

## THE UNITED STATES AND CASTRO: BREAKING THE DEADLOCK

*By Edward Gonzalez*

**T**HIRTEEN years after Fidel Castro's rise to power, Washington and Havana remain locked in mutually uncompromising positions. The continuing climate of recriminations and reprisals in U.S.-Cuban relations now stands in sharp contrast with the dramatic and sudden thaw in U.S.-Chinese relations that began in April 1971. In fact, both Washington and Havana seemed to have seized upon the Chinese development to reaffirm their postures of mutual intransigence.

On April 16, 1971, President Nixon stated that Havana's policies precluded the type of initiatives then under way toward China. The President pointedly noted that Castro was "still exporting revolution" and that "until Cuba changes their [sic] policy toward us we are not going to change our policy toward Cuba." Three days later, Castro responded by vehemently reaffirming Cuba's "solidarity" with the Latin American revolutionary movement, adding that Cuba could in fact afford to "scorn relations . . . with the imperialist government of an empire on the decline and defeated on every front." It would thus seem that the relevance of the Chinese precedent has been dismissed by both sides and that neither desires a break in the current deadlock short of a unilateral capitulation by the other party.

From the U.S. vantage point, of course, Cuba is not mainland China with its vast population, developing nuclear capability, and potential for influencing developments in Southeast Asia if not in the Vietnam War itself. Equally important, communist China has emerged as a major threat to the Soviet Union, which remains the chief strategic adversary of the United States. Most of the American political community has thus supported President Nixon's gambit toward China as furthering the vital interests of the United States.

The same kind of potential trade-offs do not appear to exist with regard to Cuba. Cuba's revolutionary thrust into the Hemisphere has already been largely contained. Castro's economic reversals in recent years have made the Cuban example less appealing for Latin America, while serving as a drain on Soviet

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follow the American lead and acknowledge Peking's sovereignty over the island. On the other hand, if relations with the mainland are likely to remain unchanged or to worsen in the future, then the Japanese think that it would be foolish to liquidate their Taiwanese holdings for nothing.

One reason why Sino-Japanese relations might worsen is because of Japan's security problems. Japan may be the world's third-ranking economy in terms of industrial production, but China is the world's fifth nuclear power. Japan is dependent upon, and committed to, maintaining her defense against China's growing nuclear strength via the American "nuclear umbrella." However, to the extent that the Japanese-American security treaty becomes less credible in Japanese eyes, the Japanese government will be forced to find some other way to provide for the security of a non-nuclear nation in a nuclear world. One way would be for the Japanese themselves to become a nuclear power. The Japanese do not want this; they know that to do so would alarm many of their trading partners and would ruin their chances for a détente with China. But it is something that Japanese planners must consider particularly in light of the "unravelling" of the Japanese-American relationship that has become evident over the past year.

For the time being the Japanese are seeking to display their independence of the United States in the hope that this posture will make the Chinese more willing to negotiate with them over outstanding issues. During early 1972, for example, the Japanese sent a Foreign Ministry mission to Hanoi, recognized Bangladesh and the Mongolian People's Republic, made overtures to Pyongyang, and accepted Soviet Foreign Minister Gromyko's overtures for improved relations and for joint Soviet-Japanese ventures in the development of Siberia. These disparate moves were not so much signs of a new Japanese policy as evidence that one did not yet exist. If China will coexist with Japan only on Chinese terms, then the Japanese position is once again likely to stiffen and tensions between the two countries will grow. If China is prepared to compromise her differences with Japan through government-to-government negotiations, then the Japanese will surely make major concessions in order to see that the negotiations succeed. But even if negotiations can remove the immediate obstacles to improved relations, the long-standing rivalries between the two nations are likely to persist.

resources. The Soviet ideological, military and economic stake in communist Cuba in turn provides the United States with a potential "hostage" for countering Moscow's moves elsewhere in the world. The Cuban leadership has fully aligned itself with Moscow as against Peking, and does not appear disposed toward an accommodation with Washington. As a result, U.S. officials evidently perceive few openings on the Cuban front—other than volleyball—that would allow for the type of initiatives undertaken toward Peking. Even if such openings existed, established OAS sanctions would have to be overcome in any new dealings with Cuba. Finally, a more conciliatory posture toward Havana would involve domestic political risks for the administration during an election year, stemming from the presence of the Cuban exile community and the anti-Castro sentiment among liberal as well as conservative elements of the electorate.

Notwithstanding these arguments, the United States may now need to reexamine its own vital interests in the light of recent Cuban developments. Indeed, both the United States and Cuba may be developing limited common interests that could be exploited by a more flexible U.S. policy. For the present, however, the policies of the two countries seem based in large part on antagonistic stances having their origins in the past, and which may no longer serve to advance their respective national interests. In any event, neither the President nor the Cuban Premier appears willing to make the first move. Since this standoff has transfixed U.S.-Cuban relations for over a decade, it may be useful to re-examine the initial causes and processes making for the breakdown in U.S.-Cuban relations.

## II. CONFRONTATION AND RECOIL, 1959-1961

The conflict between Havana and Washington was virtually certain after January 1959. Fresh from his stunning triumph over the Batista dictatorship, Castro was bound and determined to reduce, if not totally eliminate, the long-standing American economic, political and cultural presence in Cuba. Furthermore, he sought not only to detach Cuba from the U.S. embrace, but also to distinguish his new régime from the discredited image of past client governments. Thus committed, his nationalist and social revolution was from the very outset contrary to the established interests of the United States in Cuba and Latin America.

The conservative style and outlook of the Eisenhower administration made the conflict all the more likely. A staunch defender of private enterprise and an implacable foe of communism, the administration had earlier backed Batista as the dutiful, reliable ally of the United States in the Caribbean. Notwithstanding Castro's seizure of power, the White House could still look to the successful Guatemalan precedent where the United States had stage-managed the overthrow of the leftist Arbenz régime in 1954. Indeed, as former Ambassador Philip Bonsal has now confirmed, Washington's policy calculations were to be greatly affected by the belief that Castro could not long survive or that if need be he could be ousted from power through indirect U.S. intervention.<sup>1</sup>

The stakes were also considerably higher in Cuba by the end of the 1950s than they had been in Guatemala or elsewhere in Latin America where U.S. interests had been previously threatened. The book value of American enterprises in Cuba alone was over \$1 billion and encompassed wide-ranging economic interests. Cuba and the Guantanamo Naval Base were considered of pivotal strategic importance in guarding the approaches to the Caribbean and the American mainland. Sensitivity to the strategic question, in turn, had been heightened by the recent growth in Soviet strategic capabilities. Under the more venturesome leadership of Khrushchev, moreover, the Soviets appeared intent on expanding their political, economic and military influence on a global scale. High stakes and the entire gamut of U.S. interests thus appear to have been caught up with the Cuban question.

In regard to the Soviets, Castro gave cause for Washington's growing alarm by violating the "rules of the game" that heretofore had been observed—save for Arbenz in Guatemala, who had obtained Soviet-bloc arms in 1954 and, though less so, Péron in Argentina—by the member-states of the inter-American community. Beginning in early 1959, the Cuban leader openly refused to disown communist support at home, while additionally endorsing violent revolution abroad. He further advocated Cuba's neutralist position in the East-West conflict as early as March 1959, and after October he indicated his readiness to reach out to the Soviets as a means of safeguarding his revolution. Overall, then, the divergent paths of revolutionary Havana and

<sup>1</sup> Philip W. Bonsal, "Cuba, Castro and the United States." Pittsburgh: Pittsburgh University Press, 1971.

conservative Washington made for increasingly strained relations.

While perhaps unavoidable, it does not follow that the U.S.-Cuban conflict was unmanageable. Whether a conflict is contained or enlarged may depend on how the actors identify their own interests and perceive their antagonist's intentions as well as on the interests at stake. Hence, Havana and Washington became caught up in a "self-fulfilling prophecy" whereby each side anticipated the worst possible behavior on the part of the other and began to act accordingly. Castro appears to have concluded by mid-1959 that the United States would not accept his revolution and that ultimately he would have to turn to the Soviet camp for support. Similarly, Eisenhower became convinced by early 1959 that the Cuban leader was already going communist and his administration began "to examine measures . . . [for] restraining Castro if he should develop into a menace."<sup>2</sup> In short, neither side was disposed toward taking initiatives or responding to the possible conciliatory signals from the other side. On the contrary, the respective postures and rhetoric of each were perceived exclusively as evidence of hostile intentions.

To be sure, Castro exercised no restraint as he mobilized popular support by giving vent to Cuba's historical grievances against the "Colossus of the North." As early as January 1959, he condemned the United States on every aspect of its relationship with Cuba—its intervention in 1898 in Cuba's War of Independence, its imposition of the Platt Amendment, its thwarting of the 1933 Revolution and its support of Batista during the 1950s. Additionally, he launched verbal attacks against "imperialism," "oligarchic régimes," "vested foreign interests," "capitalist exploitation" and "Yankee aggression." In point of fact, he exhibited little of the self-restraint shown by President Cárdenas in 1938, or at present by President Salvador Allende in attempting to maintain Chilean-U.S. relations on a manageable plane.

Castro's confrontation tactics, however, should be placed in their immediate political context. As Cuba's liberator and Latin America's most illustrious revolutionary, he necessarily had to play to nationalistic and anti-imperialistic audiences at home and abroad. Furthermore, he had to demonstrate to his followers that he would not become another practitioner of *entreguismo* (na-

<sup>2</sup> Dwight D. Eisenhower, "The White House Years: Waging Peace 1956-1960." Garden City: Doubleday, 1965, p. 521, 524.

tional sellout) as had much of Cuba's old political class during the first half of the twentieth century. Imbued with his generation's mission of national redemption, therefore, he vowed on January 13, 1959, that:

The Platt Amendment is finished. . . . No longer is there a military régime in our country, no longer are there military officers who can betray the revolution by seizing power as occurred in '33, and for the first time there are meritorious men at the head of the country who neither sell themselves, nor falter nor become intimidated by any threat.

Nevertheless, the young Cuban leader remained under pressure from ultranationalist and communist quarters. Witness the following editorial comment by a leading Communist regarding Castro's visit to Washington in April 1959: "Fidel does not go to beg, but to negotiate; he does not go to humiliate himself, but to discuss. . . . What Cuba wants and expects, what she hopes Fidel Castro will accomplish in his trip, is to continue pursuing Martí's course in his policy. . . . A Cubanist policy. . . ."<sup>3</sup>

Acutely sensitized to such nationalist demands, Castro consequently sought to avoid compromising himself in any way with the U.S. government. A former member of his régime thus recalls Fidel's uneasiness over his decision to address the American Society of Newspaper Editors in Washington in mid-April 1959:

I heard him expressing fears of being invited to the White House and of being photographed with the President of the United States as one more Latin American leader "sold out" to imperialism. In addition there were problems when Mr. Nixon [then Vice President] changed his invitation from his home to his office in the Senate because that could be interpreted as an official visit.<sup>4</sup>

Despite his earlier statements that he would take up the question of loans for Cuba, therefore, Castro publicly denied upon his arrival in Washington that he had come for economic "hand-outs." Additionally, he privately instructed his economic advisers to avoid discussing U.S. loan overtures with State Department officials.

None the less, Fidel did seem to leave the door slightly ajar for a possible modus vivendi with Washington. While on this visit he publicly espoused a "humanist" revolution and went so far

<sup>3</sup> Carlos Rafael Rodríguez, "Un esclarecimiento necesario," *Hoy*, April 15, 1959.

<sup>4</sup> Letter from Felipe Pazos, March 22, 1963. Pazos served as President of the National Bank of Cuba until November 1959, and in that capacity accompanied Castro to Washington the previous April.

as to condemn the repressive nature of the communist political system. Shortly thereafter he flew to Buenos Aires where he proposed to the OAS "Committee of 21" that the United States fund a \$30-billion development program for all of Latin America in which, of course, Cuba would share. If only indirectly, therefore, Castro may have been signaling the United States to resume the courtship that had tentatively begun with the State Department's loan overtures to Cuba, but in a manner that would fully confirm his régime's independence and his own nationalist integrity.

These gestures were in the end eclipsed by Castro's ultra-nationalist and defiant postures. The attention of Washington and the public tended to focus on his symbolic and ideological deviations, rather than on the more moderate course that he in fact was still pursuing during the first half of 1959. The abrasive *fidelista* style of politics, as well as the leftist drift of developments within Cuba, left the Eisenhower administration little disposed to test Castro's readiness to come to terms. At the very least, such an approach would have entailed considerably more than loan overtures because these in themselves indicated no revision of the traditional U.S.-Cuban client relationship. Only in a last-minute effort to head off Cuba's turn to Moscow did Washington attempt this policy shift. Just before the arrival of First Deputy Premier Mikoyan in Havana, President Eisenhower publicly announced on January 26, 1960, that the United States would observe a policy of nonintervention, refrain from reprisals and respect Cuba's right to undertake a social revolution. But the die had already been cast.

For its part, the United States had fed Havana's apprehension by its indiscriminate as well as mounting attacks on the Cuban Revolution after early 1959. The public outcry in the U.S. press and Congress against the *fidelista* régime ranged all the way from attacks on the latter's "revolutionary justice," "communist infiltration" and "threat to the Hemisphere," to its rejection of democratic elections, its general economic policies and its Agrarian Reform Law of May 1959. From the viewpoint of the Castro régime, these growing criticisms must have appeared as a wholesale indictment of the Cuban Revolution by influential American circles which could be won over only by seriously compromising the revolutionary process. Nor were there clear signals to the contrary from the White House: both President Eisenhower and Vice President Nixon remained steadfast in

their personal opposition.<sup>5</sup> Hence, Castro and his closest followers could only conclude from these public attacks that the "Colossus of the North" would eventually turn against the revolution as had occurred previously in Cuba in 1933 and only four years earlier in Guatemala.

Not to be outdone, Castro in the end spurned the United States by abruptly radicalizing the Cuban Revolution. Beginning in October 1959, he violently attacked Washington's alleged complicity with counterrevolutionary elements, aligned himself with the Cuban Communists at home, and openly bid for Soviet support the following month. He subsequently succeeded in opting into the communist camp with the Soviet-Cuban trade and aid agreement signed at the conclusion of Mikoyan's visit in February 1960. Relations between Havana and Washington rapidly deteriorated thereafter. In March 1960, President Eisenhower gave the go-ahead for the planning of an exile invasion; in May, diplomatic relations were established between Havana and Moscow; in June, Castro seized American (and British) oil refineries; in July, Eisenhower responded by cutting the Cuban sugar quota; and in late summer and early fall Castro retaliated by ordering the wholesale nationalization of American and Cuban enterprises. Soon afterwards, the two 1960 presidential candidates were vowing to eliminate the communist "beachhead" in Cuba. Relations were then broken by the United States in January 1961, and both sides began to prepare themselves for the final showdown that would come at the Bay of Pigs the following April.

In the final analysis, the absence of mutual self-restraint in the 1959-1960 period reflected the failure by both sides to discriminate among their respective national interests and to identify which of these was most essential to preserve. As a result, the conflict could not be contained within the most narrowly defined parameters of the respective vital interests at stake, but rather was rapidly escalated and widened to include lesser interests that in turn further fueled the fires of mutual antagonisms. Equally critical, without a clear identification of its vital interests neither

<sup>5</sup> Having become "deeply disgusted at his murderous persecution of his former opponents," President Eisenhower refused to meet Castro during his April 1959 visit. See Eisenhower, *op. cit.*, p. 532. Following his conference with Castro, Vice President Nixon concluded that he was "either incredibly naïve about Communism or under Communist discipline," and recommended that the United States "deal with him accordingly." See Richard M. Nixon, "Six Crises" (Garden City: Doubleday, 1962), p. 351-352.

side could signal to the other which issues were negotiable and which were not.

As pointed out, for example, Castro was obsessed with his revolutionary stance at home and abroad. But such a posture confused revolutionary style with substance, tending thereby to obscure what were the vital interests of the Cuban Revolution. Consequently, not only was he prevented from making direct overtures to Washington, but he was also left with virtually no bargaining room for trade-offs—a no-compromise condition that was perceived equally by his ardent supporters and by the Eisenhower administration. This might not have been the case, however, had the *líder máximo* explicitly singled out Cuba's right to self-determination and to a social revolution as the real issues under dispute, rather than confusing these objectives with Havana's self-proclaimed mission of revolutionizing the Hemisphere or breaking with the pattern of anticommunist and anti-Soviet alliances.

The United States appears to have been equally indiscriminate in weighing the interests at stake in Castro's Cuba. These interests fell into four categories:

(1) Ideological—the rejection of “the American way of life” by Cuba and her adoption of a “socialist” or “communist” system;

(2) Economic—the threat posed to U.S. business interests on the island and additionally in Latin America if the Castro example were imitated elsewhere;

(3) Hemispheric stability—the disruptive impact of *fidélismo* on inter-American harmony and the threat posed to Latin American governments by *fidelistas* revolutionaries;

(4) National security—the conversion of Cuba into a “Soviet beachhead” in the Western Hemisphere, establishing a Soviet political, economic, military and strategic (as in 1962) presence in the Caribbean.

To be sure, all four interests were to be endangered by Castro, especially after 1960. But of the four, only the issues of hemispheric stability and national security truly affected U.S. vital interests. The ideological and economic stakes were essentially secondary issues which affected, respectively, the internal values and the private sector of American society. But in the 1959–1960 period the United States tended to confuse private with national interests, and ideological with strategic interests. The net effect

was that Washington's flexibility, like Castro's, was greatly restricted. Consequently, the White House could not communicate publicly and unambiguously to Havana its priorities: (a) the vital issues on which the United States would not yield (hemispheric subversion and a Soviet presence in Cuba); (b) the secondary issues that could be negotiated (the amount and method of compensation for nationalized American properties); or (c) the other secondary issues that fell under Cuba's right of self-determination (her choice of political and economic systems). Ultimately, Castro carried out a radicalized revolution that in fact hit hard at every American interest—from the confiscation of American properties and the adoption of a radical form of communism to the "export of revolution" and the consolidation of Cuba's ties with the Soviet Union.

### III. PRESENT IMPASSE AND POSSIBLE CONVERGENCE

Throughout the 1960s U.S.-Cuban relations remained in a state of permanent tension. The United States pursued a policy of "denial" toward Castro, aiming at his diplomatic, political and economic isolation within the Hemisphere through its own economic embargo and OAS sanctions, while being accused of supporting occasional clandestine operations against Cuba. Until the late 1960s, the Castro régime struck back through efforts to promote the continental revolution, while moving toward even closer ties with the Soviet Union, especially after 1968.

None the less, U.S. policy had undergone some changes by the end of the decade. Today, Washington concedes that the Castro régime seems entrenched, and it no longer insists—as originally formulated in 1964—that Cuba break her "military, economic and political dependence" on Moscow. But two "preconditions" must still be met before the United States would consider altering its "denial" policy. These are the termination of Cuba's "military ties" with the Soviets, and the cessation of her attempts to "export revolution" abroad. Hence, as President Nixon himself has noted, the current U.S. position is not based on the internal policies and ideology of the *fidelista* régime. Rather, it is directed to Cuba's external policies, which have threatened the hemispheric and national security interests of the United States, particularly during the 1960s. However, if the operative assumption in U.S. policy is that of the permanency of the régime, are the two "preconditions" conducive to altering Cuba's objection-

able behavior? And are they of equal relevance in advancing U.S. vital interests in light of recent developments in Cuba and Latin America?

First of all, the two "preconditions" are not likely to be met by the Castro régime. Current U.S. policy offers little inducement for Havana to abandon its Soviet ties and revolutionary activities. Before Fidel could limit his relationship with Moscow, thus far essential to the survival of his régime, or compromise his revolutionary and anti-imperialist stance, Washington would have to pay a price which it evidently would consider too high.

Second, Havana's revolutionary subversion of the Hemisphere may no longer be as threatening as in the 1960s. With the aid of U.S. security assistance, most Latin American régimes have succeeded in containing, if not eliminating, the *fidelista* guerrilla movements. For his part, Castro himself has backed off from his previous unqualified endorsement of violent revolution. He has moved instead toward closer ties with the current Peruvian military régime—the very same military that crushed the guerrilla movement in 1965—as well as with the Chilean socialist government. Consequently, it appears that the Cuban revolutionary threat no longer affects the vital interests of the United States to the same extent as in the past.

Last, and most importantly, Soviet penetration into Cuba now appears to be taking on new dimensions which could lead to her virtual satellization. In the past, Castro was able to exercise considerable independence in pursuing his own foreign and domestic policies, and on occasion challenged Moscow whenever it was in his interest and capacity to do so—to the extent even of purging the pro-Soviet "microfaction" in early 1968. But since then he has not possessed effective bargaining counters.<sup>6</sup> Owing to repeated economic setbacks over the last few years—and most critically to the failure to produce the ten-million-ton sugar harvest in 1970—his régime has been forced into a position of growing dependence on, and subordination to, the Soviets. The signing of new Soviet-Cuban economic agreements in late 1970 and early 1971, the growing influx of Soviet technicians, the rising influence of pro-Soviet elements within the Castro régime—and

<sup>6</sup> Castro's return to the Soviet fold was signaled by his qualified endorsement of the Warsaw Pact occupation of Czechoslovakia in August 1968. For a fuller discussion of Cuban-Soviet developments through 1970, see the author's "Relationship with the Soviet Union," in Carmelo Mesa-Lago (ed.), "Revolutionary Change in Cuba" (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1971).

the Soviet submarine servicing facility in Cienfuegos all attest to Moscow's increased hold on Cuba and Fidel's lessened capacity to limit Soviet encroachment. Indeed, Cuba now holds the dubious distinction in Latin America of having both Soviet and U.S. naval facilities on its island. Accordingly, it is not Castro himself, but the increased Soviet penetration of Cuba—which in turn could facilitate the development of even greater Soviet strategic capabilities in the Caribbean—that now most endangers U.S. vital interests.

Paradoxically, then, it would now appear in the U.S. interest to offer inducements to the Castro régime to stem further Soviet penetration of a strategic-military nature. Similarly, it would seem to the advantage of the Cubans—if not Fidel himself—to begin to work toward an eventual *modus vivendi* with the United States in order to reduce Cuba's dependence upon and subservience to Moscow. The public posture of both parties has thus far provided few openings, however, as each side appears to adhere to fixed positions.

For Castro, permanent defiance of the "imperialist government" of the United States remains very much the essence of his revolution. On August 23, 1968, he adamantly ruled out the possibility of Cuba's seeking an accommodation with the United States because that "would be the moment at which the Revolution would have ceased to exist." On April 19, 1971, replying to the aforementioned statements by President Nixon, he warned that:

The imperialists, of course, want Cuba to calm and behave herself, they want to neutralize us. They shouldn't even dream about this! . . . [because] firm principles and revolutionary intransigence are also a part of the traditions of our people. . . . This Revolution could only have relations with the imperialists at the expense of surrender. And this Revolution will never surrender!

On August 27, 1971, he repeated that Cuba had "nothing to negotiate" with Washington, especially on the issue of compensation for nationalized U.S. properties. But once U.S. leaders decide "to lift their blockade against Cuba and stop all their measures against Cuba they must do so unconditionally and without discussing one single thing with us." It would thus seem that the Cuban leader was claiming exclusive title to unyielding anti-imperialist leadership following Peking's turnabout. Nevertheless, his very protestations and conditions concerning future rela-

tions with the United States also suggest that Havana's position might not be as inflexible as it first appears.

Castro's forward position of maximum "revolutionary intransigence" could in fact mask contradictory tendencies within his régime—and possibly himself—concerning the potential significance for Cuba of the U.S. policy shift on Peking. His régime includes an older generation of civilian leaders from the defunct July 26th Movement who constitute a less radicalized element than most of the *fidelista* leaders drawn from the Sierra Maestra guerrilla campaign. In the post-1959 period, moreover, a new generation of technical and military élites has emerged who simply may not share the older *fidelistas'* intense antipathy toward the "Colossus of the North" and who may now be attracted by the Chinese precedent. For these older and younger elements of the Cuban leadership, therefore, some form of limited accommodation with the United States may offer the only prospect of improving Cuba's economic situation, lessening her dependence on Moscow and undercutting the further rise of pro-Soviet elements within the régime.

Such a "Titoist" solution for Cuba has been flatly rejected by Castro in the past—perhaps precisely because he views it both as a "surrender" to the United States and as his last remaining option for recovering his independence from Moscow. In the meantime, the preservation of Cuba's revolutionary ethic requires some level of external tension with the United States. Indeed, his regimen of stark austerity to force the pace of economic development, and his commitment to creating a "new communist man," have been facilitated over the years by Cuba's insularity from her affluent, highly developed neighbor to the north. One of the supreme ironies of the present Cuban situation, then, is that an accommodative rather than an aggressive U.S. posture could present difficult choices for Castro, and might indeed pose the more threatening situation. Fidel's defiant posturing thus serves a twofold preëemptive purpose: it deters moderate elements within his régime from pressing for some form of rapprochement with the United States, while it discourages Washington from pursuing a more conciliatory course toward Cuba.

The Cuban Premier may well have succeeded in programing the U.S. response in this respect. Notwithstanding the changing context of the Cuban and Latin American situation, U.S. officials continue to insist publicly that Havana has not fulfilled the two

"preconditions" necessary for the United States to reconsider its position. Hence, State Department spokesmen were quick to point out that in his speech of April 22, 1970, Castro had vowed that Cuba had not given up and would not give up her support for the Latin American revolutionary movement. They disregarded his amending statement in which he added that such support "does not necessarily have to be expressed in favor of guerrilla movements" but could be extended to any nationalist government "no matter by what path that government has reached power"—a proviso that has since included the Peruvian military régime as well as Chile's democratically elected socialist government.

In his remarks of April 16, 1971, President Nixon also focused on Castro's antagonistic postures:

As far as Castro is concerned, he has already drawn the line. He is exporting revolution all over the hemisphere, still exporting it. His line is against the United States. . . . As long as Castro is adopting an antagonistic, anti-American line, we are certainly not going to normalize our relations toward Castro. As soon as he changes his line toward us, we might consider it. But it is his move.

By thus challenging Castro, the President enabled the *líder máximo* to convert his own defiant stance in his April 19 reply into a question of national honor. In turn, Castro's ringing reaffirmations of support for the Latin American revolution tend to feed U.S. perceptions. Hence, on January 2, 1972, the President again insisted that there has been "no indication whatever that Castro will recede one inch from his determination of exporting Castro-type revolution all over the Hemisphere." Consequently, he went on, "our policy isn't going to change."

The President's position, moreover, conceals a fundamental contradiction in U.S. policy. While decrying Havana's "export of revolution," the United States has been equally adamant in opposing normalization of diplomatic and trade relations between Latin America and Cuba. Hence, by insisting on Cuba's continued hemispheric isolation, the United States has contributed to a situation whereby Havana in effect is being encouraged to pursue revolutionary rather than diplomatic interests in Latin America. Equally important, the President's remarks have contained no signal for the Cubans that it is the issue of increased Soviet military-political penetration and not the issue of "exporting revolution"—whether symbolic or actually implemented—

that has now become the most objectionable factor in the Cuban situation.

Testifying before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee on September 16, 1971, however, Deputy Assistant Secretary of State Hurwitch did dwell on Cuba's military ties with the Soviets. He charged that only the year before, the Castro government had "permitted" the establishment of a Soviet submarine facility in Cienfuegos. But his testimony overlooked the question as to whether current U.S. policy provides an inducement—let alone the leverage—for Cuba to resist the Soviet incursion.

To be sure, Castro remains repugnant to much of the American political community. Any change in U.S. policy could be interpreted as a concession to communism, and as bailing out a hostile government that is laboring under economic difficulties. But such an ideological and emotional reaction to Castro fails to come to grips with the crux of the Cuban problem. It only postpones the reassessment of U.S.-Cuban policy that must surely come, given the apparent permanency of the Castro régime, and the need to redefine U.S. vital interests in light of recent Cuban and hemispheric developments.

Further delay could prove costly to the United States on at least two counts. First, in addition to Chile and Peru, a number of Latin American states have already begun to press for Cuba's reintegration within the Latin American community in one form or another. The Cuban question is thus likely to become a highly divisive issue for the inter-American community in the future, and perhaps could even lead to Washington's virtual isolation within much of the Hemisphere. Second, and most importantly, the longer Washington delays in reconsidering its policy toward Cuba, the less likely it is that Castro will retain sufficient leverage to deter further Soviet penetration. Ultimately, therefore, the United States will probably deal with either a *fidelista* or a more Sovietized régime. Although the former appears preferable, we will probably be confronted with the latter unless we are willing to pay some price in the near future to bolster rather than weaken Castro's position vis-à-vis the Soviets.

#### IV. TESTING THE CUBAN LEADERSHIP

Such a maneuver by the United States is not without precedent and in fact is entirely consistent with the long-standing policy of Soviet containment. Washington turned the Yugoslav situation to

U.S. advantage by extending aid to Tito following his break with Stalin in 1948. And today, the Nixon administration not only seeks to develop ties with communist China, but also to prevent a breakdown in relations with socialist Chile which could lead to further Soviet penetration of the Western Hemisphere.

Whether Castro himself can be prevailed upon to shift his position toward the United States of course remains an open question. It may depend upon whether he can still assert his independence given Moscow's increased hold over the island. But the point is that the United States has offered neither Fidel nor less intractable elements within his régime much leeway in terms of exploring new options for Cuba. Instead, the U.S. stance has tended to confirm the *fidelist* position that Cuba must either capitulate to the Colossus or align herself fully with the Soviet Union. By attempting to deprive Cuba of the alternative markets and sources of supply, and by seeking to prevent the normalization of relations between Cuba and individual Latin American states it has also served to reinforce Castro's behavior along objectionable, if not self-defeating, lines.

A more flexible policy toward Cuba, therefore, would need to clarify the alternatives available to the Castro régime and the intentions of the United States toward the Cuban Revolution. In this regard, the U.S.-Cuban relationship need no longer be conceived by either party as a zero-sum game whereby one side can gain only at the expense of the other. To be sure, many Cuban leaders still share Castro's assumption that any lessening of Cuban-Soviet ties not only would constitute an unacceptable "reversal of alliances," but also would leave Havana extremely vulnerable to renewed U.S. efforts to eliminate the present régime.

Such an assumption may now be invalid, however. Havana's alternatives are not mutually exclusive ones in which Cuba must either become a satellite of the Soviet Union or revert back as a client of the United States. Both Cuba and the United States can gain from a situation whereby Havana retains its political, economic and military "lifeline" with the Soviet bloc, but recovers some measure of independence from Soviet control—for example, by broadening Cuba's ties with Western Europe and Japan, the noncommunist third world, and Latin America. And even if an adversary relationship were to remain under such conditions, it nevertheless would be a less damaging one than at present.

In the final analysis, much may depend on how the United States signals its readiness to work toward a limited accommodation that minimizes the costs to both sides. Washington could begin on the symbolic plane much as the Nixon administration confirmed its position publicly to Peking by its usage of the term "People's Republic of China." In changing its public stance, the United States might eventually succeed in indicating to the Cuban leadership that the "Colossus of the North" does not seek Cuba's return to her former client status, but only her escape from an ever-increasing Soviet influence. Most critically, such a posture would need to convey a commitment that the United States would refrain from attempting to depose a more vulnerable Cuban régime that seeks to limit—let alone to break—its protective association with Moscow.

Simultaneously, the United States would need to verify its intentions, and to provide Havana with the incentives for modifying Cuban policy. To this end, Washington might begin wholly or in part by easing up on the U.S. trade embargo, lifting the U.S. ban on travel to Cuba, permitting official Cuban participation in specialized conferences and sporting events held in the United States, removing U.S. objections to West European trade with Cuba and relaxing U.S. opposition to the normalization of relations between Latin America and Cuba. At a minimum, such a policy shift would serve as a means for testing Castro's readiness to lessen Cuba's revolutionary objectives in the Hemisphere, and to resolve such issues as the hijacking of commercial airplanes. At a maximum, it might provide additional inducements and needed leverage for Cuba to resist further Soviet military and political penetration. Havana's response to the U.S. initiative could then provide a basis for determining whether further attempts to improve relations are in order.

## CHINA AFLOAT

*By John R. Dewenter*

A GREAT deal of information has been published about the military strategy and forces of the People's Republic of China, some through official Chinese publications, much more through the writings of Western analysts. Most of this information concerns China's massive ground forces, with a respectable amount of coverage given to her air arm and even to her nascent nuclear missile forces. What about China's navy? "Didn't know they had one," is the derisive response one is most likely to receive.

There are several reasons why China's naval forces have received so little attention. The Chinese Navy has been dwarfed by the massive Chinese Army. The air force and navy combined comprise at most about 20 percent of China's military manpower. Secondly, the navy is just now beginning to get its "head of steam." Furthermore, it has heretofore maintained a low visibility, operating in waters close to its own shores from bases seldom if ever visited by foreigners, shunning traditional show-the-flag foreign port visits. It has been almost totally ignored in official Chinese press releases. Under this shroud of secrecy, information is simply unobtainable even by the increasing numbers of Western visitors to China.

Even granted ready access to military information, should one reasonably expect to find significant naval development in China today? The competition for scarce resources alone—for her developing economy and for the other military services with which her land-oriented "Long March" leadership certainly must feel more at home—would seem to indicate no. And then there is our traditional concept of China as a continental power.

In the short historical consciousness of the average American, pre-communist China is pictured as an awkward, continental giant. When we think of the old China we seldom think of the great Middle Kingdom, which had an historical continuity reaching back over 4,000 years and periods when its national power and culture—unparalleled in other areas of the world—reached out well beyond its own borders. Instead, the popular image of China is that of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, since her exposure to the modern Western world—weak, wracked