

Relations With The United States

Autor:

- [Castro Ruz, Fidel](#)

Gonzalez: I am now going to bring up to the fullest extent the so-called fear of the Americans. It is well known that Cuba, through you, recently won the war against the foreign press, the vendor of poison, which represented the executions before firing squads as a matter of government cruelty, etc. However, there seems to be a sort of hidden plot that is endeavoring to have the Revolutionary Government and you especially appear as enemies of the United States Government. I was at the Palace on a night in which you spoke to Dubois, I believe, and explained to him exhaustively what your position was. However, it would be useful for the purpose of the triumph of the Revolution if you went over this matter again; that is, tell us what is your real concept of the relations between Cuba and the United States.

Castro: Look. The Cuban Government does not wish to be the enemy of the Government of the United States nor the enemy of any government in the world. I believe that at this time we are an entirely sovereign and free

people, and as a sovereign and free people, one that has the right to follow its political line, due to the same right that the United States has to follow its own, and therefore, what we cannot permit is allow a policy to be imposed upon us, do you understand? Now, it is natural that there has been some reference to the United States because we are very near the United States and the interventions, the threats, those things have always come from that country. And inasmuch as that proximity is what has caused that kind of preoccupation, that is why our problems are caused by it, and besides, because you know that this is the real truth, and we want to say the truth. We have been historically the victims of the powerful influence of the United States in the destinies of our country. That is something that Maceo as well as Marti and all the leaders of our independence understood and were greatly worried about. You also know that in Cuba there has always been an annexion current, that annexionism was the current in the history of the nation which opposed the current of independence, that a part of the people, the pro-slavery part, the part that was interested in maintaining the institution of slavery was chiefly in favor of annexion to the United States, that that current seeking annexion has lasted throughout our history and that very often, when the difficulties Cuba confronted to obtain its independence from Spain were realized, that current that was more conformist, that current that was most lukewarm, which looked at independence only through economic factors toward the United States, always came to the surface.

Everyone remembers the statements of Saco in favor of Cuba's independence, in defense of Cuban nationalism. Thus it is that annexionism was always a danger here. At the end of the war of independence when it seemed that at last there was the thesis that had been fully triumphant, when the Spanish armies were virtually defeated, because we have also engaged in a war very similar to the war fought by the Cubans against the Spaniards, I say to you that the Cubans would have defeated the Spaniards in the end. I guarantee that the Cubans would have ended by defeating the Spaniards, that even if there had not been American intervention the Cubans would have conquered their freedom and above all they would have conquered it very much sooner is so many of their arms had not been embargoed in the United States, if those arms had not been held back. I believe that a policy much more in line with what Cuba required, instead of an intervention that cost American blood, would have been to allow rifles be sent to the Cubans, because what Maceo, Maximo Gomez and Calixto Garcia said

was: let us bring in 30,000 more rifles and we will end the war immediately. It would have been better to have sold them the rifles, to have recognized their belligerency, that the rifles were delivered to them, and the Cubans would have conquered their independence. How different would the course of the nation have been!

In the first place the loyalists would have been killed by firing squads, because Maximo Gomez and Maceo shot the loyalists and then all those gentlemen, later would not have been influential as they were in the country. They would have started by receiving an exemplary punishment in the history of our country. They saved themselves. Who saved them? The American occupation. What other evil immediately affected the Cuban Revolution? A terrible evil. The upstarts, the operators, the opportunists, and so that this may be understood it will suffice to ponder on this: A Revolution such as this, with so much suffering by the people, with so much popular emotion, must defend itself from the opportunists and the operators. The first thing you know, they are even in Columbia itself dressed in uniforms....people who never fired a single shot anywhere. The first you know they have been employed at a Ministry just because they went there (applause). And before you know it, the little cousin, the kid brother, uncle Joe and the old pal and all the rest of them are working for the government. Understand? In spite of watchfulness, of the purity of spirit of this Revolution, of the emotion, enthusiasm and support from the people with the revolutionaries in power, the operators and opportunists latch on, and you have to be very alert and vigilant against them. Then, look back and think what the end of that revolution (the war for independence) would have been, with those soldiers who were modest, modest like the Sierra Maestra peasants, modest like the men who have waged this Revolution, just think what it would have meant at that time when they were not even allowed to enter Santiago nor even to enter Habana. The American authorities came, and knew no one, and the opportunist, the person who spoke English, those who had some preparation, the operator who remained here, he took over the public administration, he took over the social events, the pages of the newspapers, and the noble peasant was given \$5,000, he was offered a pension and sent back to the country where he did not even own his land. The henchman remained here doing what he pleased, the war criminals, the loyalists, all of them protected, and at the end of two years they gave the country a government, at a time when it could no longer be a revolutionary government and with the sword of Damocles over its head, a Platt Amendment over its head. What happened? Conformism developed, it was created, because in the face of the first errors of the Government if the people wanted to protest, if they struggled against the situation, matters were not corrected and they were told that they were not patriotic, because they were going to sacrifice their independence, because if there was not order in the country the Americans would intervene.

The two things were created, conformism on one hand and fatalism on the other. Conformism regarding public immoralities, and the comfortable posture of waiting for the Americans to come and solve all the problems, and whoever was slapped around could not rebel, because if he struck back he was a patriot, but to keep him from hitting back he was told that the Americans would come if anyone raised a ruckus (applause). Now, how does that affect our destiny? By producing all these evils, and that dust brought this mud, and that impunity, that conformism, that lack of patriotism, was what brought this, and because, besides, the dictatorship undoubtedly had the support of the United States. That is a fact. (Applause)

For a series of reasons I am trying to explain what I believe and I am a man who holds no hatred against any country, I have no reason to feel any hatred against the people of the United States, because I know the sentiments of the people of the United States, because I know the sentiments of the people of the United States and besides because I know that a considerable part of the people of the United States has not let itself be influenced by the campaigns of the international press agencies and has not allowed itself to be influenced by all the lies that have been said of us, but I want to finish explaining this. The great truth is that Batista succeeded in maintaining control over the soldiers, to a great extent by telling them that he had the support of the United States, and when three Sherman tanks came he told them, look, we have the support of the United States; and in the minds of those soldiers, because it is a non-revolutionary mentality, the mentality of a mercenary soldier, of a soldier who took cigars, cigarettes and rum without paying for the same, they were told that the Americans were with them and that was

all; and they backed up Batista because the Americans were with him, and also for another reason, because everyone knows that it is historically true that Batista in the year 1934 overthrew the first revolutionary government of the year 1933, and did so due to the influence and pressure of Mr.

Jefferson Caffery who was the American Ambassador here then, this is a historical fact. So, Jefferson Caffery being the American Ambassador was the first to insist on Batista for us, and we had him for eleven years. Then this next time, when Batista carried out his coup, he found military missions; they were here already when he came, but others were sent, tanks were sent, aircraft were sent and all manner of resources, that is all true. Moreover, the American Ambassador always had great influence here, Gardner as well as Smith had great influence here. Batista always operated having the American problem against him (Ed.-Sic.) Therefore, up to these recent times we have been suffering the consequences of the intervention of the Ambassadors and of the American diplomats in Cuba's policies. This is the truth and as the truth it must be said.

And I am going to tell you something more. We have acted very properly because I want you to know that the American military mission became the prisoner here, de facto, the military mission was the prisoner of the Revolutionary Army. Why? Because the soldiers surrendered and the American military mission was at headquarters together with the soldiers, and when an army surrenders, the trainers who were also there are also prisoners. Yet, we at no time treated them as prisoners, due to our courtesy, and because we were not in a state of mind to cause international problems for the Revolution, and were as courteous as we could be. We then told them, naturally, not to continue teaching us as they were teaching Batista's soldiers (applause). So, the question started off with the matter of the relations (laughter). On the fourth day we began to punish the criminals and a regular Pearl Harbor was made by the international agencies. They took advantage of the freedom we have here.

No one died, no one had even a stone thrown at him, no one got a little note, and they spent 30 days, 40 days doing terrible things. Lies, international intrigue against the revolution, and no one bothered them.

As unequivocal proof of the strength of the Revolutionary Government which allowed them to tell all those lies, until the day might arrive to shut them off, because if we had wanted to do so we could have told them to get the hell out of Cuba. However, we did not do so, and why? Because we have a strong position on our principles, because we do not allow ourselves to be provoked and because we are strong in our truth and strong in the support of the people. We had nothing to fear, we called in all the newsmen of the Continent and won the Battle of the Truth in spite of all the international agencies, and that is why that change has been brought about, but let us make it clear that the hostile attitude did not come from us. That there has been a hostile attitude against the Cuban people and their interests for 50 years is true. The hostile attitude has not been ours. The hostile attitude has been theirs, it is not for us to correct ourselves, the correction should come from them. (Applause)

Wanguemert: Dr. Castro I would like to ask you a single question and it is this. Would it not be possible for that history of the first 50 years of the Republic which you have given us so admirably, with concise words but true, to be the history taught in the schools, so that our children might learn this?

Dr. Castro: I believe that the next time we will have to interview you (Laughter). Let me tell you this, so that you will know how the things of this country are written about. There was a Cuban history here, a history that is made up of ten volumes that has been written in collaboration, the history of the Cuban nation, you have seen a series of authors. And do you know who wrote the history of contemporary times? None less than Mr. Remos, a Batistiano. Do you believe it fair for the history of Cuba to be written by a Mr. Remos? Naturally, in that history Batista is a perfect personage. But this is shameful and it should not be only our shame but mainly of the publishers who published that history, and it is shameful that a Batistiano should be called upon to write the history the Batista epoch, and when other persons were called upon to write the history of the past, because if it is of interest to learn what happened three centuries ago it is much more of interest to the people to learn what has happened

here during the last fifty years, or forty years or thirty years, and here in the text books...I hope that at least the text books do not put me down in pictures, because I hate to see and dislike text books with photographs of the rulers, with adulation, lies, falsity, and I believe that the teachers that have had to stand for this should be the first, the pioneers, in fundamentally changing the truth, in fundamentally changing the history that is taught to the children who are taught to discern and think things out, because the children of today think for themselves. Anyone who speaks to a 6, 7, 8 or 9 year old child will see that he knows almost as much as a grown up. He has a wide awake intelligence, all the problems could be explained to them and a different history taught them. I believe it is essential for revolutionary writers, honest pedagogues, to take on this task, as you have said, of correcting history and I believe that that suggestion of yours should be taken up by the Ministry of Education in order that a history might begin to be written in an impartial way, not a history that will praise us, but a history that will teach the truth; our history should not be written now, our history should be written after we have passed on, but at least the true history of Cuba should be known by the children and be written by revolutionary writers.

Bravo: That long drawn out history of interference has led to a phrase which, if I am not mistaken, went this way: "against foreign interference, domestic virtue".

Castro: Naturally!

Bravo: It should be added to by speaking not only of virtue, but of intelligence, valor, decision and courage.

Castro: I agree.

Gonzalez: I only wanted to make the question clear, which Dr. Castro has so brilliantly replied to, in the following way: I would like him to explain that the new concept is that should govern relations between Cuba and the United States?

Castro: Well, a concept of mutual respect, a concept of friendship, because our relations, we have friendly relations with the United States, friendly relations with all the countries with which such a relation is justified and relations with all the countries that are ready to have friendly relations with us (Applause). And therefore on what should such relations now be based? Well then. They should be relations interested in the interests of Cuba. For instance, in the commercial field I believe that Cuba should sell to whomever wants to buy from us, that Cuba as a free and sovereign country that produces, should sell its sugar and its products to all the countries that wish to buy them, (Applause) because if they wish to buy sugar from us, we are not going to eat our sugar in order not to sell it to Russia. The sugar, if the Russians want to buy our sugar, we will sell sugar to the Russians; if the Chinese want to buy sugar from us, we will sell sugar to the Chinese. I believe that that should be the policy, and with countries that respect us and with countries that do not attack us, the same relations, that will be our attitude, friendship because they are our friends, and we have nothing against the United States, nothing. If they wish to be our friend under conditions of mutual respect, and more so on their part because they are a great people, powerful, rich, while we are a small people, we are a people trying to solve our great problems and therefore I believe that we have the right to be permitted to solve them with our natural resources, we are not going to the United States to take anything away from them, we are not going to the United States to steal anything from anyone, we are not going to the United States to deprive anyone of work, we simply believe that, for instance, what right can those large interests which have invested here have to influence the policy of the United States toward Cuba. I ask myself this question very often, every time there is talk of the slightest measure to the benefit of this country someone has to protest. For instance, now we have Senator "Allender"?...

Masso: Ellender. **Castro:** Ellender and a few days ago he made a statement saying that we must wait to see what the policy of the new government is to be and what the policy on the tariffs is to be, because if this is so, then they will see what kind of sugar quota they will assign to us. Then it seems as if we here are always merely like a ball, that when there is the danger that there will be no sugar

crop, comes a threat, because there may not be a sugar corp. That when there is going to be crop, a threat to the effect that they will not buy the crop, and simply because of the most insignificant measures that this country needs to adopt to solve its problems, we are threatened economically that they are not going to buy our sugar. Then, if we are going to set up a factory of this or that, that they will not buy our sugar; if we are to promote some industry like rice production, that they won't buy our sugar, if we are going to promote the production of lard, that they are not going to buy our sugar. All right then, because we are going to produce something, let them not buy our sugar. We will eat our sugar or will sell sugar to other countries (Applause). Therefore, is not that policy most unfair? What is the most unfair part of such a policy? Very simple. The United States is a very rich country, a very powerful country which invests in instruments of war forty or fifty billion dollars every year. And when the Government of this small country which is at peace, which has suffered so much, which only wants to develop its riches, the riches of this island, because it is for that that we live here and it was given to us by nature, this island which we wish to exploit for those of us who live here, a right held by all the peoples of the world, and we want to organize ourselves according to our convenience, because a company might lose ten million dollars every year or because others are going to lose twenty millions, Cuba is threatened. That is, that a country, when there is the slightest threat for one millionth part, because everything that those interests may sacrifice here by our undertaking a tariff reform is but one millionth part, one millionth part of the riches of the United States and it is sufficient for that one millionth part to be threatened for them to selfishly hurl a lot of threats at Cuba that they are going to take its sugar business from it. Actually, if they do not want to buy our sugar, it is not necessary to eat bitter things because sugar sweetens, and sugar is no favor on their part, we do them the favor of producing the sugar and selling it to them (Applause).

Bravo: Allow me to interrupt. Do you believe that the fact that Washington is sending us a career diplomat as Ambassador, who has a reputation for being democratic and liberal, might be interpreted as the first sign of rectification by the U. S. Government?

Castro: I hope so, and to me it seems to be that way. There is no doubt that the sending of such an Ambassador is a positive symptom. Let's hope he comes with a good sense of justice and not with threats. Let's hope he comes with the justice that they are going to buy all the sugar and that there will be no reduction in the quota and that they are going to treat Cuba as Cuba deserves to be treated and then he will undoubtedly be received very well here.

Bravo: Many thanks.

Gonzalez: I was going to add to the inventory of threats that the United States always makes, that when someone wants a change in the foreign policy, the foreign policy of the United States with regard to Cuba there is always the threat of the loss of the visa, is not this so?

Castro: Loses what?

Gonzalez: A visa to go to the United States.

Castro: After all, one lost it formerly for the mere fact of being against Batista.

Gonzalez: Exactly.

Bravo: Mr. Maso, if you please.

Castro: For instance, I remember that on one occasion I was given a visa for a single entry while I was in Mexico and the second time they invented a series of things and refused the visa. I am not holding this against anyone but I merely wanted to tell this to you here.

Gonzalez: I mentioned this fact because it has always been a threat that has been held over the heads of all Cubans who in one way or another have had an independent view.

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Castro: We are exactly the opposite. We say that no matter how much we are attacked by those newspapers all the Americans who want to can come here, they will be respected, they will be well treated, if they act and behave properly here, and will be treated with the greatest affection. So, in contrast to them, who do not want us to go there, we want many Americans to visit us to fill the hotels and go to Varadero and buy Cuban products. We want a prosperous tourism here.

Lugar:

Cuba

Fecha:

19/02/1959

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