Scholarship and the State: Notes on *A History of the Cuban Republic*

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THE CUBAN REVOLUTION placed deficiencies of American scholarship on Cuba in sharp relief. Fifty years of close diplomatic and economic relations rarely generated anything more than casual attention to the Cuban past, producing, for the most part, a rather meager and inauspicious corpus of scholarship. Rarely have modern historiographic antecedents been so ill prepared to receive an event of such transcendental magnitude as the Cuban Revolution.

Older studies, previously out of print, reappeared to provide twentieth-century perspectives to the Revolution. One of the more important studies to enjoy a second printing was Charles E. Chapman's *A History of the Cuban Republic,* first published in 1927[1] and reissued in 1969.[2] For a generation of Latin Americanists, *A History of the Cuban Republic* served as the standard reference work on twentieth century Cuba; for more than thirty years, Chapman's study provided the point of orientation for all subsequent inquiries into the history of the Republic.

The reappearance of *A History of the Cuban Republic* in 1969 met the renewed interest and wider market demands generated by the Cuban Revolution. The original publication in 1927, however, was in response to and the result of American policy needs in Cuba.

Inspiration for a history of Cuba originated with Ambassador Enoch H. Crowder. Originally appointed as Special Representative of the President in Cuba, General Crowder arrived in Havana in 1921 with instructions to overhaul Cuban national administration. During the

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1. Charles E. Chapman, *A History of the Cuban Republic, A Study in Hispanic American Politics* (New York, 1927). For a complete bibliography of Chapman's works see Osgood Hardy, "Charles Edward Chapman," *HAHR,* 22:1 (February, 1942), 2-4.

2. Chapman, *A History of the Cuban Republic, A Study in Hispanic American Politics* (rpt. New York, 1969).

early years of his stay in Havana, Crowder exercised sweeping authority over the government of Alfredo Zayas, orchestrating major reforms and managing virtually unilaterally the affairs of state through decree and ultimatum. By the early 1920s, Crowder had imposed on Havana a regimen of administrative integrity and public honesty. With the raising of the diplomatic missions in Havana and Washington to embassy status in 1923, Crowder remained in Cuba as the first American ambassador.

The projected history of Cuba responded to a series of American diplomatic reversals in Havana. By 1923, Crowder's influence over the Zayas administration had expired. Invoking self-determination and appealing to nationalism, the Cuban President recovered increasing autonomy from the American Embassy. Crowder, the Ambassador, commanded far less authority than Crowder, the Special Representative; the bureaucratization of diplomacy represented by the shift from Special Representative to Ambassador—returning the conduct of foreign affairs to the State Department—narrowed considerably Crowder's ability to mobilize support in Washington for his efforts in Havana. Outwitted and outmaneuvered by the Cuban President, Crowder's grip on the national administration slipped. In June 1923, Zayas dismissed Crowder's "Honest Cabinet"; the graft and corruption that the Ambassador had labored to eliminate reappeared as Zayas and members of his family prepared to lay siege to the national treasury.

The need for a history of Cuba was first expressed during Crowder's most anxious moments in Havana, when, the Ambassador wrote, "things were looking pretty black for the future of Cuba."[3] In late 1923, Crowder conferred with Frederick P. Keppel and Nicholas M. Butler of the Carnegie Foundation, soliciting Foundation funds to underwrite the proposed study.[4] A subsequent conference attended by

3. Enoch H. Crowder to Secretary of State, Havana, May 27, 1926, National Archives, General Records of the Department of State, Record Group 59 (hereinafter cited as RG 59), 837.41/–.

4. Crowder to General John J. Pershing, Havana, Sept. 24, 1924, Enoch H. Crowder Papers, Western Historical Manuscript Collection, University of Missouri, Columbia, Missouri. The Carnegie Foundation joined the project as a result of the influence of Dwight Morrow, a personal friend of both Frederick B. Keppel and Crowder. Representing J. P. Morgan interests in Havana, Morrow shared Crowder's concern over political developments in Cuba. J. P. Morgan had just committed $50,000,000 to the Zayas government, largely on the strength of Crowder's grip over Cuban affairs. See F. P. Keppel to Dwight W. Morrow, New York, Jan. 10, 1924, and Morrow to Keppel, New York, Jan. 15, 1924, Dwight W. Morrow Papers, Robert Frost Library, Amherst College, Amherst, Massachusetts. For an excellent account of the J. P. Morgan-Crowder-State Department negotiations see Robert F. Smith, *The United States and Cuba: Business and Diplomacy, 1917-1960* (New Haven, 1960), pp. 29-41.

Crowder, Butler, and Charles Chapman outlined in general terms the organization of the proposed history of Cuba; the projected volume was to examine a broad range of topics, concentrating, however, on the organization and workings of national government in Cuba.[5] In January 1924, the Carnegie Foundation awarded a $4,000 grant to Chapman for the writing of *A History of the Cuban Republic*.[6]

At a fundamental level, the planned history of Cuba represented in design and intent a subtle statement of policy orientation and an attempt to coerce Cuban authorities. For Crowder, frustrated by his inability to reverse the rush of events in Havana, the projected volume was designed "to be helpful in promoting honest republican government in Cuba which it is the policy of our government to foster."[7] Crowder was particularly interested in securing through the history the conditions that would allow him to restore his fallen regimen of administrative rectitude. The proposed history offered the Ambassador an opportunity to document misgovernment in Cuba as a means to generate more forceful support for his efforts in Havana and, ultimately, if necessary, justify whatever action authorities in Washington deemed appropriate to restore morality to Cuban administration. In the frustration over his powerlessness, the American ambassador could see "no remedy except in merciless publicity."[8] Two years later, a bit more optimistic over the state of affairs in Cuba, Crowder saw in Chapman's manuscript a diplomatic weapon to be held in reserve as a deterrent against future corruption in Cuba:

> Should Cuba again revert to a government of graft the manuscript of Dr. Chapman with some revision might well be published as an appropriate method of giving merciless publicity to facts which would awaken the public conscience of Cuba and justify not only before Latin America but before the world any corrective action which our Government might be compelled to take.[9]

Officials in Washington and Havana provided full cooperation to facilitate Chapman's research in Cuba. In April 1924, Crowder sought State Department authorization for Chapman to examine Embassy records, with the understanding that all precautions would be taken to avoid furnishing "any basis for any inference that his comments and

5. Crowder to Secretary of State, Havana, May 27, 1926, RG 59, 837.41/–.
6. Keppel to Morrow, New York, January 10, 1924, Morrow Papers. Charles Chapman to Crowder, Berkeley, April 28, 1926, Crowder Papers.
7. Crowder to Francis White, Havana, April 22, 1924, Crowder Papers.
8. Crowder to Chapman, Havana, Nov. 9, 1925, Crowder Papers.
9. Crowder to Secretary of State, Havana, May 27, 1926, RG 59, 837.41/–.

conclusions were inspired by the Department or by this Embassy."[10] The State Department limited Chapman's use of the Embassy archives to specific requests based on subjects, individuals, cases, and periods;[11] this authorization was subsequently expanded to permit examination of general records, with a proviso prohibiting copying and attribution.[12] The Embassy staff, moreover, cooperated with the American historian. Commercial attaché reports, military attaché analyses, and consular records were placed at Chapman's disposal; the Berkeley professor was in frequent conference with virtually all ranking members of Embassy officialdom.[13]

Disagreement between Chapman the historian and Crowder the diplomat over interpretations and methods soon strained working relationships. Chapman's investigation into the Second Intervention, in one case, produced evidence imputing graft and corruption to Provisional Governor Charles E. Magoon. "I am sorry this is so," Chapman wrote Crowder, "but though I were ten times an American I am also a historian and will not whitewash a man who doesn't deserve it."[14] Crowder objected to Chapman's conclusions and prepared for Chapman a list of persons capable of vouching for the personal integrity of the former Provisional Governor.[15]

Crowder also disapproved of the use of interviews, particularly of Cuban leaders, as a method of collecting data for the study. On this issue, too, Chapman resisted the Ambassador's attempt to direct his research:

> If you mean by this that interviews with living persons who have witnessed, or perhaps played a part in, the history of the Cuban Republic, are to be disregarded I cannot agree with you. Furthermore there is no bit of evidence so filled with error in Hispanic American history as that of official public documents. That is one of the first lessons that the Hispanicist learns.[16]

By September 1924, Crowder sensed that Chapman was unwilling to conform completely to Embassy orthodoxy. "I have been much disappointed with his methods," Crowder lamented, "and while I concede his industry, I am beginning to doubt his judgment." Certainly,

10. Crowder to White, Havana, April 22, 1924, Crowder Papers.
11. White to Crowder, Washington, April 30, 1924, Crowder Papers.
12. White to Crowder, Washington, Nov. 29, 1924, Crowder Papers.
13. Crowder to Keppel, Havana, Oct. 16, 1925, Crowder Papers.
14. Chapman to Crowder, Berkeley, Aug. 26, 1924, Crowder Papers.
15. Crowder to Pershing, Havana, Sept. 24, 1924, Crowder Papers. See also Chapman, *A History of the Cuban Republic*, pp. 234-235. (All citations hereinafter are drawn from the 1969 reprinting of the 1927 ed.)
16. Chapman to Crowder, Berkeley, Aug. 26, 1924, Crowder Papers.

Crowder concluded, "I did not intend to initiate a History of the Republic of Cuba with the expectation that it would be used to spread gossip or defame honest men."[17]

The scholar and the policy maker grew increasingly estranged over specific issues and interpretations. By early 1925, however, the issue no longer confined itself to fine points of interpretation and methodology but involved the fate of the entire manuscript. Crowder had had a change of heart—he no longer saw a need for a history of Cuba. The passage of time had witnessed a change in the Cuban scenario. Zayas had been defeated at the Liberal Party nominating convention; Gerardo Machado, campaigning on a platform of "moralization," had been elected President. Crowder was now optimistic over the future of Cuba. As a result of his friendship with the new President-elect, he acquired a new sense of importance. The Chapman manuscript, nearing completion, however, threatened this new harmony in Havana. The same reasons that had inspired the project at the outset—policy considerations—were now invoked to force revisions under the threat of suppression. In March 1925, Chapman sought the Ambassador's approval to publish in article form some of his findings on the lottery system. Crowder expressed considerable reservation, outlining for the first time the policy implications of publishing Chapman's research:

> There is an altered situation to deal with which causes me some hesitation in approving the enclosure for publication. In the first place, I have to think of the incoming administration—of General Machado who has been outspoken as to the reforms he will initiate, and most outspoken as to the friendly attitude of coöperation which he proposes to maintain with the Embassy and with the Government of the United States. He comes into office May 20th and he needs the support of the people of Cuba as well as that of the United States. Whether a publication of your severe arraignment of Cuba's most iniquitous and corrupting institution will hurt or help him is to be seen. Next month he is to visit Washington and confer with President Coolidge and Secretary Kellogg. Of course, our State Department has all this information on file and is informed but the public is not informed as it will be upon publication over your signature of the article you have written. I may well add that the Cuban critics of the lottery and other forms of corruption and graft have recently withheld their criticism out of a desire not to embarrass the President-elect. Can you not defer publication at least until after Machado is inaugurated?[18]

17. Crowder to Pershing, Havana, Sept. 24, 1924, Crowder Papers.
18. Crowder to Chapman, Havana, March 21, 1925, Crowder Papers.

The "merciless publicity" of misgovernment that Crowder had so eagerly encouraged two years earlier was no longer appropriate. "Relations between nations are always variable and delicate," Crowder explained to Chapman. "What seems to be fitting for today is wholly inapplicable tomorrow."[19] By late 1925, Crowder was sufficiently concerned over Chapman's "drastic criticism" of Cuban administration to write to Keppel, asking that Carnegie examine the manuscript "with a view to such modification of statement as will give us reasonable assurance that nothing unpleasant will occur in the relations between the two countries."[20] Pursuant to Crowder's request, the Carnegie Foundation informed Chapman of the necessity to alter portions of his manuscript to conform to the Ambassador's proposed revisions:

> A letter has been received from General Crowder calling attention to the changed conditions in Cuba and stating that President Machado now has the confidence of the Cuban people and has made very fair promises of improvement in conditions in Cuba. The General intimates that from his reading of some of your tentative chapters, he fears that a bad impression might be created by too drastic criticism of the conditions obtaining under previous administrations, and suggests that because of new conditions the effect of the book might be opposite to that intended. Under these circumstances, it will probably be advisable for us to make a very careful study of the manuscript before it is submitted to the publishers. Perhaps, in light of the General's suggestions, you may think it advisable to make some modifications.[21]

Chapman refused to submit the manuscript to Carnegie's authorities for revision. "I consider myself a historian," the Berkeley professor wrote, "and not a propagandist, and can write history only in the way that I understand the facts. You can suppress my volume if you desire, but I cannot consent to have it changed in the direction you suggest."[22]

Having failed to convince Chapman to submit the manuscript for revision to the Carnegie Foundation, Crowder secured State Department support for the proposed modifications. The Ambassador urged Butler, "in the interest of cordial relations between the two countries," to refer the manuscript to the State Department.[23] Crowder reminded

19. Crowder to Chapman, Havana, Nov. 9, 1925, Crowder Papers.
20. Crowder to Keppel, Havana, Oct. 16, 1925, Crowder Papers.
21. Henry S. Haskell to Chapman, New York, Oct. 23, 1925, Crowder Papers.
22. Chapman to Haskell, Berkeley, Oct. 28, 1925, Crowder Papers.
23. Crowder to Nicholas M. Butler, Havana, n.d., in Crowder to Secretary of State, Havana, May 27, 1926, RG 59, 837.41/—. Crowder to Haskell, Havana, June 20, 1926, Crowder Papers.

Washington that since the inauguration of Machado, "all talk of graft in the *national* administration has ceased, and I think it entirely accurate to say that in this regard the Government of Cuba will stand favorable comparison with our own. No one could have anticipated at the time that this historical work was undertaken that Cuba would ever elect a President who would accomplish over night such a miraculous result."[24] The State Department concurred, asking Crowder to inform the appropriate Carnegie Foundation officials of Washington's interest in reviewing the manuscript to make the recommendations that a "careful study of the work would seem to warrant on behalf of good relations between this country and Cuba."[25]

Compromise saved the manuscript from what promised to be an endless succession of reviews and revisions. Chapman did not share Crowder's enthusiasm for Machado but was "willing to give the benefit of every doubt,—to allow it to appear without asserting it that he may be the Cuban 'Moses' to lead that island out of the wilderness."[26] The necessary emendations were made in the closing chapter of the study, "The Future of Cuba: A Question."[27] More important, however, Chapman indicated that the conditions examined in the book related specifically to the period preceding Machado's inauguration, adding that "encouraging reports have come to hand to give reason to hope that initial steps may have been taken" to "make the government attain the level of decency that most other factors in Cuban life have already reached."[28]

Chapman's study, however, retained in its final forms all the elements inherent in the original design. Cynical, often contemptuous of Cuban politics, Chapman succeeded in conveying an impression of a republic apparently hopelessly overwhelmed by the responsibilities of self-government, solvent at all only because charitable American statesmanship kept unworthy governments afloat; only American virtues

24. Crowder to Secretary of State, Havana, May 27, 1926, RG 59, 837.41/–. Emphasis in the original.

25. Joseph C. Crew to Crowder, Washington, June 23, 1926, RG 59, 837.41/1.

26. Chapman to Crowder, Berkeley, Oct. 28, 1925, Crowder Papers.

27. Chapman, *A History of the Cuban Republic*, pp. 637-655.

28. Ibid., pp. vii-viii. This conformed to still another State Department request: Francis White, the Chief of the Latin American Division, wrote, "General Crowder's idea was a good one when conceived, that is at the heyday of Cuban governmental corruption under Zayas. . . . I agree with him that now Machado is running a good Govt. We don't want to lambast Cuba too hard. If publication at this time is insisted on, it might be possible to solve this difficulty by making it abundantly clear that this is a book of conditions prior to 1925 and that under Machado there has been a great change." White to J. Morgan, Washington, n.d., RG 59, 837.41/–.

restrained Cuban vices. Echoing original American policy imperatives, Chapman wrote, "Unless the United States is willing to render Cuba yet more assistance, the island republic is not likely for many years to be anything but the plaything and football of the political class, which represents little more than itself, and not the best interests of the country."[29] Reviewing Crowder's bout with Zayas, Chapman inveighed against "self-styled nationalists," ridiculed Cuban charges of imperialism, and lamented the "'new low' in shameless political depravity."[30] Indeed, for Chapman the issues in 1923 were clearly self-evident:

> For two years . . . the evils were held in check and something in the way of reform momentarily accomplished, through the presence of Crowder, who had the backing of the United States. These two men, Zayas and Crowder, who might almost be symbolized as 'Evil' and 'Good,' dominated the years 1921-1923. For a while, 'Good' was almost more influential than 'Evil,' but at length the latter won.[31]

The study conveyed a picture of Cuba that no doubt would have earlier delighted Crowder. Reviewers discerned—and accepted—Chapman's construct and added impetus from the outside to the "merciless publicity." "The book is an important one," Mary Wilhemine Williams wrote, "and should be of interest to all Americans, but especially to those who worked for the independence of Cuba, achieved at the cost of several thousand American lives. Certainly, in the past quarter century 'Cuba Libre' has given little proof that it was worth the sacrifice."[32] The *American Political Science Review* announced that Chapman's study seemed "to prove conclusively that the work of both General Wood and General Crowder was of superlative value to the development of the Cuban Republic."[33] The *New York Times* praised the "thankless" task undertaken by Chapman. Professor Chapman, the review suggested, "had to put things into the record that make unpleasant, in fact, ugly reading. He furnishes evidence that has only been hinted at by others. It is largely circumstantial, but the impression left is that if the United States, by virtue of the Platt Amendment (Permanent Treaty), did not stand back of the government of the republic, sustaining, restraining, admonishing and ready to invoke the

29. Chapman, *A History of the Cuban Republic,* p. 647.
30. Ibid., pp. 413-449.
31. Ibid., p. 413.
32. *HAHR,* 8:2 (May 1928), 226.
33. *American Political Science Review,* 21 (Aug. 1927), 681.

power of intervention given it by the amendment, Cuba would be a house divided against itself and in the end might be ruined by its politicians."[34]

The extent to which Chapman consciously lent his talents in the pursuit of policy objectives is unclear. He plainly resisted overt efforts to direct his research and manipulate his interpretations. The very quality of the sources made available to the Berkeley historian, however, could not have helped but to influence, however subtly, Chapman's judgments of the Republic's history.[35] A careful reading of the *History* reveals a striking conformity to the policy imperatives that inspired its writing; the study constructed a picture of Cuba tempered to a very large extent by the policy requirements of the moment. That these policy needs proved inexpedient several years later did not minimize the impact of earlier diplomatic objectives on the study. As such, *A History of the Cuban Republic* represents an early effort to employ scholarship in the pursuit of state policy.

34. *New York Times*, May 15, 1927, p. 3.

35. Chapman was not entirely unaware of this influence or, for that matter, Crowder's objectives. "I intend to use," he wrote, "the materials you gave me as the principal factor in my discussions of the workings of Cuban government. I also shall make use of the documents you gave me concerning education, although I am satisfied that I need something more on that score. The greatest help you could give me,—help which would at the same time tend toward the establishment of your views,—would be to provide me from time to time with such other materials as you and your staff are able to get together in well formulated statements." Chapman to Crowder, Berkeley, September 19, 1924, Crowder Papers.