Castro's Cuba in World Affairs, 1959-79
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nical services . . . that are consistent with the purposes of the Fund.' Thus, if agreement were reached among member countries to set up something like a Substitution Account, such an arrangement could be administered by the Fund under its present powers.

Interest in a Substitution Account may well be stimulated by the recent agreement to set up a European Monetary System.[2] One feature of this System is the requirement to deposit, for the moment in the form of renewable swaps, 20 per cent of the participating countries' reserves in gold and in dollars in return for European Currency Units (écus). This basically amounts to a form of Substitution Account, for both gold and dollars, on a regional basis. The fact that events have led a number of European countries to establish the new scheme may well lead to pressures to fashion a similar agreement on a world-wide scale.

In any case, it would seem wise to start contingency planning for such an arrangement in the months to come.

[2] For background, see Geoffrey Denton, 'European monetary co-operation: the Bremen proposals', *The World Today*, November 1978.

Castro's Cuba in world affairs, 1959–79

GORDON CONNELL-SMITH

Since the revolution exactly twenty years ago, Cuba's role in international affairs has been played increasingly as part of the Soviet system, but it has reflected mutual perceptions of common interest rather than a traditional patron–client relationship.

LATIN America traditionally has lain outside the mainstream of world affairs. This is not surprising, for the region contains no major powers, and throughout the twentieth century it has been the special sphere of influence of the strongest nation in the world. In accordance with the Monroe Doctrine (dating from 1823), the United States has forbidden other powers to extend their 'systems' to any part of the Americas. This has meant, in practice, limiting the international relationships of Latin America outside the western hemisphere. The United States has brought the Latin American republics into the 'inter-American system', whose centrepiece since 1948 has been the Organization of American States (OAS). An important function of this system has been to secure Latin American support for the United States policy of preventing extra-

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continental powers from 'intervening' in the affairs of the western hemisphere.[1]

Among the countries of Latin America, Cuba, occupying a strategically important geographical position at the entrance to the Gulf of Mexico and only ninety miles from the shores of Florida, has long been of particular concern to the United States. Until the Cuban revolution the island was dominated both economically and politically by its giant neighbour, who still maintains a naval base (Guantánamo) on its territory. Yet this small country, so closely tied to the United States, was to be the instrument through which the latter's greatest rival was to introduce its system into Latin America in defiance of the Monroe Doctrine.

Since Fidel Castro's alignment with the Soviet Union, Cuba has played a role in world affairs unprecedented for a Latin American country. The Soviet challenge, so close to United States territory, at once made Cuba a focal point in the Cold War. When, in 1962, the Russians introduced nuclear missiles into the island, the world faced its most serious crisis since the end of the Second World War. But not only did the Cuban revolution give the Soviet Union a foothold in Latin America; it also aroused the interest of the People's Republic of China, whose leaders entertained hopes of winning over Castro and promoting pro-Chinese revolutions elsewhere in the region. Thus Cuba came to be involved in the Sino-Soviet dispute as well as in the rivalry between Russia and the United States. Meanwhile, Castro's government was developing its commercial relations with Western industrialized countries and Japan, which were not averse to taking advantage of opportunities offered by the virtual ending of United States trade with Cuba. At the same time, Cuba has played a prominent role among countries of the Third World, and especially in the 'struggle against colonialism'. This last has been highlighted by its involvement in Africa, though Castro's policy in Angola and other parts of the continent has received considerable Soviet support. Within the western hemisphere, hostility between revolutionary Cuba and the United States has weakened the inter-American system and the special relationship between the two Americas. For considerable resentment was aroused in Latin America by United States pressure to secure support for its policy towards the Castro government and its several interventions to forestall further revolutions in the region. Encouraged by Cuba's example in this regard, other Latin American countries have taken steps to broaden their international relationships outside the western hemisphere, including the development of commercial relations with members of the Communist system.[2]

[1] For background information on the inter-American system, as well as analysis of the Cuban issue in the OAS, see Gordon Connell-Smith, *The Inter-American System* (London: OUP for RIIA, 1966).

[2] i.e. the system of international relationships between countries having Communist governments. Such countries in Eastern Europe form the nucleus of

A Soviet puppet?

In the last twenty years, then, Cuba has played an unusually active international role for such a small country—especially one located in a region traditionally on the sidelines of world affairs. But has it done so as a mere puppet of the Soviet Union, and not as an actor in its own right?

Such certainly has been the contention of the United States, whose leaders have always maintained that Castro 'betrayed the revolution' and handed his country over to the Russians. This accords with the traditional view of the United States that its weak neighbours must be under either its own control or that of its potential enemies: hence the Monroe Doctrine and the establishment of its hegemony over Latin America. It accords also with Cuba's historical experience of exchanging the status of Spanish colony for that of United States satellite following the Spanish-American War of 1898. In other words, the Cuban revolution has brought another change of patrons, and not true independence. But in an important sense the United States contention has been self-validating. A genuine revolution in Cuba necessarily involved the end of the privileged position hitherto enjoyed by the United States in the island's affairs. If Castro was determined—as the event proved he was—to carry out such a revolution, he could survive the ensuing United States hostility only by securing the support of an extra-continental power.[3] That power had to be the Soviet Union, for which the Cuban revolution offered an opportunity—previously only dreamed of by its leaders—of challenging the United States in its own sphere of influence. Thus was Cuba to move inexorably from the inter-American system into that of the Soviet Union.

At first the United States could not accept the permanence of the Cuban revolution. But its leaders shrank from openly invading Cuba to overthrow Castro, and tried to achieve the desired end through diplomatic and economic pressures.[4] A trade embargo was imposed upon the island and efforts were made to secure the support of allies in making the isolation of the Castro government effective.[5] The great majority of the other Latin American governments co-operated with the United States,

the 'Soviet system', which includes the Council for Mutual Economic Assistance (Comecon).

[3] Cuba needed not only protection against whatever military or political actions the United States might take to overthrow its government, but also new commercial relationships—above all, new markets for its sugar.

[4] There was, of course, the Bay of Pigs fiasco of April 1961, when the United States sponsored an invasion of the island by Cuban exiles. Much more recently, a United States Senate Select Committee report was published containing evidence of a number of plots conceived by officials of the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) to assassinate Dr Castro and other Cuban leaders.

[5] The stated objective of 'isolating' Cuba was to limit its ability to 'subvert' other Latin American governments. It also aimed to make sustaining Castro as expensive as possible for the Soviet Union.

but their ties with Cuba had never been very significant. Allies outside the western hemisphere, however (as has already been noted), were not prepared to do so. Cuba was able substantially to broaden its international relations with non-Communist countries and, most importantly, its trade with them. It became Canada's principal customer in Latin America, while Japan and Spain have been its most important trading partners outside the Communist system. Cuba's ability to import machinery and other goods from non-Communist industrialized nations has depended crucially upon the production of sugar and its price in the world market. Thus, when the world price of sugar rose to over sixty cents per pound in 1974, there was a spectacular increase in Cuba's trade with those countries. The dramatic fall of the price in 1976 brought a severe reduction in the import of advanced equipment from them, causing a serious cut-back in Cuba's five-year development programme.

Cuba's dependence upon the Soviet Union, and the importance of its trade with other members of Comecon, were therefore confirmed. Nevertheless, any hopes United States leaders may have entertained of Russia's being persuaded to dispense with such an expensive 'client' were unfulfilled. While not disposed to encourage a 'second Cuba' in Latin America, the Soviet Union by now was too deeply committed to sustaining Castro, and would lose enormous prestige in world affairs should it abandon him.[6] Not that relations between Cuba and the Soviet Union since 1959 have been uniformly friendly. In the early years of the Cuban revolution, the Russian leaders were very cautious about accepting it as 'socialist', and thereby incurring the obligations of support—and attendant risks—that would follow. They suspected Castro's ideological position, and regarded his militant call for revolutions in other parts of Latin America as unrealistic and needlessly provocative to the United States.[7] Relations between Havana and Moscow were strained by the missile crisis, the resolution of which, over Castro's head, seemed to confirm the assertion that he was no more than a pawn in the whole affair.

In the following year, however, the Soviet Union signed a generous trade agreement with Cuba. Ever since the early 1960s, in fact, long-term arrangements between the two countries have insulated Cuba from the extreme fluctuations of the world sugar market. The Soviet Union has bought Cuban sugar at prices significantly above those of the world market for most of this period, and it also has sold its exports to Cuba at generally low prices. In addition, since 1970 (the year of the failure of Castro's drive to achieve a ten-million ton sugar harvest), it has lent Cuba funds to cover its balance of payments deficit. Castro responded with firmer support for Soviet foreign policies, and by more closely

[6] To abandon Castro would be especially damaging in its dispute with China.

[7] For a useful analysis of relations between Russia and Cuba during most of the 1960s, with documentation, see Stephen Clissold (ed.), *Soviet Relations with Latin America, 1918–1968: A Documentary Survey* (London: OUP for RIIA, 1970).

identifying Cuba with the Communist system. By the mid-1960s he was paying little more than lip-service to the cause of armed revolution in other parts of Latin America. This was more to the liking of the Soviet leaders, who wanted to extend Russian influence in the region through developing relations with established governments. In 1968 Castro expressed support for the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia. In 1972 Cuba joined Comecon, and, three years later, a new constitution gave it political institutions comparable with those of the Soviet Union and the East European members of the Communist system.[8] By now Cuba was firmly on Russia's side in the Sino-Soviet dispute.

This had not always been the case. At first Cuba's relations with China were friendly, and Castro's revolutionary stance resembled that of the Chinese rather than the Russian leaders. China's hopes of using the Cuban revolution to promote its influence in Latin America were further encouraged by the coolness between Havana and Moscow immediately after the missile crisis. But Castro would not go beyond attempting to remain neutral in the increasingly acrimonious Sino-Soviet dispute, and his economic dependence upon the Soviet Union eventually ensured the Russians of his support. Early in 1966 he criticized the Chinese for failing to fulfil an important rice contract, and also accused them of interfering in Cuba's internal affairs. Relations between Cuba and China henceforth were generally to be cool, but recently they have become hostile. Cuba has bitterly attacked China for supporting the military government in Chile and groups favoured by the Western powers in Angola.[9] For its part, China has, among other criticisms of Castro's policies, described Cuban soldiers in Angola as satellite troops of Moscow.

Involvement in Africa

This description is not entirely a fair one. Certainly the Soviet Union has for some years shown a determination to increase its influence in Africa, and Cuba could not have sustained its activities there without large-scale Russian assistance. However, Cuba's role in Africa has not been one merely of carrying out Soviet policy: there have been common objectives. At an earlier stage, Cuban leaders displayed an interest in Africa which was, indeed, part of a revolutionary stance of which the Soviet Union disapproved at that time. For example, Che Guevara was active in the Congo in 1965, and Cuba's support for the Popular Movement for the Liberation of Angola (MPLA) goes back a long way. Cuban leaders often have emphasized the ethnic and cultural links between the people of Cuba and those of Africa, and Castro has described the Cubans as a 'Latin-African people'.[10] Cuba has enthusiastically espoused the

[8] There are important differences, however, notably those aspects embodying the personal role of Fidel Castro.

[9] The National Front for the Liberation of Angola (FNLA) and the National Union for the Total Independence of Angola (UNITA).

[10] See, for example, *Granma Weekly Review* (Havana), 2 May 1976, p. 3.

cause of African nationalism. Nor can it be doubted that Africa provided a more promising, and apparently safer, outlet for Castro's urge to export his revolution than did Latin America. And it has brought him no little prestige, since Cuba's intervention in Angola ensured the success of the MPLA, and helps to maintain it in power against guerrilla action by the defeated opposition. Cuba also contributed to Ethiopia's victory over Somalia in the Ogaden. The question now is whether Cuba (in concert with the Soviet Union) will undertake further major involvements[11] in Africa—especially in more immediately sensitive parts of the continent such as Namibia and Rhodesia—and, in that case, what the response will be not only of the Western powers, but also of those African countries such as Nigeria and Tanzania, which publicly have expressed approval of Cuba's role so far, yet must have misgivings about growing Soviet influence.[12]

Cuba's policy in Africa reflects not only its role in the struggle between the major powers, but also its affinity with the Third World. In fact, it embraces two roles. The concept of a 'Third World', whose members are drawn mainly from Africa, Asia and Latin America, emerged as a protest against the polarization of world affairs between the major powers ('non-alignment'), and stressed the fundamental division of the world into 'developed' and 'developing' countries (the 'North-South dialogue'). In spite of his close relationship with the Soviet Union, Castro has always identified Cuba with the Third World.[13] In the 1960s, he was very active in promoting 'Afro-Asian-Latin American Peoples' Solidarity', as his playing host to the Tricontinental Conference of revolutionary leaders in 1966 demonstrated. More recently, Cuba has been consolidating its position among the non-aligned governments. It has been able to do so because so many non-aligned countries still regard the United States rather than the Soviet Union as the principal 'imperialist threat' to themselves. Thus Cuba was able to surmount strong criticism of its Soviet-supported interventions in Angola and Ethiopia voiced at the conference of Foreign Ministers of the non-aligned countries held in Belgrade in July 1978. The sixth summit conference of the non-aligned movement is due to be held in Havana in September this year, after which Cuba automatically will be the movement's President for three years.[14]

[11] Cuba has supplied military and technical aid on a small scale to a number of other African countries and nationalist groups. The United States has accused it of supporting the Shaba rebels in Zaire, but Castro has denied this.

[12] For further analysis of Cuba's involvement in Africa and other related issues, see Gregory F. Treverton, 'Cuba after Angola', *The World Today*, January 1977.

[13] At the Belgrade conference of Foreign Ministers of the non-aligned countries, Cuba tried—unsuccessfully—to persuade the non-aligned movement to identify itself with the 'socialist countries'. See K. F. Cviic, 'Non-alignment's dilemmas', *ibid.*, September 1978.

[14] *Latin America Political Report* (London), vol. XII, no. 30, 4 August 1978, pp. 233–4.

Relations with Latin America

Cuba is not the only Latin American country to participate in the non-aligned movement, and a number of others attended the Belgrade conference.[15] The Cubans have contacts with other Latin American governments in many international organizations, although from early in 1962 they have been excluded from the inter-American system. In 1964 the Organization of American States imposed sanctions upon them: a measure which was not implemented by Mexico. Cuba had been condemned for acts of subversion against other Latin American countries, and notably Venezuela in 1963. When Castro's 'subversion' was reduced to little more than rhetoric in favour of armed revolution in the region, a feeling grew that sanctions were no longer justified. Some Latin American governments, including the Venezuelan, resumed diplomatic relations with Cuba in defiance of OAS resolutions. Eventually, in 1975, the OAS Foreign Ministers decided that members should be free to settle the matter for themselves. It is of interest that only one Latin American country, Costa Rica, has re-established relations with Castro since that decision. Not surprisingly, there is still considerable antipathy towards the Cuban revolution among the predominantly right-wing governments of the region.[16]

In spite of this antipathy, considerable resentment has been aroused in Latin America by pressure from the United States to secure compliance with its policy of isolating Cuba from the rest of the hemisphere. Even governments hostile to Castro regarded this pressure as intervention in their affairs. The issue of intervention has deep historical roots in inter-American relations, and stems, of course, from the immense imbalance of power between the two Americas. The question of Cuba has highlighted and exacerbated the essential division within the inter-American system. The United States, concerned, above all, with the challenge from 'international Communism', has seen the OAS primarily as an instrument for rallying Latin American support for its measures to meet that challenge; the countries of Latin America, preoccupied with problems of economic development, have hoped to secure through the OAS substantial aid and better terms of trade from the United States. Both parties have been disappointed. The Alliance for Progress, launched by President Kennedy in 1961, was an ambitious programme for Latin American economic and social development formulated in response to the Cuban challenge and stimulated by fears that revolution might spread to other parts of the region. Its failure increased Latin American disillusionment with the inter-American system.

In 1964, at the first United Nations Conference on Trade and Develop-

[15] Argentina and Peru were full participants. Bolivia, Brazil, Colombia, Ecuador, El Salvador, Mexico, Uruguay and Venezuela attended as observers.

[16] Yet, in recent years, Argentina has been an important trading partner of Cuba.

ment (UNCTAD), the countries of Latin America joined with the developing countries of Africa and Asia in demanding better terms of trade and economic aid from the industrialized powers. Subsequently, they formed with these other countries the 'Group of 77'. In 1975, the Latin American Economic System (SELA) was established, with Cuba as a member. Its programme is basically that of all developing countries: to transform their economic relations with the developed ones. SELA as yet is little more than an expression of aspirations, but its establishment has important implications for the future. Latin American governments supported 'The Charter of Economic Rights and Duties of States', adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in December 1974. Introduced by Mexico, and opposed by the United States and other leading industrialized countries, it is essentially a statement of the Third World position on major economic issues. These developments reflect a growing self-identification of Latin America with the Third World which clearly challenges the region's historic ties with the United States.

Thus the Cuban revolution and events which stemmed from it have given a powerful impetus to what has been called Latin America's 'new internationalism': a determination to break out of the limitations for so long imposed upon the region's international relationships by United States hegemony. This has so far manifested itself, above all, in the development of closer commercial relations with extra-continental powers, both non-Communist and Communist. Especially noteworthy, for example, are Latin America's trade with Japan and its expanding commercial relationship with China. Brazil, with its long-standing aspirations to become a world power, has been prominent in these developments—and, historically, it has been the most consistent ally of the United States within the inter-American system.

These developments should not be exaggerated. The United States still exerts considerable power and influence in Latin America. Relations with it remain of the greatest importance to all governments in the region, and crucial to not a few. United States policies are of considerable importance even to Cuba. Nevertheless, the traditional relationship between the two Americas—and the inter-American system which gives it institutional form—has been significantly weakened in the two decades since the Cuban revolution.

An historical process has begun which, on present evidence, is most unlikely to be reversed. Interestingly, a rapprochement between Cuba and the United States would further the process, since this could only be reached on the basis of a relationship very different from the one which existed before the Cuban revolution. In recent years, there have been a number of gestures on both sides indicating a desire to resolve differences. In September 1977, after a series of official and unofficial contacts—reportedly encouraged by messages, through intermediaries,

between President Carter and Dr Castro—'interest sections' were set up in Washington and Havana, in the Czech and Swiss embassies respectively: a modest step towards the resumption of diplomatic relations. But further progress has been prejudiced by Cuban activities in Africa, and Castro's vocal espousal of Puerto Rican nationalism. Moreover, formidable obstacles remain, such as the question of compensation for United States citizens whose property was expropriated by the Cuban government (with counter-claims from Cuba for the effects of the United States 'economic blockade'); and the future of the Guantánamo naval base, the relinquishment of which would be fiercely resisted in the United States, probably even more so following the Panama Canal treaties. Meanwhile, in November 1978, tension suddenly built up after a report that Russian MiG-23 aircraft, recently acquired by Cuba, might be capable of delivering nuclear weapons. The situation eased after the Soviet Union had given the United States assurances to the contrary.[17] But the episode was a reminder of the still significant role of Cuba in relations between the two leading world powers. That role for the foreseeable future will be as part of the Soviet system.

Whatever the future may hold, during the last twenty years Cuba has played a role in world affairs incomparably greater than before the revolution. It has done so under the patronage of the Soviet Union, which has underpinned both its security and its economic viability. But Castro has not been a Soviet puppet, as former Cuban leaders were clients of the United States. On a number of occasions, he has displayed a measure of independence, as, for example, in his refusal to permit international inspection to verify the removal of the Russian missiles in 1962, and later to subscribe to a nuclear test-ban treaty. The Soviet commitment to him, and his very strong personal position as a national leader who made his own revolution (comparable in this regard with Tito[18]), have given him leverage which has done something to offset Cuba's dependence upon the Soviet Union. But perhaps the most important factor in Cuba's international role during the years from 1959 to 1979 has been the extent to which its aspirations have coincided with what the Soviet leaders have judged to be Russia's interests. Whether this will be so in the coming decades is another matter.

[17] *The Times* (London), 18 November 1978; *Latin America Political Report*, vol. XII, no. 46, 24 November 1978, p. 368.

[18] As we have seen, United States policy has been to increase Castro's dependence upon the Soviet Union, not to encourage him to become 'another Tito'. Perhaps in due course the Americans will reverse this policy.