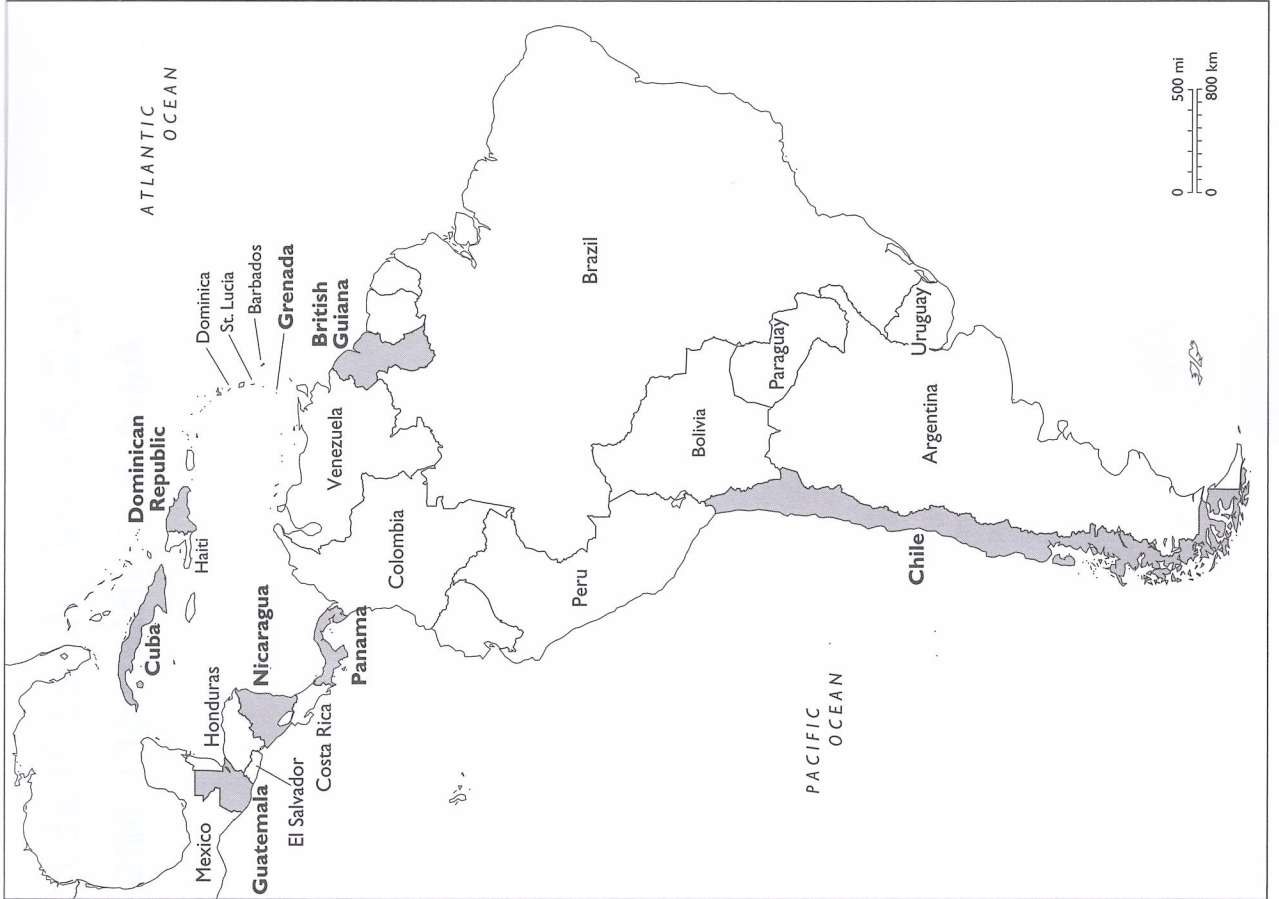


U.S. Presidents and Latin American Interventions

Pursuing Regime Change in the Cold War

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dedicated to internal reforms and international independence. Like the Guatemalan revolution, it contained within itself a variety of ideological tendencies ranging from social democratic reformism to Marxism-Leninism. And, as in Guatemala, Marxist elements gradually gained ascendancy and eventually set the revolution's programmatic agenda. Cuba's revolutionaries had also learned crucial lessons from Arbenz's defeat, however—notably the importance of masking their Marxist proclivities and dismantling the prerevolutionary national armed forces—and they were accordingly better prepared to anticipate, and survive, eventual U.S. intervention.

Cuba was not Guatemala. Its economy was more highly developed. Its national income levels were substantially higher. Its upper class was neither as homogeneous nor as manorial as its Guatemalan counterpart; its middle class was larger and more experienced in politics; and its lower class had a longer tradition of labor activism. And yet Cuba, like Guatemala, was merely a variation on the theme of Latin American underdevelopment. Its monocrop economy was overwhelmingly dependent on the production and export of a single commodity—sugar—and the sugar-based economy condemned hundreds of thousands of Cuban workers to unemployment or underemployment and a precarious standard of living during the eight-month “dead time” that followed the annual sugarcane harvest. In the countryside, where 8 percent of the population owned 71 percent of the land, more than two-thirds of the population lived in dirt-floor thatched huts, without running water or electricity. Average income for Cuba's rural workers in the late 1950s was \$90 a year, and their nutritional intake and access to health-care facilities were so inadequate that nutrition-related diseases were virtually endemic among the rural lower classes. The Cuban educational system was so inaccessible to the country's lower classes that in 1958 one-third of the population had received no schooling whatsoever while another third had no more than three years of primary education.³

If anything, the hegemonic presence of the United States weighed even more heavily on Cuba than on Guatemala. U.S. military intervention had freed the island from Spanish colonial rule in 1898, after which the Cubans gained a conditional form of national independence as a U.S. political protectorate and informal economic colony. By the late 1950s, Cuba had been molded into the centerpiece of the U.S. sphere of influence in the Caribbean. More U.S. capital (approximately \$1 billion) was invested in the island than in any other Latin American nation with the exception of Venezuela. U.S.-owned sugar mills produced 40 percent of Cuba's sugar; U.S. companies controlled the island's public utilities, railroads, and oil refineries; and U.S.-owned cattle ranches, mines, banks, hotels, and casinos were influential players in the Cuban economy. A special instrument of U.S. hegemonic power was the U.S. sugar quota, an arrangement in which Cuba was allowed to supply an annual fixed percentage of U.S. sugar imports; the quota guaranteed Cuba a profitable market for its principal crop, but threats to reduce the quota gave U.S. officials powerful leverage over Cuban policy makers if they stepped out of line.⁴

CHAPTER TWO

Cuba, 1961

President Kennedy knew that, in his words, he had “fucked up” and was in “deep trouble.” Less than three months into his presidency, a U.S.-sponsored invasion of Cuba by a CIA-trained proxy army of Cuban exiles had been routed by Fidel Castro's armed forces at the Bay of Pigs. Of the 1,511 Cubans that Kennedy had sent to overthrow Castro, 1,303 had been captured or killed. Kennedy's immediate reaction was one of “personal shock and political calculation”—the Cuban debacle would undoubtedly have a devastating impact on his administration's “domestic popularity and international reputation.” Politically, he told White House assistant Theodore Sorensen, the Bay of Pigs disaster was “the worst defeat of his career”; he had “handed his critics a stick with which they would forever beat him.” Internationally, U.S. prestige had been seriously damaged; Kennedy's failure to defeat the military forces of a small Caribbean island neighbor would inevitably create the impression in Latin America, in NATO, in the Kremlin, indeed everywhere, that Kennedy was a weak president and that under his administration the United States had become a paper tiger. The president's aides “had never seen him so distraught” or “as close to crying.”⁵

Three days after the Bay of Pigs operation collapsed, Kennedy began the process of damage limitation. On April 20, 1961, in a speech on Cuba before the American Society of Newspaper Editors, the president was neither apologetic nor contrite; instead, he projected an image of strength and resolve reminiscent of Winston Churchill during the Battle of Britain. Although U.S. military forces had not participated in the Cuban invasion, Kennedy told his audience, “Let the record show that our restraint is not inexhaustible. Should it ever appear that the inter-American doctrine of non-interference merely conceals or excuses a policy of inaction—if the nations of this Hemisphere should fail to meet their commitments against outside Communist penetration—then I want it clearly understood that this Government will not hesitate in meeting its primary obligations which are to the security of our Nation!” He wanted to make clear that “as the President of the United States” he was “determined” to protect U.S. security interests “regardless of the cost and regardless of the peril!” The main purpose of the speech, Kennedy told an aide afterward, was “to make us appear tough and powerful.”⁶

The target of Kennedy's interventionism, and the source of his discomfiture, was a Latin American nationalist revolution similar in many respects to the Guatemalan revolution. Fidel Castro's 26th of July Movement was another multiclass coalition

There was seldom any need. For six decades, Cuba's political leaders complacently accommodated themselves to U.S. power. They maintained close bonds of diplomatic and military collaboration with Washington; they permitted U.S. ambassadors to exercise proconsular influence over Cuban policy matters; and they accepted (in fact occasionally invited) periodic U.S. interventions that stabilized Cuba's fractious political system. They provided U.S. investors with open doors, lenient regulations and tax laws, guarantees against nationalization of property, and a stable cheap-labor force. And they stole the Cuban treasury blind. Official corruption in Cuba reached levels of such excess that a U.S. ambassador would later recall: "I know of no country among those committed to the Western ethic where the diversion of public treasure for private profit reached the proportions that it attained in the Cuban Republic." Cuba's long tradition of corrupt, servile government reached its nadir with the Fulgencio Batista dictatorship of 1952–1958. Batista, who eventually fled into exile with riches estimated at between \$60 million and \$300 million, served as one of the United States' most reliable Cold War allies in Latin America. He "faithfully backed" U.S. positions in international forums, outlawed Cuba's Communist Party, and rejected diplomatic relations with Eastern bloc nations, while his generous tax exemptions and "lightened controls on capital remittances" stimulated nearly a 50 percent increase in U.S. investments in Cuba during his tenure in office. As rewards, Cuba received nearly \$40 million in U.S. Export-Import Bank loans, \$16 million in U.S. armaments, and extensive U.S. military training programs for the repressive Cuban national-security forces that kept Batista's increasingly unpopular regime in power. To a generation of young Cubans reaching political maturity in the 1950s, Batista's symbiotic alliance with the United States was merely the latest proof that Cuba's struggle for genuine national independence remained "unfinished business."⁵

The most prominent figure to emerge from that generation, Fidel Castro, was a product of the same currents of revolutionary nationalism and anti-imperialism that inspired Arévalo and Arbenz. Like Guatemala's revolutionaries, Castro attributed his nation's underdevelopment to the elite classes' long tradition of exploitative collaboration with foreign imperialism. As a twenty-year-old student at the University of Havana in 1947, Castro publicly denounced Cuba's leaders as "puppets at the orders of foreigners." After Batista's 1952 seizure of power interrupted his budding career as a parliamentary politician, Castro labeled Batista "a faithful dog of imperialism" and launched a guerrilla insurrection against his dictatorship.⁶ During a 1955 meeting with the leaders of competing opposition movements, Castro called on them to join him in "fighting against the past"; he went on to explain, according to an aide present at the meeting, that

he was against the unscrupulous politicians, against the scoundrels in government, against the embezzlers, against the military . . . , against the rich, against the landowners, against the big foreign interests, against Yankee imperialism.

"*Con todo esto hay que acabar*" ("We have to do away with all this"). . . . Then he turned once again to his favorite, almost obsessive theme: a denunciation of the *viejos políticos* ["old politicians," for whom] he reserved his most scathing diatribes and epithets . . . : scoundrels, shameless thieves, spineless lackeys of Yankee imperialism.⁷

After forcing Batista from power on January 1, 1959, Castro regularly identified the "alliance" of "national and international oligarchies" as the principal enemy of structural change in Cuba, and he warned the Cuban people that Cuban reactionaries—"those who sold out to foreign interests"—would inevitably attempt a counterrevolution supported by "foreign aid" from the "international oligarchy."⁸

The principal international and foreign threat to which Castro alluded, of course, lay 90 miles to the north. Castro, like most Cubans of his generation, had a deep-seated resentment of U.S. domination. His bitterness toward the United States dated back to his student days at the University of Havana, where he was active in a variety of anti-imperialist organizations and promoted student militancy on behalf of Cuba's "true independence . . . economic liberation . . . [and] genuine emancipation." In 1948, he headed a delegation of Cuban students that traveled to Bogotá, Colombia, to participate in the formation of an anti-imperialist organization of Latin American students and to disrupt a conference of hemispheric foreign ministers that was convening in the Colombian capital to formalize the creation of the Organization of American States—a conference that, in Castro's words, had been "called by the United States to consolidate its system of domination here in Latin America." During the subsequent guerrilla war that he waged against the Batista dictatorship, Castro on several occasions characterized his insurrection as a struggle for national liberation. If anything, the military campaign against Batista's U.S.-trained and -supplied forces intensified his resentment of the U.S. presence in Cuba and persuaded him that, as he told a compatriot in 1958, his true destiny was to wage "a much longer and bigger war" against the Americans and "make them pay dearly for what they're doing" in Cuba once Batista had been defeated.⁹

After Batista's flight into exile, Castro's public statements bristled with defiant indications that U.S. hegemony in Cuba was now a thing of the past. "This time the Revolution will not be frustrated," he told cheering crowds in Santiago on January 2, 1959. "This time . . . it will not be like 1898 when the Americans came and made themselves masters of the country." "For the first time," he told a Havana audience two weeks later, Cuba had political and military leaders who were "not taking orders from abroad" and who "cannot be bribed or intimidated." In at least two January speeches, he declared that he was "not selling out to the Americans" and would not "receive orders from them." He was not going to be "another Yankee lackey," he told a Cuban journalist. "If the Americans don't like what is going on in Cuba," he said in angry response to U.S. criticism of his firing-squad exe-

cutions of Batista henchmen, "they can land the Marines and then there will be 200,000 *gringos* dead." The United States had been "interfering in Cuban affairs for more than fifty years," he stated in February, and it was time for a change, time for Cuba to "solve its own problems."¹⁰

Meanwhile, Castro was announcing his plans for a revolutionary transformation of Cuba. The "Republic that we are building and the *Patria* that we are redeeming," he told a Havana mass audience in March, "will not be a paradise for vested interests, as it was in the past, but rather a home where humble people can find happiness." The "onerous concessions" that Batista's government had granted "to foreign monopolies" were "going to be reviewed and cancelled." Cuba would no longer be subject to the United States' "continual threats" to reduce the sugar quota and would, in the future, "sell sugar to anyone who has the money to buy it."¹¹ Castro also hinted that Cuba would be withdrawing from the U.S. sphere of influence and the Western bloc in favor of neutral nonalignment in the Cold War. In March, he defined Cuba's revolution as "a new doctrine which is between the two hegemonies struggling to control the world." "Why should Latin America be with either side?" he asked. He expressed open contempt for hemispheric solidarity and the U.S.-led inter-American system, calling the Organization of American States "a useless organization." In February, he rejected membership in the newly formed Inter-American Development Bank, and the following month announced that Cuba would no longer "accept actions taken under the Rio Treaty." By year's end, Cuba had withdrawn from the World Bank as well.¹²

Cuba's revolutionaries had studied the 1954 Guatemalan intervention closely, and they anticipated that their defiant gestures of anti-American nationalism would eventually provoke U.S. intervention. In January, Castro warned a mass rally in Havana that "the U.S. Government has not directly attacked us . . . but we know what the mechanics are in the United States. A certain campaign is begun; the interests that fear the revolution organize a campaign against the revolution; they shape public opinion, and then ask the U.S. Government to take action." Accordingly, from the moment of their arrival in Havana, Castro's forces were taking steps to reduce their vulnerability to U.S. aggression while they consolidated their revolutionary government in power. Batista's national army was quickly dissolved and replaced by a new institution commanded by "radical guerrilla chieftains." The U.S. military missions in Cuba were also asked to leave the country. As a result, historian Jules Benjamin writes, "one of the old channels of U.S. influence . . . rapidly dried up." Castro also attempted to secure alternative sources of economic assistance that would enable him to proceed with his plans to nationalize U.S. capital in Cuba without fear of U.S. economic retaliation. In late January, during a state visit to Venezuela, he told President-elect Rómulo Betancourt that he was thinking of "having a game with the gringos" and needed a \$300 million loan from Venezuela "to free his government from dependence on the U.S. sugar-market quota, loans from U.S. banks, and international credit agencies."¹³

Castro's revolutionary ambitions did not confine themselves to Cuba, however. From the start, he felt that his ultimate destiny was to liberate all of Latin America from the chains of domination that the United States had forged in collaboration with Latin America's reactionary elites. As early as 1955, he was telling his revolutionary colleagues that "the struggle in Cuba was part of the continental struggle against the Yankees that Bolívar and Martí had already foreseen." Shortly after coming to power, he confided to a prominent supporter that "he hoped to do nothing less than free Latin America from U.S. economic domination as Simón Bolívar himself as a liberator and as the potential spiritual leader of a great new Latin American revolutionary bloc," recalls former U.S. diplomat Wayne Smith, who observed Castro closely during the early days of the revolution. "The main enemy was U.S. economic imperialism, but as Castro assessed the power structure in most Latin American countries, most of the governments represented *vendepatria* (or sellout) classes whose interests were closely linked to those of the United States. Thus in the other countries, as in Cuba, the first step in driving out U.S. influence was the overthrow of the national governments themselves." Castro undoubtedly also calculated, of course, that as the leader of a Latin American alliance of nationalist revolutionary states his regime would be less isolated and consequently less vulnerable to U.S. intervention.¹⁴

Cuba's new leader lost little time in pursuing his "messianic vision" of hemispheric liberation. Throughout 1959, his revolutionary government attempted to ignite insurrectionary uprisings in neighboring countries. In April, Cuba sponsored an armed expedition against the Panamanian government. In June, Cuban-backed insurgents invaded the Dominican Republic. In August, a small Cuban invasion force attempted to land in Haiti. Although none of these early expeditions succeeded in establishing a guerrilla front, Castro remained convinced that Cuba's revolution would be the vanguard of a great anti-imperialist rebellion that would inevitably sweep through Latin America and liberate the region from the prevailing U.S.-controlled "system of domination."¹⁵

The first priority, however, was survival. Castro knew that he must avoid alarming the United States to the point where it would move to snuff out the revolution before he had had time to consolidate his power and strengthen his defenses. Accordingly, throughout the early months of 1959, he shrewdly balanced his outbursts of anti-American nationalism with a series of seemingly conciliatory gestures designed to keep U.S. officials off balance and uncertain of his real intentions. His initial revolutionary government was made up of internationally respected moderates known to favor democratic-capitalist development models for Cuba. Castro alternated his anti-U.S. comments (and in fact quickly apologized for his "200,000 dead *gringos*" remark) with public statements expressing his desire for good relations with Washington. He repeatedly asserted that Cuba would move toward a mixed economy in which foreign investment would play an important

role; U.S. private capital and U.S. government aid, he said, were welcome in Cuba. During an April trip to the United States, Castro was the "guest who told everybody what they wanted to hear." In media appearances and meetings with U.S. officials, he affirmed his commitment to "real democracy," a free press, and "good relations" with the United States. He was opposed to communism and socialism, he informed U.S. audiences, and would side with the Western democracies in the Cold War. Nor, he said, would he expropriate U.S. property. According to Castro, his U.S. visit was designed "to win support . . . from American public opinion." Its real purpose, however, was to gain time.¹⁶

A month later, Castro announced the centerpiece of his planned structural revolution: the agrarian reform law of May 17, 1959. The law authorized the state to expropriate all properties larger than 1,000 acres, except for estates devoted to sugar, cattle, or rice production, where the limit was extended to 3,333 acres. Expropriated landowners were to be compensated with twenty-year bonds bearing 4.5 percent interest, with payments based—as in Arbenz's land reform—on the declared value of the land for tax purposes. Seemingly moderate on the surface, Castro's agrarian reform program was in actuality the foundation for a radical revolutionary transformation of Cuba. It was designed to abolish large-scale private landholdings—including the island's massive U.S.-owned properties, which ranged up to 480,000 acres in size—and to replace them with peasant cooperatives and, eventually, state farms. Again, as in Guatemala, the program was essentially viewed by its authors as a political instrument, "the decisive apparatus . . . for activating the country's masses." The government agency created to implement the program—the National Institute of Agrarian Reform (INRA)—immediately began mobilizing Cuba's peasantry in support of the government. Within two months, INRA had nationalized 400 of the largest U.S.- and Cuban-owned ranches—totaling nearly 2.5 million acres of land—and was moving quickly to create "its own armed 100,000-man militia units" to defend the revolution. A year later, INRA's executive director would describe the agency as "the bastion where the Revolution occurred in those initial months . . . the organism that dealt the real blow to [the] bourgeoisie and imperialism."¹⁷

The agrarian reform law was drafted in secret by a small circle of Castro's Marxist supporters.¹⁸ Did this mean that Castro himself was a Marxist in early 1959? A vast number of books, polemical and scholarly, have addressed that question, and a good many more will be written before a definitive answer emerges. All that can be stated with any certainty is that by May 1959 Castro had cast his lot with the radical wing of his 26th of July Movement and that "unorthodox communists"—notably his younger brother Raúl and guerrilla comrade Ernesto "Che" Guevara—were serving as his closest advisers. Raúl Castro had close connections to Cuba's communist party, the Partido Socialista Popular (PSP), and was "a great admirer of the Soviet Union." He shared his older brother's conviction "that the struggle for power was to make a revolution on behalf of the people, and that this

struggle was not only for Cuba, but for Latin America and against Yankee imperialism." Guevara was "a convinced Marxist" embarked on a personal mission to engage in "combat for the liberation of America from United States imperialism." Ideologically, Guevara said, he "belong[ed] to those who believe that the solution to the world's problems can be found behind the so-called iron curtain."¹⁹ Raúl and Che were independent Marxist revolutionaries. Neither was under communist party discipline or Soviet direction. But they and the other 26th of July Movement radicals were convinced that genuine social revolutionary change in Cuba must inevitably lead to open confrontation with the United States and that if the revolution was going to survive U.S. hostility it would need the support of strong allies, including the Cuban communist party and the Soviet Union.²⁰ By the second half of 1959, Fidel Castro evidently shared that view.

Castro had long regarded the Partido Socialista Popular with disdain and distrust, owing to the party's failure to participate in armed struggle against Batista and its condemnation of Castro's rebels as a "movement of petit-bourgeois adventurers." By early 1959, however, he was conducting "discreet negotiations" with PSP leaders aimed at fusing the party (and its solid organizational base in the Cuban labor movement) with the radical wing of his 26th of July Movement in order to create a new mass-based revolutionary organization that he could use to institutionalize the revolution.²¹ An early indication that the revolution was headed in a radical direction came in May with the naming of an "ardent Communist," Antonio Núñez Jiménez, to direct the government's new agrarian reform agency, INRA. During June and July, five moderate cabinet ministers were replaced by radicals, and Osvaldo Dorticós, a secret PSP member since 1953, replaced the moderate Manuel Urrutia as the country's figurehead president. By October, Raúl Castro had taken official command of Cuba's armed forces and intelligence services. During November, the last remaining moderates were forced to resign from the cabinet, communists secured influential positions in several government ministries and Cuba's principal labor confederation, and Che Guevara became president of Cuba's national bank. By the end of 1959, Castro's moderate supporters had been purged from nearly all positions of power, and the Cuban Communist Party was actively being integrated into Cuba's state structures under Castro's political control as the revolution's "Maximum Leader."²²

Meanwhile, early feelers were being extended to Moscow. Castro had no particular love for the Soviet Union—as he informed his brother Raúl during the revolution's insurrectionary phase: "I hate Soviet imperialism as much as Yankee imperialism! I'm not breaking my neck fighting one dictatorship to fall into another." During 1959, however, as his early plans to construct a protective alliance of neighboring revolutionary states in Latin America proved unattainable in the short term, Castro—according to his first finance minister, Rufo López-Fresquet—became "interested in an alliance with Russia to counter intervention by the United States." In April, Raúl Castro asked the Soviets to supply a few military

advisers from a group of Spanish communists trained in the Soviet military academy, "to help the Cuba army . . . on general matters and for the organization of intelligence work." The Soviet Presidium quickly approved the request. During June and July, Che Guevara led a Cuban trade mission to Africa and Asia, where he spent time with local Soviet and Eastern bloc diplomats, informing them that Moscow had a new Third World ally in Cuba and inviting Soviet economic aid and expanded commercial relations. In September, the Cubans requested permission to secretly purchase weapons from Poland. Again the Kremlin responded affirmatively. In October, the first Soviet KGB agent, Aleksandr Alekseev, arrived in Cuba and was quickly granted an audience with Castro, who enthusiastically suggested an increase in Cuban-Soviet trade relations and invited a touring Soviet cultural and technological exhibition to visit Cuba. In subsequent discussions with Alekseev, Castro confided that Cuba's dependent economy was vulnerable to U.S. economic strangulation and suggested that Soviet credits and a trade pact—one based, perhaps, on an exchange of Soviet oil for Cuban sugar—would reduce the revolution's vulnerability to U.S. aggression. And if done "very carefully," Castro indicated, an eventual Cuban alliance with the Soviet Union could probably be sold to the Cuban people.²³

Castro's seduction of the Soviets was consummated in February 1960 with the signing of a major Soviet-Cuban commercial agreement. Under its terms, the Soviet Union extended Cuba a \$100 million credit and agreed to buy 4.425 million tons of Cuban sugar over the next five years, "20 percent of which was to be paid for in hard currency and the remainder in Soviet goods, including 6 million barrels of oil per year." Economic agreements with East Germany and Poland soon followed. Consequently, by early 1960 Castro and his radical supporters were enjoying a growing sense of security. The foundation was nearly in place for the revolution's institutionalization at home, and bonds of alliance were rapidly being forged with a powerful foreign protector and patron. Now, Castro boasted confidently to Alekseev, "All U.S. attempts to intervene are condemned to failure."²⁴

The Eisenhower administration had been watching Castro apprehensively since December 1956, when his revolutionary expedition landed in Cuba and launched its guerrilla war against Batista. From that point onward, Assistant Secretary of State for Inter-American Affairs Roy Rubottom recalled in 1960, the State Department had been trying "to pin a definite label on Castro in order to take stronger action against him." His 26th of July Movement was "composed of heterogeneous elements—most of them undesirable," the U.S. embassy in Havana reported as the insurrection gained momentum; "the political, economic and social policies which they would follow are too much of an unknown quantity." The CIA's assessment was more unequivocal. In Castro, the agency concluded in mid-1958, "the U.S. was up against an individual who could not be expected to be acceptable to

U.S. Government interests." Accordingly, the Eisenhower administration assumed an attitude of "malevolent neutrality" toward the rebels. During 1958, as Batista's position weakened, the United States withdrew its support from the dictator and embarked on a fruitless search for a "democratic third force" that could "block Castro's ascension to power." By late December, with Batista's collapse imminent, the State Department was working frantically "by all means short of outright intervention to bring about a political solution in Cuba which will keep the Castro movement from power." When Batista suddenly fled into exile, abandoning Cuba to Castro's forces, the administration realized it was left with no alternative but to "batten down the hatches" and prepare for "some real stormy weather."²⁵

The early months of 1959 were, in Eisenhower's words, the "testing phase" of U.S. policy toward the revolution. The administration viewed the Castro brothers and Che Guevara with deep skepticism, but the presence of "Cubans of ability and moderation" in the new government gave U.S. officials reason to hope that the revolution's moderate faction might "check the extremists." Moreover, the president later recounted,

the great popularity which Castro then enjoyed throughout this Hemisphere and the world gave us no alternative but to give him his chance.

Our first actions, therefore, were directed to give Castro every chance to establish a reasonable relationship with us. . . . We sharply curbed all inclination to retort and strike back at his early diatribes against us, leaving the way open to him to climb off of this line and get down to the serious business of running the affairs of his country responsibly.

Before the first six months had ended, it was clear Castro had failed this test.²⁶

In June 1959, the State Department "reached the decision that it was not possible to achieve our objectives with Castro in power" and "that . . . we should devise means to help bring about his overthrow and replacement by a government friendly to the United States." Follow-up action was temporarily delayed when "important American interests" in Cuba reported a potential "change in the climate," but by late October U.S. officials were convinced that "definitive action against the Castro Government" was necessary. On November 5, Secretary of State Christian Herter formally recommended to Eisenhower that the United States give covert support to Cuban opposition elements in order to bring about "a reformed Castro regime or a successor to it" by "not later than the end of 1960." The goal, Herter indicated, was to see Castro's regime "checked or replaced." The president quickly approved Herter's recommendation. Four months later, on March 17, 1960, Eisenhower approved the CIA's proposed "Program for Covert Action Against the Castro Regime," the stated objective of which was "to bring about the replacement of the Castro regime with one more devoted to the true in-

terests of the Cuban people and more acceptable to the U.S. in such a manner as to avoid any appearance of U.S. intervention." The program authorized the CIA to organize a viable Cuban opposition movement and train a paramilitary force of Cuban exiles "to be introduced into Cuba to organize, train and lead resistance groups." It was the framework for the Bay of Pigs invasion thirteen months later.²⁷

But what specific aspects of the Cuban revolution had provoked Eisenhower's decision to overthrow it? One perception operative in Washington was that Castro posed a potential threat to U.S. national security. U.S. officials had been searching for signs of communist influence in the 26th of July Movement since the start of the insurrection against Batista. They were consistently wary of Raúl Castro and Che Guevara, whom they regarded as "staunch pro-Communists if not actual Communists." They were alarmed by the Cuban communist party's "infiltration" of Castro's guerrilla movement in 1958 and, beginning on New Year's Day 1959, its "penetration" of Cuba's government. And they feared that Castro's emerging entente with the Soviet Union in late 1959-early 1960 presented international communism with an opportunity to strengthen its position in the Caribbean.²⁸ But they could find no evidence that the revolution was communist led or even susceptible to communist control.

In late 1957, Secretary of State John Foster Dulles dismissed suggestions that Castro was "a procommunist . . . heavily influenced by Moscow" as "utter nonsense." A year later, as rebel forces advanced on Havana, the State Department concluded that although "the Communists are utilizing the Castro movement to some extent" and the 26th of July Movement's "nationalistic line is [a] horse which Communists know well how to ride," it would "not . . . be possible to pin a communist label on the Castro movement." Shortly after the rebels assumed power, CIA director Allen Dulles informed the Senate Foreign Relations Committee that Castro did not have "any Communist leanings." Nor could the U.S. embassy in Havana find any "serious evidence of effective Communist influence upon the new Cuban government either from the local Communist party or from abroad." After a three-hour private conversation with Castro during his April 1959 U.S. visit, Vice President Richard Nixon "guessed" that the Cuban leader was merely "incredibly naive about Communism" rather than "under Communist discipline." In early November, on the same day that Eisenhower approved Secretary of State Herter's recommendation for U.S. intervention, CIA deputy director C. P. Cabell told a Senate subcommittee that "Fidel Castro is not a Communist." "The Cuban Communists do not consider him a Communist Party member, or even a pro-Communist," Cabell testified; "they do not . . . control him or his government." The previous day, the State Department had again reported that there was "no evidence" of "Soviet activity" in Cuba. On March 17, 1960, the day Eisenhower authorized the CIA to undertake its program of covert action against Castro, Secretary of State Herter acknowledged that "our own latest National Intelligence Estimate [NIE] does not find Cuba to be under Communist control or domination,

and we lack all of the hard evidence which would be required to convince skeptical Latin American Governments and the public opinion behind them." Five days later, as preparations for the intervention accelerated, a Special National Intelligence Estimate on "Communist Influence in Cuba" reported that Castro "almost certainly has no intention of sharing his power" with Cuba's communists and that he was "not disposed to accept . . . direction from any foreign source." "Fidel Castro and his government are not now demonstrably under the domination or control of the international Communist movement," the NIE concluded. "Moreover, we believe that they will not soon come under such demonstrable domination or control."²⁹

Another aspect of the revolution that seriously disturbed U.S. officials was its nationalistic treatment of U.S. investment capital. Washington reacted to Castro's May 1959 agrarian reform law with indignation, charging that its compensation formula—twenty-year bonds based on tax valuations—failed to meet the traditional U.S. standard of "prompt" (immediate), "adequate" (full-value), and "effective" (in-cash) compensation for expropriated property. As land seizures commenced, frightened U.S. investors barraged the administration with requests for support.³⁰

The chronology of U.S. policy responses to the revolution would seem to suggest that Castro's assault on U.S. investment capital played a decisive role in Eisenhower's decision to intervene. By the president's own admission, it was in June 1959—the same month the agrarian reform program went into effect—that the testing phase of U.S. policy ended and the administration decided that "a change in the Cuban Government" was needed. Initial planning for a covert operation was then temporarily put on hold when, according to Assistant Secretary of State Rubottom, "some U.S. companies reported to us . . . that they were making some progress in negotiations" with the Cuban government, "a factor which caused us to slow the implementation of our program." It was only after the hoped-for change in Cuba's nationalistic economic climate failed to materialize that Secretary of State Herter took his November 5 recommendation for intervention to Eisenhower. Four months later, on the same day that he authorized preparations for CIA action against Castro, Eisenhower acknowledged that "businessmen were constantly coming to him and saying that something must be done to counteract the Cuban situation." Shortly thereafter, he wrote angrily about "the expropriation of extensive American properties without acceptable provision for compensation."³¹

Nevertheless, although the expropriations were "of major concern" to U.S. policy makers, and although administration officials sympathized "deeply" with U.S. investors on the island, there is little evidence that Eisenhower launched plans for intervention primarily out of concern for U.S. private capital in Cuba. U.S. corporations denounced the agrarian reform program as "confiscatory" and appealed to the U.S. government for support, but they did not lobby for Castro's overthrow. Instead, they called on Eisenhower to impose economic sanctions on Cuba and

suspend the U.S. sugar quota to pressure Castro into seeking an accommodation with U.S. investors or at least provide what they considered equitable compensation for their property losses. Indeed, throughout the June 1959–March 1960 period, many U.S. companies in Cuba were cautioning the administration “against the application of aggressive policies” and indicating their desire “to reach a *modus vivendi*” with Castro, while U.S. “sugar and cattle plantation owners . . . continued to operate in the hope that an acceptable arrangement could be worked out.” On the rare occasions when U.S. business leaders did advocate Castro’s overthrow, administration officials were unresponsive. In late June 1959, for example, Texas cattleman Robert Kleberg, whose King Ranch was about to lose holdings worth \$3 million in Cuba’s Camaguey province, met separately with Eisenhower, Herter, and Treasury Secretary Robert Anderson “to offer certain suggestions with regard to U.S. policy toward Cuba.” Among the “immediate steps” that Kleberg recommended were a suspension of Cuba’s sugar quota, seizure of all Cuban assets in the United States, deployment of a U.S. naval fleet on “Caribbean maneuvers,” and a U.S. announcement that “in 1898 we fought to free Cuba from tyranny—we will not stand by now and allow Communism to permanently destroy this freedom.” Herter quickly rejected Kleberg’s suggestions as ill advised and informed Eisenhower that a White House reply was not necessary.³²

Administration officials were more disturbed by the broader regional implications of Castro’s property seizures. As Assistant Secretary of State Rubottom put it at the start of June, “The U.S. has investments totaling \$9 billion in Latin America, and every country in the hemisphere is watching to see what U.S. reaction to Cuba’s expropriation will be.” U.S. embassies in the region warned that if the Latin Americans “see them getting away with taking the property in Cuba, it will happen . . . in other Latin American areas.” The administration’s concern was based on more than narrow considerations of U.S. economic self-interest, however. U.S. policy makers were convinced that sociopolitical stability and the prevention of anti-U.S. “extremism” in Latin America required economic growth and the improved living conditions that would presumably follow. They also believed, and relentlessly preached to Latin American government officials, that a private-enterprise/foreign-investment-based economic development model was the only viable formula for sound economic growth in the region. And in their view, nationalistic economic policies such as Cuba’s agrarian reform program only discouraged the flows of private foreign investment capital that they believed were prerequisites for economic growth and regional stability. As Rubottom warned in December, “time is running out and . . . if Cuba gets by with the actions she is taking against American property owners, our whole private enterprise approach abroad would be in serious danger.”³³

Eisenhower viewed the economic dimension of the Cuban threat principally in strategic terms. He believed that Latin America was “of vital importance to the United States” as a dependable source of strategic minerals and other industrial

raw materials essential to U.S. defense production. If Castro successfully seized U.S.-owned property in Cuba, nationalists elsewhere in Latin America might be emboldened to expropriate foreign-owned oil fields and mineral deposits, with potentially “disastrous and doleful consequences” for U.S. national security. On March 17, 1960, hours before he approved the CIA program of covert action against Castro, and with the “great importance” of “the Cuban situation” very much on his mind, Eisenhower warned the National Security Council (NSC) that the United States “was getting more and more to be a have-not nation as far as raw materials are concerned.” Without imported iron-ore from Venezuela and Canada, the president pointed out by way of example, U.S. “steel production would be seriously curtailed.” “We must have access to the South American continent,” he said emphatically.³⁴

In the end, however, the issues of agrarian reform and expropriation of U.S. property exerted their principal influence on Eisenhower’s decision to intervene by simply reinforcing Washington’s growing conviction that any accommodation with the Castro regime was impossible. The fact that Castro refused to compromise or negotiate and instead seized U.S. property without “proper” compensation—indeed, without *any* compensation, as it eventually turned out—was seen in Washington as a decisive indication that Cuba’s new leaders were not going to play by the old hegemonic rules of the game and could no longer be tolerated. With the advent of agrarian reform, U.S. policy makers concluded that what Rubottom referred to as the period “of probing and testing to see what Castro would do, what he was like, and how he’d react to situations” was over. The fact that he had opted for a radical nationalist approach to land reform, one that in the State Department’s view was “the recognized product of Castro’s radical and extremist supporters,” was sufficient evidence that, in Rubottom’s words, “Castro was not going to be a man with whom the United States could work.”³⁵

Instead, it was Castro’s “aggressively neutralist” foreign policy,³⁶ more than any other aspect of the revolution, that swayed Eisenhower decisively toward intervention. In 1959, as in 1953, U.S. policy makers regarded “hemispheric solidarity” and a cohesive bloc of Latin American allies as a vital cornerstone of U.S. national security in the Cold War. And in Cuba, as in Guatemala, the great U.S. concern was that the loss of a Latin American ally to neutral nonalignment would be perceived abroad as an indication of declining U.S. power, dangerously damaging the credibility of U.S. international leadership at a time when the global balance of power was growing increasingly precarious. According to a secret National Security Council policy statement approved by the president in February 1959:

Latin America plays a key role in the security of the United States. In the face of the anticipated prolonged threat from Communist expansionism, the United States must rely heavily on the moral and political support of Latin America for U.S. policies designed to counter this threat. *A defection by any significant number*

*of Latin American countries to the ranks of neutralism . . . would seriously impair the ability of the United States to exercise effective leadership of the Free World, particularly in the UN, and constitute a blow to U.S. prestige.*³⁷

Cuba, by its own admission, clearly represented a defection from the U.S.-led inter-American system into “the ranks of neutralism.” From January 1959 through March 1960, Castro’s critiques of U.S. hegemony in Latin America, his open contempt for the Organization of American States, and his expressed intention of removing Cuba from the U.S. sphere of influence in favor of a position of neutral nonalignment in the Cold War set off alarm bells in Washington. From the start, U.S. officials were appalled by “the tendency of the top revolutionary leadership to adopt an intermediate or neutral position in the East-West conflict” and by Castro’s declarations “that he would not side with the United States in the cold war.” In April, the U.S. ambassador in Cuba, Philip Bonsal, pointedly reminded the Cuban leader that in such a “critical time” of the Cold War, the United States was quite sensitive to Cuban expressions of “neutralism.” It was uncertain, Secretary of State Herter told Eisenhower a few days later, whether Cuba “would remain in the western camp.”³⁸

Worse still, from Washington’s perspective, were Castro’s efforts to forge “a neutralistic bloc in Latin America.” U.S. officials deplored the Cuban leader’s early attempts to foment radical-nationalist revolutions in neighboring Caribbean states, and they blamed him for instigating revolutionary instability in Panama, the Dominican Republic, Haiti, and—by their account—Nicaragua. Rubottom later recalled that the downward trend in U.S.-Cuban relations began in April 1959, during the period when Cuba was actively preparing “filibustering expeditions against the Dominican Republic, Nicaragua, and Panama.” At an April meeting of State Department officials and U.S. ambassadors from throughout the Caribbean region, “the anti-American campaign fanned by Castro” and “activities in Cuba directed at the overthrow of the Dominican, Nicaraguan and Haitian Governments” were highlighted as “problems of special concern to the U.S.” Particularly disturbing to the U.S. diplomats were “Castro’s indication that Cuba should be neutral in the East-West struggle” and his “backing of revolutionary activities” throughout the region. “There was agreement that United States policies and actions should be directed at containing these trends.” A month later, Rubottom personally warned Castro that “we do not want to be a country isolated from our Latin American friends, nor do we want to see twenty Latin American countries united in a bloc against the United States. This would be a tragic thing.” By June, Herter had concluded that “if we did not do something” to curb Cuban-sponsored nationalist revolutionary activity in the Caribbean, “the fire would spread very fast,” resulting in further defections from the U.S.-led hemispheric system. It was in June that U.S. officials first decided to intervene. In drafting the State Department recommendation to Eisenhower that Castro be checked or replaced, Rubot-

tom justified the proposed intervention by condemning the revolution’s “increasingly ‘neutralist’” foreign policy and its “efforts . . . to stimulate neutralism elsewhere in Latin America.” By the time the recommendation reached the White House, Eisenhower was already fed up with the Cubans’ “shrill anti-American diatribes” and “abortive . . . efforts to overthrow various Caribbean governments.” Castro, the president complained a few weeks later, was “going wild and harming the whole American structure.”³⁹

During the fall of 1959, new Cuban displays of international independence exacerbated U.S. concern. In a September speech before the UN General Assembly, Cuban foreign minister Raúl Roa declared that “for the first time in its history,” Cuba was “truly free, independent and sovereign” and that “its foreign policy” had “freed itself of all bondage, oppression and servitude.” Roa went on to identify Cuba and Latin America with “the under-developed peoples of Africa and Asia” as an international “third group” uncommitted to either the Eastern or Western bloc. “We will never be a docile pawn on the chessboard of power politics,” he said. “It is high time that the great Powers ceased arbitrarily to decide the fate of small nations.” Over the next two months, Cuba successfully forged “a close working relationship with the neutralist Asian-African bloc at the United Nations,” voting “with increasing frequency . . . in opposition to the United States” on important issues such as the admission of Communist China to the United Nations and “openly seeking to induce other Latin American nations . . . to follow its lead.” Castro, meanwhile, was actively soliciting collaborative relations with Egypt’s Nasser and Indonesia’s Sukarno—two prominent neutralist leaders regarded in Washington as particularly annoying Third World troublemakers. He also attempted to organize a tricontinental “Conference of Hungry Nations” to promote unity among the world’s underdeveloped countries. To U.S. officials, Cuba’s promotion of a nonaligned Third World bloc was nothing less than an effort “to whittle down the free world and enlarge the number of uncommitted countries” to the detriment of the West’s position in the international balance of power.⁴⁰

Accompanying the Cuban government’s neutralist initiatives were unrestrained new outbursts of anti-U.S. rhetoric. In late October, a plane flown by a Florida-based Cuban exile dropped anti-Castro leaflets on Havana, drawing Cuban anti-aircraft fire that accidentally killed three of the city’s residents. Castro responded with what press observers described as his “most violently anti-American performance in some time.” In a series of emotional public speeches that U.S. diplomats characterized as highly inflammatory and even hysterical, the Cuban leader charged that the “bombing” of Havana was foreign aggression carried out by counterrevolutionaries in connivance with U.S. authorities. Then, in early March 1960, when a freighter delivering Belgian munitions to the Cuban government exploded in Havana’s harbor, Castro went ballistic, charging that “functionaries of the North American Government” had committed an “intentional act of sabotage.” Perhaps, he speculated, the United States was planning an intervention and wanted “to

show us that we can be invaded at any time." "If they think of landing troops, let them go ahead," he said. The Cuban people "would fight to the last drop of blood." The vehemence of Castro's verbal attacks infuriated U.S. officials and intensified their determination to overthrow him.⁴¹

Many administration analysts believed that Castro's anti-American ultranationalism and neutralism were sources of "deep satisfaction to the leaders of international communism" and provided "fertile ground for future [communist] bloc exploitation." According to a March 1960 Special National Intelligence Estimate, the Cuban leader's policies "satisfied the aims of the Latin American Communist movement by undermining the influence and prestige of the United States in the region."⁴² Eisenhower, however, was not convinced that Third World nationalism and neutralism were inevitably susceptible to communist subversion.⁴³ And besides, the U.S. intelligence community could produce no proof that Cuba's revolution was falling under communist domination or control. Instead, the administration's apprehensions remained focused on the prospect that Castro would influence other U.S. allies in Latin America to defect from the U.S.-led hemispheric system into the ranks of nonalignment. In March 1960, one week before Eisenhower approved the CIA's covert action proposal, the State Department predicted that if Castro succeeded in consolidating his "hostile . . . neutralist" government in power, he "would undoubtedly further intensify his efforts to bring into power governments responsive to his leadership in other Caribbean and Latin American countries." It was not unlikely, the department warned, that "in view of the instability of a number of governments in the area" and the widespread "sympathy" that Castro evoked throughout the region, "he might succeed in at least a few countries. In this event, we would be in very serious difficulties in our Latin American relations. *All other dangers*—except the possibility that Cuba would be made available clandestinely or otherwise to hostile forces for operations directly against U.S. military security—*are subsidiary to this main danger.*"⁴⁴

The message was clear: a policy of inaction would only fuel further defections from the U.S. sphere of influence. As Ambassador Bonsal warned: "The other nations of Latin America are watching the Cuban developments closely. It seems certain that they are curious to see what the response of the United States will be. A purely passive reaction might be at least partially responsible for later unfavorable developments in other nations."⁴⁵

The "main danger," as U.S. officials perceived it, was that the erosion of "inter-American solidarity" at the hands of Cuban-sponsored neutralism would convey an image of U.S. weakness and damage U.S. prestige in the eyes of world opinion. If the United States could not enforce unity within its own hemispheric security alliance, other free world allies might conclude that the United States was a declining superpower and lose confidence in U.S. leadership. And in the world of 1959–early 1960—with the Soviet Union seemingly outpacing the United States in science and technology thanks to spectacular recent successes in the Soviet missile

and space programs, and with many observers expressing concern that the United States was losing the Cold War—the Eisenhower administration could ill afford any additional appearance of national weakness.⁴⁶

Perhaps the definitive statement of the Eisenhower administration's motives for intervening in Cuba was provided by Secretary of State Herter in his November 1959 policy memorandum to the president recommending intervention. In justifying the need for U.S. action, Herter mentioned that Castro had "tolerated and encouraged the infiltration of Communists and their sympathizers into important positions" in government and organized labor. He also criticized Castro's "drastic" economic policies for harming U.S. business interests and hindering U.S. efforts to "promote necessary private investment in Latin America." But Herter's principal justification for U.S. intervention was Castro's "deliberate fomenting of anti-American sentiment in Cuba and . . . other Latin American countries." Castro, Herter informed the president, "has veered toward a 'neutralist' anti-American foreign policy for Cuba which, *if emulated by other Latin American countries, would have serious adverse effects on Free World support of our leadership, especially in the United Nations.* . . . He has, in fact, given support to Caribbean revolutionary movements designed to bring into power governments modeled on or responsive to his government and by such interventionist activities sought to undermine the Inter-American system." The United States should move to reverse "the extremist, anti-American course of the Castro regime" by organizing an anti-Castro opposition movement in Cuba, Herter advised the president.⁴⁷ It was time to prevent the spread of anti-U.S. neutralism in Latin America by attacking the virus at its source.

Another factor, however—one seldom mentioned in policy discussions or policy memoranda—also influenced Eisenhower's decision to overthrow Castro. Again, as in Guatemala six years earlier, domestic political pressures were creating an added incentive for intervention.

State Department officials had been sensitive to the political dimension of the Cuban issue from the start. For most U.S. diplomats, the consequences of losing China in 1949—the ruined careers of State Department "China hands" during the McCarthy era, the incumbent party's defeat in the 1952 election—were still fresh memories, and the department's Latin American specialists had no desire to repeat that experience by appearing responsible for the loss of Cuba. Consequently, they argued against a renewal of the Cuban sugar quota in 1959 out of fear that such a conciliatory gesture toward Castro would lay the administration "open to charges that it was 'soft on communism.'" In September, the presidents of the leading U.S. sugar companies in Cuba delivered a thinly veiled political warning to the department that "the American people" might soon "demand" a stronger administration response to Castro's nationalistic policies, creating an impression

in the minds of department officials that, as one diplomat put it, “by Cuba we will be judged.” The Bureau of Inter-American Affairs subsequently concluded that a tougher U.S. approach was needed in Cuba “to avoid *domestically and internationally* any feeling that the Government is not strong-willed enough to resist Castro’s attacks and depredations.”⁴⁸

State’s political concerns proved to be well founded because, by the summer of 1959, Eisenhower’s Cuban policy was coming under attack from several directions. In July, a bipartisan group of conservative congressmen led by Democratic Senator James Eastland of Mississippi began to publicly accuse the administration of losing Cuba. In a series of “carefully staged and televised” Senate hearings before Eastland’s internal-security subcommittee, a stream of Cuban exiles and right-wing witnesses charged that administration officials knew in 1958 that Castro was a communist but permitted him to come to power nonetheless. Several State Department officials were subpoenaed, and the career of William Wieland, director of the Office of Caribbean Affairs, was destroyed by the committee’s McCarthy-like innuendoes. The hearings, which continued through the second half of 1959, had an influential impact on congressional opinion, and by year’s end a growing number of congressmen were calling on the administration to take more decisive action against Castro.⁴⁹ The conservative pressure from Capitol Hill was reinforced by William F. Buckley’s *National Review*, which criticized Eisenhower relentlessly for allowing “patience” to “paralyze” his decision making on Cuba. By the spring of 1960, Buckley was openly calling for U.S. intervention. The criticism from conservative quarters in Congress and the press put Eisenhower on notice that, in Ambassador Bonsal’s words, his “posture of moderation in the face of Castro’s insulting and aggressive behavior was becoming a political liability” as the nation entered the 1960 presidential election year.⁵⁰

Meanwhile, Senator J. William Fulbright (D-AR), the influential chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, had begun criticizing Eisenhower for mismanaging Cuba, relations with Latin America, and U.S. foreign policy in general. Fulbright believed that Eisenhower’s close ties to Batista were responsible for Castro’s anti-U.S. sentiments, and by September 1959, he was publicly proclaiming that “in the whole history of the presidency, with the possible exception of Herbert Hoover and James Buchanan, the performance of President Eisenhower” in foreign-policy leadership “stands on a bizarre plane of its own.”⁵¹ Then, in February 1960, a Senate Foreign Relations subcommittee chaired by liberal Senator Wayne Morse (D-OR) also issued a report expressing concern over the growth of communist influence in Cuba.⁵² All in all, it did not require exceptional political foresight on Eisenhower’s part to recognize that his Cuban policy was likely to be a prime target of attack in the 1960 election campaign.

In addition, however, politically induced pressure for intervention was coming from within the administration itself. By mid-1959, Vice President Richard Nixon was actively urging Eisenhower to take “a more belligerent stance” toward Castro.

Nixon hoped to succeed Eisenhower as president in the 1960 election, and Castro’s overthrow would protect him from potentially damaging Democratic campaign attacks on the administration’s “failed” Cuban policies. Accordingly, the vice president “assumed the leadership of a loosely knit group of hardliners” within the administration and became, in his own words, “the strongest and most persistent advocate” of forcibly overthrowing Castro by arming Cuban exiles against him.⁵³ During National Security Council deliberations, Nixon regularly called for a more aggressive U.S. policy toward Castro—and the political implications for his forthcoming presidential campaign seldom lay far below the surface of his arguments. In mid-December 1959, for example, he told the NSC that he “did not believe that Cuba should be handled in a routine fashion through normal diplomatic channels.” “When Congress reconvened there would be a great assault on the Administration’s Latin American policy,” he said. “Heavy criticism of that policy was coming from the Republican as well as the Democratic members of Congress,” and “a discussion of Cuba could not be avoided.” The Cuban problem was already “spilling out of Congress, he warned, and “would soon have far-flung” political implications. Nixon acknowledged that “radical steps with respect to Cuba would create an adverse reaction throughout Latin America,” but he argued that “we needed to find a few dramatic things to do with respect to the Cuban situation in order to indicate that we would not allow ourselves to be kicked around completely.”⁵⁴

Consequently, when Eisenhower approved the CIA’s covert-action proposal in March 1960, Nixon celebrated the decision as a personal victory. He would later write that “Early in 1960, the position I had been advocating for nine months finally prevailed, and the CIA was given instructions to provide arms, ammunition, and training for Cubans who had fled the Castro regime.”⁵⁵ Now Nixon would only need to prod the CIA to complete its assigned project as quickly as possible and get the Cuban problem out of the way prior to the November election in order to deny the Democrats a potentially damaging weapon in their campaign arsenal against him.

The 1960 presidential campaign quickly confirmed Nixon’s fears. Democratic candidate John Kennedy immediately launched an “all-out assault on the administration’s foreign-policy failures,” and Cuba figured prominently in his indictment. Castro’s Cuba, the Massachusetts senator said, was “the most glaring failure of American foreign policy today . . . a disaster that threatens the security of the whole Western Hemisphere.” “In 1952 the Republicans ran on a program of rolling back the Iron Curtain in Eastern Europe,” he reminded voters. “Today the Iron Curtain is 90 miles off the coast of the United States.” Thanks to the Eisenhower administration’s policy of “blunder, inaction, retreat, and failure” in Cuba, he charged, U.S. international prestige had experienced a critical decline. Kennedy attacked Nixon directly by reminding campaign audiences that “I wasn’t the Vice President who presided over the Communization of Cuba.” “If you can’t stand

up to Castro," he asked, "how can you be expected to stand up to Khrushchev?" "Mr. Nixon is experienced," he remarked in an Alexandria, Virginia, speech, "experienced in policies of retreat, defeat, and weakness."⁵⁶ Kennedy was also hawkishly critical of the administration "for not doing more to remove Fidel Castro from power," and he indicated that as president he would adopt a more aggressively interventionist approach.

"For the present, Cuba is gone," he told a Cincinnati audience. "Our policies of neglect and indifference have let it slip behind the Iron Curtain." Now, he said, the United States should be giving encouragement to "those liberty-loving Cubans who are leading the resistance to Castro." Elsewhere, Kennedy lamented the fact that "these fighters for freedom have had virtually no support from our Government," and he issued a position paper recommending that "the forces fighting for freedom in exile and in the mountains of Cuba should be sustained and assisted."⁵⁷

As a result, Nixon soon found himself trapped between his political need to match Kennedy's tough talk and his official duty to protect the secrecy of the CIA's intervention plans. In public, he tried to resolve that predicament by supporting Eisenhower's "wise policy of restraint and forbearance" while intimating vaguely that Castro "could and would be taken care of." In Detroit, the Republican candidate assured the Veterans of Foreign Wars that "the United States has the power—and Mr. Castro knows this—to throw him out of office any day that we would choose." "We could give it to Mr. Castro in 24 hours," he told reporters. On several occasions, Nixon openly invoked the possibility of a direct U.S. military invasion of Cuba but then "condemned any notion of unilateral action" as "unworthy of the United States." During his second television debate with Kennedy, the vice president assured viewers that "Cuba is not lost" and accused his opponent of defeatist talk. "The free people of Cuba, the people who want to be free, are going to be supported and . . . they will attain their freedom," he pledged.⁵⁸ Meanwhile, behind the scenes, Nixon was exerting relentless pressure on the CIA to speed up its Cuban operation. According to Peter Wyden, "The Vice President regarded the operation as a major political asset" and "was eager for the Republican administration to get credit for toppling Castro before the election." Accordingly, Nixon assigned his executive assistant for national-security affairs, Gen. Robert E. Cushman Jr., to the task of applying sustained "heat" on CIA officials. ("How are the boys doing at the Institute?" Nixon would ask Cushman. "What in the world are they doing that takes months? . . . How the hell are they coming?")⁵⁹ He also repeatedly appealed to the president to "take some action" prior to the election. Eisenhower, however, was too experienced a military commander to be rushed into an invasion before preparations had been finalized, and he consistently rejected Nixon's requests to expedite the operation.⁶⁰

Nevertheless, the president remained sympathetic to Nixon's political plight, and as the neck-and-neck presidential race entered its critical final weeks the White House took several steps designed to strengthen the vice president's prospects.

On October 18, Nixon delivered a forceful speech before the American Legion in Miami in which he labeled Castro's government an "intolerable cancer" and announced that the administration would soon take "the strongest possible economic measures" against it. Less than twenty-four hours later, Eisenhower imposed a U.S. trade embargo on Cuba. The president had previously opposed a trade ban but reversed his position in response to Nixon's increasingly desperate entreaties for some display of strong U.S. action with which he could be personally associated. One day later, the State Department recalled Ambassador Bonsal to Washington, and as Bonsal later admitted, his recall "reflected the administration's desire to improve the Vice President's position" in the election campaign.⁶¹ Kennedy, however, dismissed the new White House initiatives as "too little and too late" and renewed his call for efforts "to strengthen the non-Batista democratic anti-Castro forces in exile and in Cuba itself who offer eventual hope of overthrowing Castro."⁶² Then, one week before the election, the White House issued a public statement pledging that the United States would fight to defend its Guantánamo naval base in Cuba. The statement, according to State Department sources, was "made for 'domestic political' reasons at the behest of Republican leaders." Shortly thereafter, "as American voters prepared to go to the polls," Eisenhower landed 1,450 U.S. marines at Guantánamo as a military show of force designed in part "to improve Nixon's chances."⁶³

The president's efforts were to no avail, as Kennedy eked out a narrow electoral victory. In the end, however, the Cuban issue proved damaging to winner and loser alike. Nixon was convinced that Cuba cost him the presidency in 1960, while Kennedy's interventionist campaign rhetoric had painted him into a political corner from which, as president, he would find himself unable to cancel the CIA's disastrously ill-fated invasion project. Cuba, he was soon complaining, had now become his "albatross."⁶⁴

Simultaneously, meanwhile, an additional factor was encouraging the U.S. government along the path toward intervention. Throughout 1960 and early 1961, anti-Castro Cubans were assuring U.S. officials that a U.S.-sponsored invasion of the island would enjoy a high probability of success. Local CIA informants in Cuba told their agency handlers that the revolutionary regime was steadily "losing popularity" and that "more and more men" were "taking to the hills to fight Castro." One Cuban source reported that "less than 30 percent of the population was still with Fidel." Another claimed that the Cuban Army had been successfully "penetrated by opposition groups and . . . will not fight in the event of a show-down." Ambassador Bonsal later acknowledged that the U.S. embassy in Havana was unduly influenced by "our anti-Castro informers."⁶⁵ At the same time, the leaders of the Miami-based Cuban exile community in Florida were informing White House officials that if an invasion were launched, "10,000 Cubans would

immediately align themselves with the invading forces." Such assurances apparently contributed significantly to the U.S. government's overly optimistic expectation that a U.S.-sponsored invasion would trigger "a sizeable popular uprising" and receive "the active support of, at the very least, a quarter of the Cuban people."⁶⁶ According to Robert Hurwitch, the State Department's Special Assistant for Cuban Affairs during the Kennedy administration:

My impression is that a great deal of influence, whether it was on the CIA or on other agencies here in the United States that dealt with these matters, came from the Cuban exiles. And I think they persuaded a number of people that things were ready to blow and all it would require was a little bit of a push to get it going. . . . I am inclined . . . to believe that Cuban exiles and refugees had a disproportionate amount of influence on the assessment the United States Government achieved in this situation.⁶⁷

By the time of Kennedy's inauguration, U.S.-Cuban relations had deteriorated irreparably. Throughout the latter half of 1960, the two countries engaged in "a mutual economic slug match" in which Castro confiscated the remaining U.S. investments on the island and Eisenhower retaliated by suspending Cuba's sugar quota and implementing the trade embargo. Diplomatic relations were severed in early January 1961.⁶⁸ Meanwhile, Castro was moving conspicuously leftward both at home and internationally. In July 1960, Che Guevara announced for the first time that the Cuban revolution was "Marxist," and during the fall Castro began fusing the PSP and the 26th of July Movement into a single entity in preparation for the creation of the new Cuban Communist Party under his personal control. By year's end, large numbers of Cuban-owned businesses and properties were being forcibly transferred to state ownership, and free-enterprise capitalism was beginning to disappear from the island.⁶⁹ Castro also intensified his courtship of the Soviet Union. In March 1960, he asked Alekseev if Cuba could count on Soviet military and economic assistance in the event of a U.S. blockade or military attack. The Soviet reply came four months later when Premier Nikita Khrushchev announced to the world that "Soviet artillerymen" were prepared to "support the Cuban people with their rocket fire if the aggressive forces in the Pentagon dare to start intervention against Cuba." Khrushchev also offered to purchase all of the Cuban sugar that had been destined for U.S. markets prior to Eisenhower's cutoff of the sugar quota. A Soviet-Cuban defense agreement and a new trade treaty quickly formalized Khrushchev's pledges. As a result, by midsummer of 1960 Cuba's leaders felt certain that their revolution would survive in the face of U.S. hostility. The Soviets had agreed to extend the protection of their nuclear umbrella to Cuba and were quickly becoming "the guarantors of the island's economic viability." Now, Raúl Castro told Soviet military officers, "The Americans

no longer dared attack us." In September, Fidel Castro and Nikita Khrushchev celebrated their new alliance with public displays of affection at the United Nations. Two months later, in Havana, Castro told a delighted audience of PSP members that he now considered himself a Marxist and regarded Moscow as "our brain and our great leader."⁷⁰

U.S. officials watched angrily as Cuba tilted toward communism and the communist bloc. By fall, the U.S. embassy in Havana was reporting that the position of Cuba's communists had changed "from one of influence and increasing infiltration to one of effective control," and that although "Cuba is not a Soviet satellite in the traditional sense," it "must now be regarded as an extension in the Western Hemisphere of the Sino-Soviet bloc." In Assistant Secretary of State Rubottom's words, Castro had become a "commie stooge." Nevertheless, neither Eisenhower's advisers nor the incoming Kennedy team believed that the Soviet-Cuban alliance posed a direct military threat to U.S. national security. In July, Eisenhower was assured by his administration's principal Soviet specialist, Charles Bohlen, that the Soviets would not be "so foolish" as to attempt to make a military base out of Cuba, while in February 1961 Thomas Mann, Rubottom's successor as assistant secretary of state for inter-American affairs, advised new secretary of state Dean Rusk that the Department of Defense "does not currently consider Cuba to represent a threat to our national security. If later it should become a threat we are able to deal with it."⁷¹

Instead, U.S. officials continued to evaluate the deteriorating situation in terms of U.S. credibility and the integrity of the inter-American alliance. Now that Cuba had abandoned international neutrality for alignment with the Soviet Union, U.S. analysts considered the island "a Communist base of operations for export of similar revolutions to an already unstable and potentially explosive Latin America." If the United States did not take "immediate and forceful action," the Joint Chiefs of Staff warned Kennedy a week after he took office, the consequences for U.S. security interests could be "disastrous." The immediate threat, however, was geopolitical and psychological rather than military. If Cuban/Soviet-sponsored subversion produced additional Cuban-style defections from the U.S. hemispheric alliance, the credibility of U.S. international leadership would be seriously weakened. And that, U.S. officials believed, was the Soviets' main objective. According to the State Department, communist bloc support for the Castro regime was part of the Soviet Union's "larger efforts to isolate the United States and to weaken and eventually destroy its influence throughout the world." To that end, department analysts believed, the Soviets intended to use their new Cuban "outpost in the Americas . . . to wreck the inter-American system." With Soviet support, a December 1960 NIE predicted, "the Castro regime will continue its efforts to undermine the position of the U.S. and to spread the Castro revolution to other countries in Latin America. Given the serious social and economic pressures building up in most countries of Latin America and the weakness of many of the present

governments, the chances of the establishment of one or more Castro-like regimes over the next year to 18 months are appreciable." The resulting erosion of Latin American support for U.S. leadership would have dangerous consequences for the Western position in the international balance of power. As Eisenhower told British Prime Minister Harold Macmillan, "What is involved in Cuba is a challenge to the unity and security of the Free World." The U.S. embassy in Havana succinctly summarized U.S. perceptions on the eve of the presidential transition when it reported that "the United States faces in Soviet-supported Castro's Cuba an intolerable threat to its prestige and its security which has to be eliminated."⁷²

In dealing with Cuba as president, Kennedy found himself subject to the same pressures of credibility and politics as Eisenhower. Unlike Ike, however, Kennedy was a young and unproven leader with little foreign-policy experience. As a result, the new president entered office determined to demonstrate his international toughness to friends and foes at home and abroad. During the campaign, he had promised to support anti-Castro forces in Cuba, contain communist advances in southeast Asia, resist Soviet pressure on Berlin, reinvigorate the Atlantic alliance, and generally provide the United States with more vigorous Cold War leadership than his predecessor. His inaugural address put the world on notice that under his administration the United States would "pay any price, bear any burden, meet any hardship" to defend the free world; concerning Latin America, he declared: "Let all our neighbors know that we shall join with them to oppose aggression or subversion anywhere in the Americas, and let every other power know that this hemisphere intends to remain the master of its own house." Consequently, he could hardly begin his term in office with a passive or restrained policy toward Cuba. Any impression of weakness in dealing with Castro "would be a denial of Kennedy's whole approach to foreign policy, of his toughness, his courage," his bold public promises. He could not afford to "give his opponents at home or abroad reason to question his courage," Richard Welch writes. He could not "appear less resolute in his opposition to a communist Cuba" than Eisenhower.⁷³

Internationally, Kennedy "excited tremendous anticipation" among U.S. allies, who were waiting expectantly for the fresh, dynamic, visionary leadership promised by the new administration. In Western Europe, a White House adviser reported, "Kennedy was considered the last best hope of the West against communism and for peace." Moscow was less impressed; the Soviet Foreign Ministry dismissed the new U.S. leader as an opportunistic politician "unlikely to possess the qualities of an outstanding person." Castro, for his part, had already expressed his open contempt for the "illiterate and ignorant millionaire" who now occupied the White House. If Kennedy failed to back up his public bravado with effective action against Cuba, government leaders in other world capitals would have cause to dismiss his policy pronouncements as little more than bluster. The ramifications could be disastrous for what Kennedy defined as the most fragile international balance of power "in the last 2,000 years." The Soviets were relentlessly

"probing the West for any sign that our resolve is weakening," he believed, and Khrushchev's recent pledge of Soviet support for Third World wars of national liberation was causing major concern in the White House. If Cuban-Soviet subversion in the Western Hemisphere succeeded in creating "another Cuba," Kennedy's advisers were warning, "the game would be up through a good deal of Latin America."⁷⁴ If he could not defend the U.S. sphere of influence in Latin America, Kennedy worried, the Soviets would think him weak. How would he be able to negotiate with Khrushchev from a position of strength on Berlin, Laos, or arms control at the upcoming Vienna summit? How could he expect to build a successful foreign-policy record as president?

Domestically, political considerations virtually forced Kennedy to pursue an interventionist policy. Thanks to the inflammatory language with which he had exploited the Cuba issue in the 1960 campaign, "the political cost of scuttling the [CIA's covert] operation once he was in office" would have been steep. According to White House aide Kenneth O'Donnell, the president and his staff were well aware that if he cancelled the invasion he would look like an "appeaser of Castro" and be faced with "a major political blowup." By early 1961, "Cuba was part of American politics," deputy national-security adviser Walt W. Rostow later recalled. "Kennedy had taken an activist position during the campaign." If, as president, he had failed to carry Eisenhower's covert operation through to completion, "the Republicans could have argued that Kennedy didn't have the guts to go through with something that would have eliminated Castro once and for all. Everything unpleasant that happened subsequently in Cuba would have been directly on Kennedy." Rostow concurred fully with the observation of his friend Gunnar Myrdal: that if Kennedy had not intervened, "he would have been dead politically in the United States. The Republicans would have had an issue forever." "If we didn't do it" [i.e., intervene], Kennedy's national-security adviser McGeorge Bundy told an interviewer shortly before his death, "the Republicans would have said: 'We were all set to beat Castro, and this chicken, this antsy-pantsy bunch of liberals. . . . There would have been a political risk in not going through with the operation. Saying no would have brought all the hawks out of the woodwork.'" Robert Kennedy, the president's brother and closest adviser, also acknowledged the intervention's political motives: "If he hadn't gone ahead with it, everybody would have said it showed that he had no courage. Eisenhower trained these people, it was Eisenhower's plan; Eisenhower's people all said it would succeed—and we turned it down."⁷⁵

Consequently, as president, Kennedy found that he had little choice but to proceed with the intervention. By the time he entered the White House, CIA preparations for a covert action were well advanced, and a paramilitary invasion force of several hundred Cuban exiles was undergoing training at secret CIA camps in Guatemala. In March, agency director Dulles warned Kennedy that cancellation of the planned invasion would create a serious "disposal problem." "If we have to

take these men out of Guatemala," Dulles told the president, "we will have to transfer them to the United States, and we can't have them wandering around the country telling everyone what they have been doing." To demobilize them in Guatemala would be even worse, Dulles said, because the frustrated Cubans would disperse throughout Latin America spreading the word that the United States had "lost its nerve." Neither of Dulles' scenarios was likely to enhance the activist image that Kennedy was seeking to project for his administration. National-security adviser Bundy agreed with Dulles that "dispersal" of the Cuban strike force "would be a blow to U.S. prestige." While Kennedy himself felt that "cancellation of the operation . . . would be a show of weakness inconsistent with his worldwide stance against the Communists" and "guarantee that Castro would long be around to harass all of Latin America." In addition, the president and his senior officials were certain that if the Cuban troops in Guatemala were not unleashed against Castro and were instead brought back to the United States, they would "launch ugly political attacks on the administration" for failing to see the operation through to completion. Bundy, in a postinvasion assessment, concluded that "a quite excessive emphasis was placed, in the end, on the need to do 'something' with the Guatemala force." In Bundy's view, Kennedy and his advisers had been unduly concerned that if they called off the invasion they would be subjected to "heavy criticism from refugees and Americans for appeasing Castro." The "prospect" that anti-Castro elements would have been "noisy in complaint" played an important role in administration decision making, he implied.⁷⁶

According to Arthur Schlesinger Jr., a White House special assistant who worked closely with the president on Cuba,

Kennedy was trapped. . . . He inherited this project from Eisenhower. When he talked to Dulles about it, Dulles kept emphasizing what he called the "disposal problem." Dulles was telling Kennedy, between the lines, that if you cancel this venture it means that the 1,200 Cubans we have been training in Guatemala will disperse around Latin America, and they'll spread the word that the U.S. government has changed its policy toward Castro. This, in turn, will be a great stimulus to the *Fidelistas* throughout Latin America. The political impact of cancellation, Dulles implied, will be very serious for the balance of force in the hemisphere.

What Dulles did not add, but what Kennedy fully understood, was that the domestic political implications of Kennedy's cancellation of this expedition would be very considerable. For a lieutenant JG [junior grade] in the Navy in the Second World War to cancel an expedition that had been advocated, sanctioned, and supported by the general who commanded the largest successful amphibious landing in history, would have been hard to explain. I think this was more important than anything else.⁷⁷

The intervention that resulted has been variously described as a "fiasco," a "debacle," "a humiliating defeat," and "a perfect failure." Between them, Kennedy and the CIA took an operation that was at best marginal and risky and turned it into one of the worst U.S. foreign-policy disasters of the Cold War.⁷⁸ CIA planners overoptimistically assured the White House that an amphibious assault by the agency's Cuban strike force would establish a lodgment on Cuban soil, ignite a damaging civil war, and hopefully "topple the Castro regime within a period of weeks." If the invasion encountered difficulties, the CIA said, the exiles could simply melt away into the mountains and become "a powerful guerrilla force" that would "exert . . . continuing pressure on the regime."⁷⁹ Kennedy's main concern was that the intervention remain covert and "plausibly deniable" by the U.S. government. If U.S. sponsorship was too conspicuous, he feared, the provisional Cuban government that replaced Castro would be widely regarded as an illegitimate product of "Yankee imperialism," and communist accusations of U.S. "imperialist aggression" would reverberate throughout the United Nations and the Third World. Accordingly, Kennedy ordered key changes in the CIA's plan—a relocation of the landing site from a coastal population center to a more isolated area, a night deployment instead of a daytime assault, and reductions in U.S. air support—to make the operation "less noisy" and reduce the visibility of U.S. involvement. The changes doomed the invasion to defeat. The CIA accepted the president's fatal modifications in the belief that "when the chips were down" and the invasion faced impending disaster, pressures of politics and prestige would force Kennedy to send in U.S. military forces in order to prevent the operation from failing. When push came to shove, however, Kennedy refused to authorize overt U.S. military intervention, apparently out of concern that if he did so, the Soviets would move against Berlin—and in his calculus Berlin would be an even graver loss to the West than Cuba.⁸⁰ As a result, the Cuban exile brigade landed in mid-April at a hastily selected site on Cuba's southern coast, where it was immediately attacked by Castro's numerically superior forces. Lacking adequate air cover and with no viable escape route, it surrendered within seventy-two hours.⁸¹

The U.S. defeat at the Bay of Pigs was a traumatic experience for all concerned. At the CIA, careers were ruined and reputations sullied. At the White House, Kennedy was left feeling humiliated and "stupid."⁸² His administration had embarrassed the United States, and the consequences were certain to be unpleasant. Within days, administration analysts were warning that the failed invasion would have dangerous international ramifications: the Soviets would now consider the United States to be strategically on the defensive, the underdeveloped nations would "question U.S. strength," and European allies would find the apparent "naivete and recklessness of the U.S. leadership" disturbing. Castro's military victory would also "inflare disruptive forces" throughout Latin America, the NSC's Rostow predicted. All in all, Rostow added, there was a growing perception abroad

“that we are up against a game we can’t handle.”⁸³ At home, the Republicans were quick to criticize Kennedy’s “disastrous handling” of the intervention. The invasion, they said, had the appearance of a Boy Scout operation. Eisenhower suggested that the Bay of Pigs story should be entitled a “Profile in Timidity and Indecision,” while Nixon told reporters that Kennedy should have known that “when you commit maximum U.S. prestige you have to commit maximum U.S. power to back it up.” Meanwhile, on Capitol Hill, Republican leaders eagerly prepared to make Cuba the dominant issue of the 1962 congressional election campaign. From the Bay of Pigs onward, White House aide Sorensen would later write, Cuba became “the Kennedy administration’s heaviest political cross.”⁸⁴

The administration conducted internal investigations to determine what had gone wrong, and it identified numerous lessons that it claimed to have learned from the disaster.⁸⁵ The main lesson was already self-evident, however: Castro’s Cuba had successfully defied U.S. power. A small Caribbean island-state had abandoned the U.S. sphere of influence for the communist bloc and inflicted a humiliating defeat on the U.S. government in the process. From a White House perspective, one conclusion outweighed all others: no U.S. president could afford to risk a repetition of the disastrous Cuban experience—the potential costs, internationally and domestically, were simply too high. For Kennedy, and for his successors in the White House over the next quarter century, a fundamental new axiom of U.S. foreign policy was etched in stone at the Bay of Pigs: there must be no “second Cuba” in the Western Hemisphere.

British Guiana, 1963

As the Kennedy administration struggled to contain the damage from its Bay of Pigs misadventure, a potential “second Cuba” was already appearing on Washington’s radar screens. British Guiana, an obscure British colony on the northern coast of South America, was about to receive its independence with a Marxist government in power.

In 1961, after a decade and a half of anticolonial struggle, self-avowed Marxist Cheddi Jagan and his People’s Progressive Party (PPP) had won control of British Guiana’s colonial government and were preparing to lead the small colony’s scheduled transition to nationhood. Jagan, like nearly half of the colony’s 600,000 population, was the descendant of indentured East Indian “coolies” imported by the British in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries to work on the sugar plantations that dominated the colonial economy. Ironically, it was in the United States that Jagan first became attracted to Marxism. While studying dentistry at Northwestern University in the early 1940s, he met his future wife Janet Rosenberg, a member of the Young Communist League, who introduced him to the writings of Marx, Lenin, and Stalin. Returning to British Guiana, the couple entered politics and in 1950 founded the PPP, a party dedicated to Guianese independence and “the socialist reorganization of society.” The party’s advocacy of a wide-ranging program of social and economic reforms—improved housing and health care for workers, redistribution of unused sugar-plantation land to peasant farmers, increased taxation of the colony’s British-owned sugar industry and Canadian-owned bauxite mines—quickly attracted the political support of East Indian sugar workers and the black urban labor force, and in 1953 elections, the PPP won control of the British-supervised colonial government.¹

With partial power in their hands, the Jagans and their supporters immediately launched a legislative attack on the established colonial order. They passed a bill empowering the colonial government to confiscate privately owned agricultural land. They introduced labor reform legislation that would have given the PPP-controlled ministry of labor indirect control of British Guiana’s trade union movement. And they attempted to transfer control of the church-run educational system to secular local authorities. The colony’s propertied classes counterattacked, charging that the Jagans were atheistic communists bent on the elimination of private property, and as political tensions escalated, the British government intervened militarily. In October 1953, British troops arrived, suspended British Guiana’s constitution, and removed the PPP from power. The Jagans were subsequently arrested, and Cheddi received a jail sentence of six months at hard labor.