no promises, Batista decided to depose the President in favor of Colonel Carlos Mendieta, a more conservative leader of one of the principal opposition groups. In advising Washington of this possible development, Caffery urged immediate authority to recognize a Mendieta government. "If this is not done," he warned, "Batista will probably turn definitely to the left with definite disaster for all our interests here (or declare himself military dictator)."⁸⁵ President Roosevelt again declined to promise recognition in advance,⁸⁶ but on January 15 Batista nevertheless proceeded to force President Grau San Martín's resignation, and after three days of confusion Colonel Mendieta was installed as Provisional President. In less than a week Secretary Hull instructed Caffery to extend "a formal and cordial recognition," and the six month Cuban crisis seemed over.⁸⁷

Yet in nearby Mexico Ambassador Daniels was by no means certain that the United States had behaved in Cuba like a proper good neighbor. True, Washington had not intervened with troops, and its naval forces had restricted their activities to off-shore patrolling. And the crisis had led President Roosevelt to promise a renegotiation of the Platt Amendment and to renounce any future unilateral intervention by the United States in Latin America. Clearly these actions had etched the new Good Neighbor Policy in sharp, positive tones.

But Daniels was not at all happy about the apparent United States responsibility for the downfall of President Grau San Martín. And as he got to know President Mendieta's Ambassador to Mexico,

⁸⁴ Jefferson Caffery, Havana, to Acting Secretary of State, January 10, 1934, 7 p.m., *Foreign Relations, 1934* (1952), V, 95-96.

⁸⁵ Jefferson Caffery, Havana, to Acting Secretary of State, January 13, 1934, 5 p.m., and January 14, 1934, 3 a.m., and noon, *ibid.*, pp. 97-99.

⁸⁶ William Phillips, Washington, to Jefferson Caffery, Havana, January 14, 1934, 4 p.m., *ibid.*, p. 100.

⁸⁷ Cordell Hull, Washington, to Jefferson Caffery, Havana, January 23, 1934, *ibid.*, p. 107.

Daniels became ever more convinced that the practical effect of Washington's policy had been to frustrate in Cuba the kind of necessary reforms it was championing at home under the New Deal. "I do not think that Cuba is going to become quiet or stable until they have a President of their own choosing," he wrote Cordell Hull privately in the summer of 1934.⁸⁸

As you know, I believe that a great mistake was made in not recognizing the Grau San Martín government. If that had been done promptly and he had been given a chance, much of the present troubles might have been averted. If Cuba were to have an election now, he would be elected by an overwhelming majority, or some man in sympathy with the long suppressed aspirations of the people would be put in office. I think Mendieta is an honest man, but he is not regarded by the liberal Cubans as in sympathy with what we would call a New Deal. . . . I do not even know Grau San Martín. He was here two months, but I did not call on him or make his acquaintance because he had been rather severe in some of his criticisms of the American policy, and I did not wish to embarrass myself or my Government by having any relations with him. But from what the Cuban Ambassador, utterly out of sympathy with him, and what everybody else who seems to be fair minded, says, Grau San Martín is an honest man and a patriot, and his chief unpopularity was due to the fact that he reduced the hours and increased the wages of labor, and made the plain people feel that at last they had a Government with a heart.

All too frequently since the Spanish-American War, Daniels declared, United States representatives in Cuba had been more concerned with protecting private American investors than in helping the Cubans achieve genuine independence.

I could wish we had as Ambassador in Cuba a man of a new type. Welles and Caffery are of the old school of diplomats, who never saw anything wrong in the sort of diplomacy which cost us the confidence of the people of Pan America in the past years. What we need in all Pan American Embassies and Legations are men of our type, who will change the whole atmosphere and have welcome in their hearts for a New Deal in those countries such as we wish for our own.⁸⁹

The revolutionary turbulence in Cuba in 1933 proved to be both a valuable test and a necessary catalyst in the development of Franklin D. Roosevelt's Good Neighbor Policy. The most important result of the crisis was, of course, the President's decision to give real meaning to the new doctrine by renouncing unilateral United States intervention in Latin America. At the same time, the agitation

⁸⁸ Josephus Daniels, Mexico City, to Cordell Hull, Washington, July 24, 1934, Daniels Papers, Box 750.

⁸⁹ Josephus Daniels, Mexico City, to Cordell Hull, Washington, July 10, 1934, Daniels Papers, Box 750. Hull's reply to this frank and critical letter was carefully noncommittal. Hull to Daniels, July 14, 1934, Daniels Papers, Box 750.

over Cuba revealed some interesting differences of opinion within the Roosevelt Administration as to the proper role of a good neighbor under adverse circumstances. There was, in fact, remarkable confusion over the precise meaning of nonintervention. One view, argued persuasively by Sumner Welles in Havana, construed nonintervention to include paternalistic meddling in Cuban political affairs and even contemplated the use of troops to restore a government friendly to American interests, public and private. President Roosevelt and Secretary Hull firmly rejected the thought of armed intervention for such a purpose, though they dispatched a sizeable naval armada to patrol Cuban waters. Moreover, they accepted without question Welles' contention that it was both necessary and proper to withhold diplomatic recognition and economic aid in order to persuade the Cubans to get rid of a revolutionary government which Washington regarded as unsatisfactory. Ambassador Daniels in Mexico City, on the other hand, defined the Good Neighbor Policy in broader humanitarian terms. Daniels believed the time had come for the United States to abandon its old fashioned policeman's role, and instead strengthen its political and commercial influence in Latin America by encouraging, rather than fighting, New Deal-type social reforms there.

In the end President Roosevelt's actions demonstrated that he leaned more toward Daniels' view of the Good Neighbor Policy than Welles', but the Cuban difficulties also suggested that good neighborliness was a concept difficult to define satisfactorily. Worsening relations with Mexico after 1936 would set off new debates, among the same protagonists, over the proper interpretation and application of the Good Neighbor Policy in Latin America. Thus the Cuban crisis of 1933, although it did not resolve all questions over the Good Neighbor Policy, provided important clues to the Roosevelt Administration's probable thinking and action during the subsequent troubles with Mexico.

In later years the various American participants in the Cuban crisis of 1933 chose to remember it in rather different fashion. Joseph Daniels, for example, in his autobiographical *Shirt-Sleeve Diplomacy*, assigned to President Roosevelt the major credit for Washington's neighborly restraint and modestly made no mention of his own considerable missionary work.⁹⁰ Cordell Hull in his *Memoirs* gave himself equal if not top billing with Roosevelt in the determination of a pacific approach to Cuba. Hull's later dislike of Sumner Welles is clearly revealed at a number of points in his account of the Cuban

⁹⁰Daniels, *Shirt-Sleeve Diplomacy*, pp. 323-325.

difficulties. "He had good ability and experience, along with much ambition," Hull noted in introducing Welles among the dramatis personae. "In later years we were to differ sharply on questions of judgment. In the earlier years I found myself in agreement with my other associates more often than with Welles on important questions of policy." As if to hammer home his point, two pages later Hull quoted at length from Welles' cable of September 7, 1933, asking for the landing of American troops in Cuba to restore the fallen Céspedes Government. "The moment I finished digesting the telegram," Hull recalled with a trace of indignation, "I took it myself to the President at the White House and had him read it. I then strongly expressed to him my opinion that we could not and should not think of intervening in Cuba even to a limited extent. It seemed to me that Welles was overinfluenced by local conditions in Cuba and misjudged the disastrous reaction that would follow throughout Latin America if we agreed to his request. . . . Mr. Roosevelt readily agreed with my viewpoint."⁹¹

From Welles' rather full account of the episode in his book *The Time for Decision*, however, one would never guess that he had asked for troops nor that anyone besides Welles and the President had taken a hand in shaping American policy. In fact, Welles carefully limited his discussion of the possible use of troops to the period immediately following the collapse of the Machado regime in August, 1933. "There were, of course, innumerable demands for American armed intervention, especially from certain people representing commercial interests," he pointed out. "Every request was rejected flatly." Welles conveniently overlooked his plea for the forceful restoration of the Céspedes Government after the sergeants' revolt led by "that extraordinarily brilliant and able figure, Fulgencio Batista." He stressed, moreover, that only the existence of the Platt Amendment had led him to oppose diplomatic recognition of the Grau San Martín Government, since the United States would have been "derelict in its obligations to the Cuban people" if it had given official support to an unpopular and "disastrously incompetent" regime. Welles declared that he personally believed in the Estrada doctrine of automatic recognition, which he implied dated from 1934.⁹² As a matter of fact, the Mexican Government had made a great point of invoking this well-known doctrine during the Cuban crisis, in an effort to bolster the shaky Grau San Martín Government.

⁹¹ Hull, *Memoirs*, I, 313, 315.

⁹² Sumner Welles, *The Time for Decision* (New York: Harper, 1944), pp. 196-199.

Like his subordinates, President Roosevelt also looked back with considerable pride at the way his Administration had met this first test of the Good Neighbor Policy. In 1942 he gave a state dinner for visiting President Fulgencio Batista of Cuba, and in a toast to his guest recalled the role each had played in the troubles of nearly a decade before. Roosevelt's reconstruction of his meeting with key Latin American diplomats at the peak of the crisis is of interest, especially in view of the fact that the Mexican representative, for one, came away suspecting that the United States was about to intervene in Cuba. At that White House conference, it will be recalled, Roosevelt had stressed that while the United States had no wish to intervene, he nevertheless hoped the Cubans would quickly establish an effective government of their own choosing. This, he had said, would "have the happy effect of eliminating altogether any preparation or thought of the necessity of intervention."⁹³ As the President recollected it in 1942, however, he had been much more positive in expounding the Good Neighbor Policy to the assembled Latin American diplomats:

And I said, "Gentlemen, I am not going to do it. I am not going to apply the Platt Amendment. I am not going to send either the Army or the Navy to restore order in Cuba."

Well, there was a lifting of eyebrows among a good many of these nineteen other envoys. What is this new President of the United States going to do?

I said, "I am going to exercise the Good Neighbor Policy, because this is the first chance I have to put it into practical effect. If any Americans want to leave Cuba, they will have every opportunity. If any Americans want to get out, they can go down to the nearest port, and will find a revenue cutter or a patrol boat of some kind that will take them on board and take them out. I am not going to land a single soldier or sailor on the soil of the Cubans. I think this is an internal matter, which the Cubans are fully competent to settle."

Well, that was the beginning. I think the Bible says, "Ye shall be known by your deeds."

And that particular act, throughout all the American Republics, did have an effect, because the United States proved in a practical way that it could apply the doctrine of the Good Neighbor.⁹⁴

Perhaps the historian should not quibble over pesky details, for in the broad outlines Roosevelt had it right.

⁹³ Presidential press conference 49A, Washington, September 6, 1933, 5:45 p.m., Roosevelt Papers, II, 240-241.

⁹⁴ Franklin D. Roosevelt, toast to President Fulgencio Batista, December 8, 1942, Roosevelt Papers, PSF, Box 4 (Cuba).