

A COOPERATIVE DISAGREEMENT

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INTRODUCTION

Few events during the Cold War changed the game as significantly as the Cuban Revolution. The 1959 triumph of Fidel Castro's 26th of July Movement over the corrupt oligarchic dictatorship of Fulgencio Batista established a new order in the island republic that sent shock waves throughout the world. This new order challenged the *ancien régime* that the United States had strongly supported and pulled the island republic from the direction of revolutionary socialism and into the embrace of the world's communist superpower, the Soviet Union. In the process, Castro became a hero and inspiration to would-be revolutionaries seeking to topple colonial regimes throughout the Global South and even to capitalism's opponents in the industrialized world. Castro and his cadres directly challenged the well-established American-led economic and political order that prevailed in Latin America and the Caribbean, a region the United States had considered to be its backyard since the 1820s. This US footprint reverberated most heavily in Cuba, a country the United States had contemplated annexing during the nineteenth century and had all but ruled directly during the first third of the twentieth century. At almost any point in their shared history, a revolution in Cuba would have received Washington's disapproval, if not sparking outright intervention. Yet for the United States, the grand ideological contest that was the Cold War made the threat posed by the new Cuba even more acute. It shuddered at the security and economic implications of a pro-Moscow communist country ninety miles from American shores. Within months of Castro's ascension to power, the

United States was determined to contain and, if possible, eliminate his regime.

As the United States' closest and most similar neighbour, Canada, too, was uncomfortable with revolutionary Cuba. As a capitalist country and a member of the NATO alliance, but with a government rooted in British parliamentary democracy, Canada regarded communist regimes as foreign and otherworldly. Geography and history rendered Cuba a considerably more remote country to Canada than to the United States. Canadian commercial interests on the island, while significant in the banking and insurance sectors, were but a small fraction of those of its US neighbour. Although Canada was concerned about the security and economic implications of Castro's revolution, it was considerably less alarmed by them than was the United States. Its default posture, rooted in its British-influenced foreign-policy model, was to maintain the best possible mutually beneficial relations with Havana, particularly in the economic sphere. It was believed such a stance would help Canada moderate the revolution's course by keeping an open door to the West. Canada consistently chose what historian Stephen Randall calls a "constructive engagement" with the Castro regime, even as it found its ideology and its behaviour mostly distasteful.¹

Contrasting strategies for relating to revolutionary Cuba showcased key stylistic differences in foreign policy between Canada and the United States, ones that at times threatened to bring about significant discord. The realities of geography, power asymmetry, and history meant the United States was in the driver's seat on this issue, which would ultimately impact Canadian-American relations. Relations with Cuba was a much more emotionally charged issue for Americans than for Canadians. The former were angered by the regime's communist orientation, viewing it as a betrayal of American values, especially because of the regime's expropriation of American-owned lands and businesses and its support for like-minded revolutionaries in the region. A growing Cuban diaspora, especially to Florida, persistently urged Washington toward uncompromising, hardline policies against Castro. Except for a small liberal minority, most Americans were troubled by Canada's ongoing engagement with Havana, not understanding why its Cold War ally had failed to fall completely in line with their government's policies.

Consequently, Canada often found itself taking a reactive position in its relations with the United States on Cuba. While anticommunist, the

Canadian government did not share its American counterpart's alarm about Cuba. Some officials in Ottawa, and not too few Canadian citizens, sympathized somewhat with Castro's objectives of improving the lives of impoverished Cubans, if not his means. They also doubted US policies would succeed. By 1959, many Canadians were becoming reticent about the extent of American influence over their own country's politics, economy, and culture. The two neighbours therefore chose different paths toward Cuba, a divergence that naturally generated bilateral friction that could, at times, be quite pronounced. The unrelenting American hostility to the Cuban Revolution, which ebbed and flowed in intensity throughout the Cold War (and beyond) forced Canadian policy makers to pay the Cuba file disproportionate attention.

Historians have debated whether Canadian-American relations should be characterized primarily by the similarities or differences between the two countries. Emphasizing the former, Robert Bothwell and Stephen Azzi argue that even when bilateral differences surfaced, the two countries' overlapping origins, shared history, democratic values, and economic interdependence allowed the relationship to persevere despite occasional turbulence.² From the American perspective, Gordon Stewart argues that the United States largely viewed Canada as being similar to itself, particularly after Great Britain loosened its ties with Canada and the other Commonwealth Dominions during the interwar years and as the two North American economies grew more interdependent, particularly during the Second World War. In the postwar years, American policy makers seemed genuinely puzzled by Ottawa's reluctance to align itself more completely with the United States, given economic realities and American power – a reluctance that had previously been attributed to vestiges of the old British connection.³

Other historians, such as Norman Hillmer and Jack Granatstein, emphasize that moments of discord and disagreement occurred regularly, precisely because of the two countries' different historical choices, interests, political cultures, and climates. This friction increased as the United States grew into a great power with a strong sense of its mission and destiny.⁴ The very existence of Canada as a separate North American entity that had rejected the United States – first as an assembly of colonies of both British Loyalists and French Canadians and later as a Dominion and, finally, a nation – limited

the scope of American expansion across the continent. Yet, given all that the two countries shared, Hillmer and Granatstein also present the case that their leaders were motivated in the interest of harmony to cooperate and find workable solutions when they did not see eye to eye.⁵ Being much smaller and ever mindful of the United States' global responsibilities and its own economic and military dependence on it, where Canada disagreed with its powerful neighbour, it mostly fell on the former to find solutions and ways to cooperate with Washington, as a necessary price to ensure that its voice was heard. While Americans generally understood Canadians' sensitivities about their country's autonomy and identity, they did so begrudgingly. As Secretary of State Henry Kissinger smugly put it: "We are so powerful – whatever identity [the Canadians] have, they get in opposition to us."⁶

When it comes to revolutionary Cuba, the Canada-US relationship can be characterized by the two countries' differences as well as similarities. Ottawa and Washington fundamentally disagreed on how to engage Havana's communist regime, or even whether to do so. Canada experienced the impact of this difference more acutely, being a smaller country, one geographically remote from the Caribbean basin and lacking the Americans' history of extensive economic and strategic interests on the island – even though Canadian commercial ties to Cuba were by no means negligible. On matters of disproportionate importance to the United States, such as Cuba, Canada was forced to acknowledge the Americans' position, even though it did not fully share it and wanted to chart its own course on the matter. In fact, since 1959, both Canada and the United States had opposed communism and sought a liberal democratic Cuba. Yet they disagreed profoundly on the best means of engaging with the island to facilitate such an outcome. In the mid-1990s, a period of reignited bilateral discord over Cuba, Prime Minister Jean Chrétien contrasted the two approaches as being "dialogue over confrontation, engagement over isolation, exchange over estrangement."⁷ Revolutionary Cuba revealed important diplomatic style differences between the two neighbours, which at times generated considerable heat without actually posing insurmountable or lasting barriers to good relations.

Brian Bow's examination of the Canada-US dynamic argues that while the United States was not infrequently exasperated when Canada refused to embrace US positions, particularly on those it believed were vital

security issues, it valued bilateral harmony enough to refrain from using coercive linkages to resolve differences.⁸ While Bow does not mention Cuba specifically, that country's relative importance to the United States presented it with prime opportunities for linkage diplomacy with Canada, as advocated at times by some American voices. That successive US administrations stepped back from such an approach attests to the value they placed on maintaining harmony across the forty-ninth parallel.

Washington thus tolerated, if not always appreciated, Canadian trade and relations with Cuba. Yet the realities of an unequal balance of power meant the outcome was not always resolved in Ottawa's favour. In Robert Keohane and Joseph Nye's list of ten Canadian-American "dyadic conflicts," one of the main bilateral flashpoints – extraterritoriality, or the United States' efforts to make its laws apply to its citizens and corporations residing in another sovereign country – aggravated the cooperative disagreement. This issue was viewed in Canada and other countries as an infringement on sovereignty. As Bow observes, on this dyadic conflict, the Americans held sway although, as will be shown here, they made limited accommodations with Canada in particular instances.⁹

The first quarter century of the Cuban Revolution overlapped with what Robert Bothwell identifies as a period of distancing in Canadian-American relations.¹⁰ During that period, many Canadians grew skeptical of US foreign policy with its zealous anticommunism and brinksmanship, believing their powerful neighbour had too much influence, if not outright control, over Canada's economy, media, and culture. But Americans also had their own reservations about Canada, seeing it as an occasionally lukewarm and unreliable ally that did not deserve "special relationship" considerations. Given Canada's geographic and historical distance from Latin America, the United States expected its neighbour to understand the greater interest it had south of the Rio Grande. Provided its own freedom to act and that its commercial interests remained unhindered, Ottawa for the most part willingly acquiesced to Washington in this arena. The Canadian government recognized that its hemispheric policies had to be implemented with discretion and tact to minimize the effects of a potential fallout with its indispensable ally.¹¹

While Ottawa placated US interests and policies in the Southern Hemisphere, it did so without warmly embracing them. Canadian policy makers

recognized that many Latin Americans deeply resented an American policy characterized by condescension (and at times outright racism), economic exploitation, and gunboat diplomacy that backed repressive dictatorships. They also recognized that many Canadians wanted their government to distance itself from Washington's policies. Concerning Cuba, few Canadians embraced communism but more were sympathetic toward Castro's aspirations to improve the lives of its masses. As the 1960s progressed, left-leaning Canadian voices – whether those of peace activists, labour unionists, students, or Québécois nationalists – found inspiration in the Cuban Revolution, a posture they shared with like-minded Americans, Europeans, and Latin Americans.¹² Although Ottawa's politicians and bureaucrats shared few of these sympathies, even the staunchest Cold Warriors among them were considerably less averse than Americans to grassroots revolutions in the Global South. Michael Hunt argues that Americans viewed revolutions mostly through the lens of the French and Russian Revolutions, which in contrast to their own “exceptional” revolution of 1776, promoted mob rule, tyranny, and class warfare.¹³ But Canadians mostly looked at Cuba's revolution as a popular response to legitimate grievances rather than the work of external puppeteers based in Moscow.

How did Canada and the United States, as two close but asymmetrical neighbours, successfully mitigate and minimize the impact of their different approaches to revolutionary Cuba? To date, this question has been largely unexplored. Leading scholars of the Canada-Cuba relationship, such as John Kirk, Peter McKenna, and Robert Wright, have concentrated primarily on its bilateral dimension, portraying it as a surprising success and model of engagement for two ideologically, culturally, and economically disparate countries. They even hint that because both Canada and Cuba have the shared experience of living next door to what Pierre Trudeau famously called “the elephant,” they should naturally have a strong shared understanding of each other, thus making it incumbent on Ottawa to overlook some of the revolutionary regime's less palatable attributes.¹⁴ These authors portray the choice by Canadian leaders, particularly John Diefenbaker and Pierre Trudeau, to engage Havana as a calculated act of deviation from American foreign policy.¹⁵ Yet they pay relatively little attention to the Canadian-American dimension, thus missing the nuances, ebbs, and flows of the true role Cuban issues played in this central relationship.

Political scientist Lana Wylie offers a more theoretical comparative analysis of Canadian and American perceptions of Cuba, using post-Cold War examples and arguing that each country's perceptions and policies toward Havana were constructed from their respective foreign policy traditions, history, political structures, and domestic constituencies.¹⁶ More recently, Calum McNeil has contrasted Canada's "inter-state trust building" with Cuba to the "trust-breaking" of the US-Cuban relationship.¹⁷ Mirroring these gaps from the American side, leading historical overviews of US-Cuban relations, notably Lars Schoultz's monograph and the much older work by Morris Morley (both political scientists), acknowledge that Canada offered an alternative to US policy, although, in doing so, they give Canada itself minimal coverage.¹⁸

Using Cuban academic Raúl Rodríguez's triangle metaphor – with Ottawa, Washington, and Havana as its points – this book offers a comprehensive, chronological, archive-intensive exploration of the understudied Canada-US side.¹⁹ It seeks to explain why Canadian-American policy differences yielded results that were much less toxic than they might have been. It examines not only bilateral engagements at the most senior levels but also engagements between the all-important working bureaucracies of both countries. It was these latter levels that mitigated most of the contentious Cuba-related matters between them. Canadian and American diplomatic and policy professionals finessed the issues with sufficient skill to keep these matters off the agendas of prime ministerial–presidential relations, which were testy between 1961 and 1974. As I argue, while Canada's policy on Cuba has been celebrated by nationalists as a symbol of Canada's independence from the United States, at no point did Ottawa design this policy to intentionally snub or aggravate Washington – a point the US executive branch mostly recognized (although some in Congress felt differently). For the duration of the Cold War, there were ample opportunities and theatres for bilateral cooperation on Cuba that benefitted the United States but also curried Canada favour in Washington. After the mid-1960s, such cooperation became routine, only rarely requiring senior-level discussion. In contrast, after the Cold War, the story played out differently. Although Canada and the United States still disagreed on Cuba, they did so for different reasons and without the earlier opportunities for mutually advantageous cooperation – at least until the Obama White House asked

for Canadian assistance in facilitating secret US-Cuban normalization talks from 2013 to 2014.

In many ways, this work is a hybrid of Kirk and McKenna's study of Canadian-Cuban relations; Asa McKercher's exploration of American, Canadian, and British policies toward the Castro regime in its first decade; and Harold Boyer's much older examination of Canada-US intersections concerning the island republic. Boyer's categories align closely with those examined here, although he wrote as a political scientist; in other words, he lacked hindsight and archival access.²⁰ Archival records confirm that during the Cold War, policy differences between Canada and the United States often played out in routine bilateral theatres such as export control monitoring, intelligence sharing, and civil aviation. But importantly, within boundaries established at the highest levels, such theatres also presented space for cooperation. For Ottawa, the boundary lines its neighbour was not to cross were overtly pressuring Canada to sever its normal commercial and diplomatic relations with Cuba as well as subjecting US-owned Canadian businesses to American laws – the latter issue the United States refused to renounce in principle but until the 1990s regularly placated Canada by offering its subsidiaries exemption licences for Cuban sales. For the United States, its red lines for Canada included exports of strategic or American-made goods to Cuba, the use of Canadian territory for espionage or subversion, and offers of mediation. After two sharp rebukes by two successive presidents from opposite parties in the early 1960s, Canada desisted from making offers for several decades. As a smaller power facing a much larger one on an issue of considerably greater importance to the latter, Canada made more of the concessions, at times transgressing its own sense of fairness. But the outcome was a successfully managed disagreement – Ottawa in fact earned some significant trust and respect in Washington. As Stephen Azzi argues, “conflicts between the governments never led to long-term damage in the relationship.”²¹ As a noted example of one such conflict, drawn out over decades, the Canadian-American conversation on Cuba, even during its most heated moments, never did become a genuine shouting match.

CHAPTER 1

SETTING PRECEDENTS IN LATIN AMERICA

When it comes to Cuba, the Canada-US relationship has broad roots grounded in the historical narratives of the two neighbours and their shared experiences in Latin America during the Second World War. This shared heritage and experience meant Canada and the United States had more in common with each other than either had with the countries and peoples south of the Rio Grande. Yet the differing politics and traditions subsequently shaped how their governments and their publics alike responded to revolutionary changes in the region, particularly Cuba.

Canada's connections to Latin America and the Caribbean were considerably more remote than those of the United States. As a collection of sparsely populated British colonies (which included a substantial number of French-speaking and Indigenous peoples) until 1867, and then a self-governing Dominion within the British Empire, Canada lacked autonomy in foreign or defence policy until the 1931 Statute of Westminster; even afterwards, its foreign policy traditions reflected its British roots. In contrast, by the mid-nineteenth century, the United States, having wrested and then solidified its independence from Great Britain after two wars, had become an expansionist power, filling the vacuum left when Spain and Portugal quit their colonial empires in the 1820s (Cuba and Puerto Rico were the exceptions and were ruled by Spain until 1898). In 1823, with the former Iberian empires dissolved into a series of somewhat weak and unstable republics, the United States proclaimed itself, through the Monroe Doctrine, the

principal power in the hemisphere. By the time the United States defeated Spain in its 1898 war, American economic and military power, followed thereafter by technology and culture, held great sway across the region, especially in the Caribbean basin.¹ American investors and entrepreneurs came to own much of the land and control the economies of its various countries, and for the first third of the twentieth century, these interests were protected by gunboat diplomacy, with Washington reserving for itself the right to intervene in its so-called backyard.

On the receiving end, Latin Americans simultaneously admired, envied, and resented the colossus to the north. While enamoured with American technology and culture, they resented the paternalism and exploitation that accompanied them and the United States' readiness to support the region's most regressive elements, by means of military force if necessary.² Of all the region's countries, none was more completely under the US shadow than Cuba. Until the 1930s, through the Platt Amendment Washington imposed on the country a formally constituted right to forcefully intervene in its affairs. It was that history that fuelled Fidel Castro's intense anti-Americanism.³

In contrast to the United States, Canada had an all but invisible political presence south of the Rio Grande before 1939. When the Second World War began, it had only five external legations. None of them were in Latin America, where Canadian interests were represented by the British.⁴ This changed when the wartime closure of European markets forced an economically depressed Canada to look south for trade and closer links. This process had a false start in the 1930s, when Prime Minister R.B. Bennett sent his minister without portfolio, Sir George Perley, to visit several South American countries, an effort for which Perley was later mocked for enjoying "a splendid time" while Canada's trade with the region "dropped by half" and the country continued to languish under the Great Depression.⁵ Bennett's successor William Lyon Mackenzie King repeated the process in 1941-42, sending Trade and Commerce Minister James MacKinnon to several Latin American countries, Cuba among them.⁶ His deputy minister, Dana Wilgress, wrote later that the Canadians received enthusiastic receptions in the various capitals: "It seemed that the people in the countries we visited interpreted our mission as a belated recognition of the fact that we lived in the same hemisphere and that the paucity of relations with Canada was an anomaly, which our visit was designed to correct."⁷

The goals of MacKinnon's Latin American hosts were primarily political, as they valued diplomatic formalities and saw Canada as a smaller, less bombastic version of the United States, untainted by either *yanqui* imperialism or the British variety – a point that Fidel Castro and Cuban diplomats later impressed on several occasions to their Canadian counterparts.⁸ The larger republics and those with having significant commercial ties to Canada first got their wish of formal diplomatic recognition, with Ottawa appointing representatives first to Brazil, Argentina, and Chile in 1941, followed by Mexico, Peru and then Cuba by the war's end.⁹ A relatively new autonomous diplomatic player, Ottawa judiciously weighted where its interests warranted the expense of an embassy. This approach disappointed several Latin American countries, which interpreted Canada as being aloof, but the External Affairs Department of Lester B. Pearson stayed the course. His undersecretary, Arnold Heeney, outlined this rationale to his deputy, Escott Morton, in mid-1949 concerning Colombia: "My feeling is that the government will not be enthusiastic about a recommendation to open a Mission in Colombia in the near future nor indeed any new Missions anywhere with[out] pretty specific reasons based on pretty evident, tangible and immediate Canadian interest shown."¹⁰ Few Canadian diplomats clamoured for Latin American postings, countries that many saw as a backwater. Among those willing, a disproportionate number were French Canadians who had some affinity for the region because of its romance languages and Roman Catholic religion.¹¹ The region was a low priority for Pearson, who never visited a Latin American country either as secretary of state for external affairs or as prime minister. In the former role, he cancelled a planned trip to Mexico in 1951 to attend to more urgent diplomacy elsewhere. As prime minister, Pearson visited several Commonwealth Caribbean countries but no Latin republics. His only Latin American travels took place when he was the Opposition leader, to visit his son Geoffrey, then posted at Canada's embassy in Mexico City, and also to attend a conference in Brazil. Canada was not officially represented in all of Latin America until 1963.¹²

While Canada's political representation in Latin America was a postwar phenomenon, its commercial ties to the region had a much longer history, and Cuba was a centrepiece of that relationship. Canada's links to the Caribbean region dated back to the seventeenth century, when sugar from the

islands flowed northward in exchange for fish and other staples.¹³ After the United States terminated its twelve-year reciprocity arrangement with British North America in 1866 (in response to British policies during the American Civil War), officials in London and its North American colonies gazed farther south for alternative markets.¹⁴ Seven British North American representatives accompanied a British mission that year to Brazil and numerous islands in the Caribbean, including Spanish Cuba. On the latter, Commissioner Thomas A. Ryan reported an already substantial British North American trade and noted that Havana wanted reciprocal tariff reductions on flour, fish, pork, and lumber in exchange for sugar and molasses.¹⁵ This mission generated few tangible results, but British trade and investments in Latin America, especially Argentina, expanded greatly in this era of so-called free-trade imperialism.¹⁶ The region purchased 14 percent of British exports on the eve of the First World War and, in turn, supplied 13 percent of its imports, a figure that dropped substantially in the 1920s and 1930s.¹⁷

As Christopher Armstrong and H.V. Nelles describe it, at the turn of the twentieth century, Canadian business entrepreneurs and investors used British imperial connections, especially in finance, to invest in utilities, transportation, and infrastructure projects in Brazil, Mexico, and Cuba.¹⁸ Somewhat paralleling its experience with the United States, Cuba felt the Canadian presence considerably more than its neighbours. Canadian banks and insurance companies – notably the Royal Bank of Canada, the Bank of Nova Scotia, Confederation Life, Sun Life, Crown Life, Imperial Life, and Manufacturer's Life – all became recognized and trusted firms in Cuba and several other islands in the Caribbean basin.¹⁹ The Royal Bank became so prominent that during Cuba's post-First World War sugar boom, roughly 16 percent of the bank's loans and deposits were connected to the island – a figure that fell drastically when sugar prices collapsed in the mid-1920s.²⁰ By the eve of the revolution, Canadian life insurance companies underwrote approximately 70 to 80 percent of Cuban insurance deals.²¹ As John Kirk and Peter McKenna argue, the protection of commercial interests and the expansion of trade became the foundation of Canada's relationship with Cuba.²² Indeed, it can be argued that these objectives directed Canada's foreign policy at large.

From the moment Canada began to forge ties with the rest of the Americas, the influence of the United States loomed large, at times pulling its

hemispheric policies in different directions. It was during the Second World War, when the 1941 Hyde Park Declaration virtually integrated the Canadian and American economies, that bilateral cooperation in Latin America began in earnest, establishing patterns that later played out regarding postrevolutionary Cuba. This wartime cooperation was accompanied by differences in interests and perspective, which generated moments of friction but also offered opportunities for cooperation. Realistic about the size and historical hegemony of the United States in the region, Canadian officials concluded they would gain little by going against their neighbour's interests and concerns. Yet at the same time, the Americans grew to appreciate Canada's growing importance as an ally and trading partner and thus granted it a wartime hemispheric role it had long denied to European powers under the Monroe Doctrine.

Even as American officials gave Canada greater leeway in Latin America than other countries, they nonetheless viewed their northern neighbour as a commercial competitor and, given its Commonwealth ties, a possible British surrogate.²³ This assessment had some merit, as evidenced by Canada's high commissioner in London, Vincent Massey, confiding to Undersecretary Norman Robertson that a continuing British influence in Latin America would offer a counterweight to the Americans.²⁴ Viewing Latin America through the Monroe Doctrine lens, American policy makers were hesitant at best about Canada taking its empty chair at the Pan American Union, as was advocated by several Latin American republics.²⁵ Shortly after the United States entered the war, Hume Wrong, then minister-counsellor to Canada's legation in Washington, relayed back to Ottawa that such American reservations went right to the White House; President Franklin D. Roosevelt believed (as did some Latin American governments) that Canada "was not strictly speaking, an American republic."²⁶

Such thinking infuriated Mackenzie King, who wanted greater respect for Canada and a place at the table with the British and Americans alike. When the question of Canadian participation in a hemispheric defence conference arose, Robertson told his boss: "It would seem absurd for Canada, the only power in the hemisphere that has been fighting for two years against what is now the common foe to be absent from a meeting specifically called to consider the means of defeating the enemy."²⁷ Wrong pushed Undersecretary of State Sumner Welles, Roosevelt's principal

adviser on Latin America, regarding American support for Canadian membership in the Pan American Union (PAU). Having Roosevelt's ear, Welles replied circumspectly: "The United States would be glad to have full Canadian cooperation in all aspects of Inter-American affairs" and promised to seek out the opinions of Latin American delegates.²⁸ Wrong later learned that Brazil's populist dictator Getúlio Vargas had confided to Roosevelt his interest in greater Canadian participation in the Pan American Union.²⁹

Mackenzie King got cold feet, however, and changed his mind on the PAU. He saw the American response as tepid at best, not in harmony with other member states, and concluded that the time was not ripe for Canadian membership.³⁰ Not wanting Canada caught in the middle between the United States and Latin American republics, King advised Roosevelt's successor, Harry S. Truman, not to ask Canada to join the inter-American organization.³¹ As will be shown, while hemispheric dynamics shifted during the Cold War, successive Canadian governments remained wary of having to make potentially awkward choices; thus, Ottawa would not join the PAU's successor, the Organization of American States (OAS) for several decades.

The PAU was not the only source of Canada-US friction concerning wartime hemispheric policy. Another issue arose concerning American export control policies. Despite an intertwined economy and the shared goal of containing fascism, the United States regarded Canada as a junior partner that did not merit the same consideration or consultation process on US policy decisions as more senior partners. In early 1943, Canadian officials complained about the lack of notification concerning the Roosevelt administration's decision to exclude Canadian products such as wood pulp from certain Latin American countries, a position Washington had justified on a technicality.³² That same year, the United States' Board of Economic Warfare issued a Decentralized Plan of Export Control to rationalize shipping to Latin America. This plan imposed new licensing requirements on the flow of goods from and through the United States. Because of Hyde Park, this plan also affected Canada.³³ Concerned about these developments and their impact on the Americas, Robertson believed that bilateral relations were slipping into "an unsatisfactory phase."³⁴ Escott Reid, then with External Affairs American Division, argued that Ottawa needed to be

assertive with the Americans, noting that “we are treated as children because we have refused to behave as adults.”³⁵ The prime minister was certainly prepared to be assertive; although he agreed to follow the American lead, he insisted on joint authority for any export-control cooperation, on the understanding that Canada would also be a regular supplier of goods.³⁶ In April 1943, Dean Acheson, then assistant secretary for economic affairs agreed to Canadian participation in the export control regime and reinstated earlier in-transit licences that the new plan had unilaterally cancelled, once again allowing the passage of Canadian goods destined for Latin American countries.³⁷ Canada accepted the Americans’ offer and went so far as to allow, where no Canadian mission yet existed in Latin America, American rather than British diplomatic missions to handle its interests.³⁸ Canada thus recognized American hemispheric hegemony, although it would not allow Washington to disregard its interests. The secretary of state, Cordell Hull, later praised Canada’s position on export controls as “another example of the excellent collaboration between the two countries.”³⁹

James Rochlin’s assertion that Canada sought a Latin American policy independent from the United States is only partly correct.⁴⁰ Indeed, Canada willingly asserted its autonomy, but the realities of American power and influence meant it marched along to the American tune much of the time, and Canadian differences mostly concerned means rather than ends. In turn, the United States grew to appreciate Canada as a prosperous wartime ally and as a capitalist democracy with a similar outlook. The wartime experience led the two neighbours to establish precedents for hemispheric cooperation even where differences and disagreements existed, laying the foundation for the thornier issue of revolutionary Cuba fifteen years later.

Following the Allied victory in 1945 and the onset of the Cold War, the North American neighbours continued these patterns concerning the Western Hemisphere. As Western capitalist democracies, they naturally found themselves on the same side in the Cold War, viewing communism in general, and the Soviet Union in particular, as a threat to their political systems and economic interests. Concluding that Moscow’s ideology and interests precluded a continuing alliance, President Truman declared in 1947 that the United States would seek to contain communist influence around the globe. Washington viewed indigenous communists as

furthering the Soviet Union's global position, requiring that they be resisted, suppressed, and defeated wherever possible.⁴¹

Canada's government followed suit that year and adopted its own version of containment. Not only did it largely accept Washington's suspicions of the Soviet Union; its own prewar position had been strongly anticommunist.⁴² Accepting the United States' premises and its leadership of the West, Ottawa expanded its theatres of cooperation with the Americans, ranging from defence to intelligence sharing.⁴³ For the next decade, Canadians largely supported their government's Cold War foreign policy but within limits.⁴⁴ Canadian officials and the public alike were leery of, if not outright repulsed by, anticommunist hysteria in the United States, which peaked with Senator Joseph McCarthy's demagoguery in the early 1950s.⁴⁵ Yet as Reg Whittaker and Gary Marcuse point out, even as Ottawa resisted a made-in-Canada McCarthyism, elements of it seeped north of the border, and its targets of persecution mirrored those victimized in the United States, albeit on a smaller scale and at a lower volume.⁴⁶ Canada sought a more nuanced anticommunism than the United States, one that Escott Reid characterized aptly as "firmness without rudeness."⁴⁷ In Reid's seminal August 1947 policy memorandum, Canada had little option but to support the United States on critical issues of defence and security but anticipated challenges over style differences that would force it to walk the narrow path of maintaining its own position and character without losing needed influence in Washington. Reid argued that

the weight of the influence the Canadian Government can bring to bear on Washington is considerable. If we play our cards well we can exert an influence at Washington out of all proportion to the relative importance of our strength in war compared with that of the United States. The game is difficult; the issues will be delicate; but with skill we can play it successfully.⁴⁸

Ottawa adapted Reid's principles concerning Latin America and especially Cuba with remarkable consistency, even though at times the results varied.⁴⁹

Even early in the Cold War, Canadian diplomats recognized that communist ideology was attractive in some Latin American circles. While a chargé d'affaires in Chile, Jules Léger (a future governor general) concluded:

“Semi-feudal countries are an easy prey for Communist infiltration through the awakening of the masses to political life.”⁵⁰ He and other like-minded officials believed that poverty and exploitation, rather than Soviet agitation and manipulation, made the region vulnerable to communism. In his August 1947 memo, Reid recognized that while the Soviet Union might hijack the aspirations of colonial peoples, legitimate grassroots resistance should not always be framed in Cold War terms.⁵¹ Hence, Canadian officials came to view Third World revolutions through this lens, a noted difference from their American counterparts, who readily saw Moscow’s hand behind such developments. These differing assessments meant that Canada and the United States at times misunderstood and misinterpreted one another; revolutionary Cuba offered one particularly poignant opportunity.

The record suggests that, for American diplomats and officials, concerns about Latin American communism quickly mushroomed from a minor concern to outright alarm.⁵² In September 1948, the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) concluded that a direct Soviet attack in Latin America was extremely unlikely and the probability of any of its states becoming communist remote.⁵³ Yet senior US officials believed that, as in France and Italy, domestic communists could exploit internal divisions within individual countries to gain influence. They suspected communists were behind the unleashing of political violence in Colombia following the March 1948 Bogotá meetings, out of which the Pan American Union became the OAS – an event where Fidel Castro, attending as a student protester, received what his biographer Tad Szulc described as “his real baptism as a revolutionary.”⁵⁴ The Americans concluded that arming Latin American militaries was one way to counter communist influence, although some officials recognized that too closely embracing oligarchic dictators could embolden opposition movements and fuel anti-American sentiments.⁵⁵ But in the tenuous climate of 1950, containment architect George F. Kennan emphasized regional security over democracy in what became his own corollary to the Monroe Doctrine. In a memorandum to Secretary of State Dean Acheson, Kennan wrote that

where the concepts and traditions of popular government are too weak to absorb the intensity of the communist attack, then we must concede that harsh governmental repression may be the only answer; that these

measures may have to proceed from regimes whose origins and methods would not stand the tests of American democratic procedure; and that such regimes and such methods may be preferable alternatives, and indeed the only alternatives, to further communist successes.⁵⁶

All Cold War US presidents, save perhaps Jimmy Carter (in his first year), accepted Kennan's premise without question. American aid soon flowed to Latin America, but most of it was military-oriented, and the recipient governments often used it against their own people, as was the case in mid-1950s Cuba. Along with military support for rightist dictatorships, the United States, especially under Dwight Eisenhower, turned increasingly to covert actions, both propaganda and paramilitary efforts, either to prevent or remove leftist governments. The CIA-assisted ousting of Guatemala's Jacobo Arbenz in 1954 remains the most famous example, an event Eisenhower praised for eliminating "a Soviet beachhead in our hemisphere."⁵⁷ Fearing more such cases, Vice-President Richard Nixon travelled in February 1955 to Central America and reported that "what happened in Guatemala would have been much worse if it occurred in Mexico or in Cuba"; "an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure."⁵⁸ Stopping in Havana, Nixon lavishly praised dictator Fulgencio Batista for being the kind of leader worthy of American support.

For many Latin Americans, Guatemala signalled the end of Washington's "Good Neighbour" policy and reignited long-smouldering anti-American sentiment, which soon materialized in the Cuban Revolution.⁵⁹ Fidel Castro, his brother Raúl, and Che Guevara were all conscious of the Americans' role in Arbenz's downfall – especially Guevara, who had been in that country at that time.⁶⁰ Once in power, the Castro government regularly invoked Guatemala as typifying US hemispheric policy. At the September 1959 United Nations General Assembly, Foreign Minister Raúl Roa García greatly offended Washington by lumping Guatemala in with Hungary and Tibet as recent examples of "compulsive force."⁶¹ In fact, some Americans misread the Latin American perspective entirely, as when, in 1958, an air force general cited the Guatemala episode as a positive, prestige-enhancing example of American leadership.⁶² Such illusions were quickly dissipated when Nixon returned to Latin America in May 1958, only to face rock throwing and jeering mobs.

While his vice-president was unharmed, this episode greatly perturbed Eisenhower, who subsequently dispatched his brother Milton, a self-styled Latin American expert, to Central America to report on the regional mood. His findings confirmed that anti-American sentiments were widespread, but that the region's countries desired improved economic terms with the United States.⁶³ His brother's report added to Eisenhower's genuine bewilderment over the Global South's perceptions of the United States. Even in the earliest months of his presidency, he articulated: "It was a matter of great distress to him that we seemed unable to get some of the people in these downtrodden countries to like us instead of hating us."⁶⁴ To moderate anti-American feelings, in his last two years, Eisenhower shifted the character of US aid from military to development, a foretaste of his successor John F. Kennedy's Alliance for Progress.⁶⁵ As will be shown, for Cuba especially, these efforts were too little, too late, and Nixon's fears of a new Arbenz or worse were all too soon realized.

The Cold War offered the United States a convenient cover for ongoing hegemonic interference in Latin America through a variety of means. Nonetheless, Washington did not want to be politically isolated in the region; thus, it sought supporters, among conservative Latin governments but also Canada. The latter, as a similarly minded hemispheric neighbour and NATO ally, was seen by the Americans as a natural choice. Eisenhower administration officials recognized that Canada was less doctrinaire in its anticommunism than the United States, but hoped its shared history and role as an ally would bring it on side concerning the hemisphere. In National Security Council directives on Latin America, Canadian membership in the OAS was a stated goal.⁶⁶ Instead of viewing it as a competitor or British surrogate, American officials believed "[Canada's] inclusion in a greater measure in the Inter-American system would tend to strengthen the position of the United States and to weaken the tendency of a concept of the United States versus Latin America."⁶⁷

Although Washington's position on Canadian OAS membership shifted in the 1950s, Ottawa's did not. Like his predecessor, Prime Minister Louis St. Laurent was in no hurry to move forward in this regard. Reflecting on the fact Washington felt outnumbered and wanted "to ameliorate somewhat the unique position of the United States as the only English-speaking member," Secretary of State for External Affairs (SSEA) Pearson instructed

his diplomats to decline even observer status, offering as an official line that Canada already had its hands full with UN and NATO commitments. But he also added that Canada lacked knowledge of the Inter-American system and did not believe OAS participation was necessary for better relations with Latin America.⁶⁸ In fact, External Affairs' officials feared that Canadian OAS membership might both harm Canadian relations with Latin America and generate awkward moments with the United States.⁶⁹ Brazil's ambassador in Ottawa presented the problem differently – in the OAS, Canada might have to “interpret” the United States to Latin America.⁷⁰ John Diefenbaker's Progressive Conservatives, who took office after defeating St. Laurent's Liberals in June 1957, also declined OAS membership, even as they paid Latin America greater attention.⁷¹ With the Cuba troubles soon to follow, this was prescient.

Beginning in 1959, Cuba suddenly moved to the centre of this Canadian-American discourse on the hemisphere and sharply accented the differences between them. The postwar story of Cuba exemplified the tension between its people's national aspirations and the American hegemony that had prevailed since 1898. Dominating the island's economy and holding considerable sway on its culture, American influence was more prevalent in Cuba than any other Latin American country. Kirk and McKenna present Canada as a parallel but contrasting example to Cuba, as another example of an ex-European colony bordering on the United States that was “vulnerable to [its] twitches.”⁷² While an interesting parallel, the degree of American influence and control in the two countries differed by orders of magnitude. The Americans viewed Canada as a junior but similarly minded partner and treated it with nowhere near the humiliating condescension with which they did Cuba. American economic and cultural influence in Canada expanded greatly in the 1950s, generating enough public concern that Canadians voted the Liberals out in 1957 for appearing too pro-American. Yet, in those very years, like the United States, Canada faced unprecedented and continuous prosperity, one it would not face either before or after: jobs were plentiful, standards of living were rising, and many were joining the middle class.⁷³ To most Canadians, the influence of the United States in their country in the 1950s seemed benign and a positive contributor to the postwar boom. This was not the viewpoint or experience of most Latin Americans, Cubans in particular. .

Unlike with Canada, the contrasts in power and wealth between Cuba and the United States were enormous, and the American influence was felt there much more acutely. So, too, were the differences in their historical roots and experiences, despite both having been European colonies and having had the institution of slavery and wars of independence. Most scholars of Cuba agree that Americans largely saw its people as racially and culturally inferior.⁷⁴ Cubans paradoxically sought to become like Americans even as they coveted national respect by resisting US domination. Commencing with José Martí, Cuba's nationalist hero of the late nineteenth century, this dynamic carried on well into the Castro era.

The literature on twentieth-century Cuban history and the revolution's origins has grown considerably in the last three decades. Only a cursory summary is offered here. Despite interpretative variations, a consensus exists that the revolution's root causes lay in Cuba's economic vulnerabilities as a cash-crop economy, the preponderance of American influence, social inequalities, and the prevalence of corrupt, ineffective, and repressive governments that mostly served elite and foreign interests.⁷⁵ Fidel Castro's 26th of July Movement completed a multistage independence process that had suffered several interruptions: the United States' supplanting of Spain after 1898, and the so-called unfinished revolution of 1933, which replaced one populist-turned dictator, Gerardo Machado, with another, Fulgencio Batista.⁷⁶ During his first elected presidency, Batista spearheaded important reforms and brought about the relatively progressive 1940 Constitution. But subsequent governments, whether elected or not, were corrupt and ineffective. They precipitated Batista's return to power in March 1952, this time by a *coup d'état*.⁷⁷

While Cuba's per capita income was higher than many of its Latin American neighbours, its economy remained over-reliant on sugar, subjecting it to boom-and-bust cycles, a pattern Stephen Farber calls "uneven imperial development."⁷⁸ Income and regional inequalities on the island were stark. Although only 7.5 percent of Havana's population was illiterate in the 1950s, in rural Cuba, the figure was 43 percent. Similar disparities existed for health care services.⁷⁹ Once in power, Castro's highest priority was remedying these inequalities – an effort that brought his revolution considerable international admiration for providing broad access to health care and near-universal literacy. During Batista's dictatorship, as he turned

Havana into a Las Vegas-style playground for wealthy American tourists, Cuba's elites invested and spent much of their money abroad, mostly in the United States, inviting large-scale American investments, some of them from organized crime, in the capital. Supported both by wealthy patronage and increasingly violent repression, Batista created a fertile climate for Fidel Castro's vision to take root among poor, disenfranchised Cubans.⁸⁰

It is nearly universally accepted that the leadership of Fidel Castro was essential to the revolution's success, even if historians differ over what precipitated his uprising against Batista or when he embraced communism. Biographers such as Robert Quirk and Tad Szulc present Fidel not only as a rebel from his youth but also as the embodiment of the frustrations and anxiety of the many Cubans left out of their country's prosperity.⁸¹ While Castro arguably flirted with Marxism early in his career, he was not a committed Marxist-Leninist until after taking power. Decades later, and with his own ideological legitimacy in mind, Castro wrote that he had been a communist since his youth, a view shared by former US Ambassador Earl T. Smith.⁸² However, neither the Cuban Communist Party (PSP) nor the Soviet Union nor the CIA believed Fidel Castro was a communist in the late 1950s, although his brother Raúl was a secret party member, and Che Guevara was a true, if unorthodox, Marxist.⁸³ Relations between the PSP and Castro's 26th of July Movement remained aloof, even months after the latter's victory. Yet the new revolutionary leader needed a political infrastructure to support his revolution, and the Communists were natural candidates ripe for recruiting. Castro would have internal rifts with PSP members for several years, and the modern, Castro-led Communist Party of Cuba was not established until October 1965. Even then, as James McAdams described it, the party was shaped "according to Fidel's wishes, not the reverse."⁸⁴ Castro ensured for the duration of his leadership that he was at the revolution's centre, building on the Latin American tradition of populist, authoritarian *caudillo* leadership as well as the personality cult of the twentieth century's leading communists.⁸⁵ Regardless of the debate over Fidel Castro's ideological journey, what is clear is his utter determination to pull Cuba out from a hegemonic "American orbit" and to elevate its impoverished masses – even if these goals drove him to eventually embrace the Soviet Union as an enthusiastic supporter.⁸⁶

US policy toward Cuba in the 1950s can aptly be described as “accepting Batista and doing what we could to get along with him.”⁸⁷ American influence was then so prevalent that Ambassador Smith once glibly boasted that he was the most influential man in Havana, next to the Cuban president.⁸⁸ To ensure stability, the United States equipped the country’s military and security apparatus through arms sales, military training, and CIA support for the anti-communist Repression Bureau.⁸⁹ By mid-decade, Cuba had become the second-largest Latin American recipient of American military aid, receiving \$16 million worth of weaponry and the training of five hundred of its officers in US military academies.⁹⁰ Ignoring the repressive and increasingly unpopular nature of the Batista government, American ambassadors facilitated aid, spurred on by Pentagon brass such as Admiral Arleigh Burke, who ensured, among other things, that American sailors regularly called on Cuban ports.⁹¹

Viewing Cuba as being naturally within the United States’ sphere of influence, Eisenhower paid the island little attention for most of his presidency. He believed US interests were more than adequately managed by the two conservative Republican men he appointed as ambassador – Arthur Gardner and Earl T. Smith. For many Cubans, these diplomats typified a paternalistic lack of respect for their country and people. Smith certainly fit this mould. Unable to speak Spanish, he nonetheless claimed he “knew Cuba.”⁹² His predecessor, Gardner, was worse. He grew so close to Batista that Lars Schoultz describes him as a Cuban double agent who represented Batista in Washington as much as he did his own country in Havana. An embarrassed Eisenhower replaced him with Smith in 1957.⁹³ But both men staunchly defended the deposed dictator after 1959. Gardner told the Senate Internal Security Subcommittee: “I don’t think we ever had a better friend.”⁹⁴ In his bitter memoir, Smith laid the blame for “losing Cuba” on the so-called Fourth Floor of the State Department – the location of the Inter-American Affairs Division (although he also chided liberal-minded American journalists such as Herbert L. Matthews of the *New York Times*, and even some CIA field officers, for being too sympathetic to the 26th of July Movement and overlooking its communist influences).⁹⁵

While Americans paid Cuba considerable attention in the 1950s, both as tourists and as monitors of its burgeoning revolution, this was not the case

with Canadians. While Canada at times found a lucrative market in Cuba, its dictatorial and corrupt leaders were inimical to Canadian tastes. Cuban politics had made a few waves back in 1933, when ousted dictator Gerardo Machado sought and received a temporary permit to enter Canada, both to avoid extradition and to conduct financial transactions at the Royal Bank's Montreal headquarters. External Affairs officials received letters and petitions from business executives, labour unions, and ordinary citizens, both Cuban and Canadian, urging that Machado be denied asylum. Some Cubans even threatened to pull their policies from Canadian life insurance companies if Ottawa allowed him to stay.⁹⁶ Disliking the threat of boycotts, company executives such as Imperial Life's Cuban manager, W.A. Campbell, nonetheless opposed allowing the Cuban ex-president into Canada, a man he described as "the most repulsive loathsome and criminal human being that ever trod the soil of this continent."⁹⁷ Yet with Machado lacking criminal convictions, Undersecretary O.D. Skelton had no reason to deny him entry.⁹⁸ The Cuban stayed in Montreal until mid-November, when he left for the United States.⁹⁹ He later received another sixty-day permit, also to do banking, on the understanding that Bermuda, through which he transited to Canada, agreed to readmit him afterwards.¹⁰⁰

Cuban politics again found a Canadian stage in May 1953, complicating Ottawa's relations with the Batista government. Another ousted Cuban president, Carlos Prío Socarrás, and fourteen members of the opposition Auténtico and Ortodoxo Parties chose Canada as a place to develop an anti-Batista strategy. Meeting for three days at Montreal's Ritz-Carlton hotel, they emerged with a manifesto that declared the Batista dictatorship illegal and ineligible and called for the restoration of the 1940 constitution, new elections, and a renunciation of violence.¹⁰¹ In Havana, Ambassador Harry Scott was highly embarrassed about these meetings, which he learned about from the Cuban media.¹⁰² His superiors at External Affairs were equally taken by surprise, learning only at the last minute that a former Cuban president was in the country. On May 28, the third day of the gathering, the Cuban Ministry of State requested as "a friendly act" that Ottawa stop the meetings.¹⁰³ Scott was instructed to the contrary, as the opposition members had entered Canada as tourists and had freedom of speech and assembly rights.¹⁰⁴ Kenneth C. Brown, then second secretary at the Havana

embassy (and later ambassador) briefed his American colleagues on the incident, concerned that political opponents of the Batista regime might seek to smuggle arms to the island via the United States. At the same time, Brown told the Americans that Ottawa would not intervene, provided the Cubans confined their conversations to a Montreal hotel room.¹⁰⁵

This incident generated some embarrassment for Canada in Cuba, which the local press built up as the “Montreal Charter,” portraying it as a smoke-screen for revolutionary plotting.¹⁰⁶ Batista sent to Ottawa Alberto Campa, the son of Cuba’s foreign minister (minister of state), to argue that the true objective of these political opponents was to secure contraband weapons for a revolt.¹⁰⁷ On June 8, Acting Undersecretary Charles Ritchie met with the Cuban envoy, accompanied by Cuban Ambassador Delfin H. Pupo and embassy counsellor Dr. Américo Cruz, who would later serve as Cuban ambassador in Ottawa from 1960 to 1968. Ritchie told Campa that Canada wanted “the friendliest of relations with the Cuban government,” and that he deplored members of Cuba’s opposition parties meeting on Canadian soil. Reiterating that Ottawa had had no advance knowledge of the Montreal meetings, Ritchie promised to thoroughly investigate any evidence Havana could provide on arms procurement efforts and reassured him that Canada would not tolerate any infractions of its law, including plotting an insurrection against a friendly government.¹⁰⁸ Acting briefly as *chargé d’affaires*, Cruz wrote Pearson that his government was not asking Canada to violate its laws on civil liberty but to stop “the organization of armed rebellion in my country and the assassination of the President of the Republic.”¹⁰⁹ Ironically, as ambassador a decade later, Cruz staunchly defended Fidel Castro’s revolution, including his efforts to foster revolutions in neighbouring countries, which Cuba did using, among other tools, a Canadian-made motor to ferry weapons to Venezuelan insurgents.¹¹⁰

Before the summer of 1953 had ended, rumours abounded that “made in Montreal” arms, as well as those of American and Mexican provenance, had been found in the hands of insurgents captured after the failed July 26 assault on the Moncada Barracks in Santiago de Cuba – led by Fidel Castro. Batista’s government made no formal representations to Ottawa on this allegation, nor did it offer evidence that the Montreal delegates had procured weapons.¹¹¹ Later on, Cuban officials told the Canadians that the Moncada arsenal likely came from Mexico.¹¹² Smarting still from Canada’s

unintentional hosting of the Cuban opposition, Scott advised his department not to approach its Cuban counterpart, lest it “arouse the erroneous impression that we had a guilty conscience.”¹¹³ Within days of the Montreal meetings, tighter immigration rules were implemented, requiring visas for Latin American visitors and thus enabling Ottawa to prevent any further such meetings.¹¹⁴ Future Canadian governments remained equally committed to preventing their territory from serving as a staging ground for violent, subversive, and revolutionary activities, especially from the new Cuba of Fidel Castro.¹¹⁵

Canada was not keen to foster insurgency. Although considerably less laudatory of Batista’s government than that of the United States, Canadian diplomats in Havana saw the dictator as the best among several poor choices and thus wanted cordial relations. Their dispatches mostly supported the status quo, even while acknowledging that Batista’s regime fell considerably short of Canada’s governance standards. The president of the Canadian Inter-American Association, who had accompanied Trade and Commerce Minister C.D. Howe in 1953 on a Latin American tour, had praised Batista’s hospitality and his passable English.¹¹⁶ But Scott described the Cuban leader as “a comic opera leader” rather than as an effective dictator.¹¹⁷ His pro-US successor, Hector Allard, saw him as the country’s “best hope” to secure investment. Allard admitted Batista ran a “strong-man government which is repulsive to minds raised in the atmosphere of Canadian democracy” but believed one led by Castro would be worse.¹¹⁸ He blamed Castro’s insurgency for turning Batista “from democratic intention to dictatorial reality.”¹¹⁹

While Canadian diplomats remained ambivalent toward Batista, entrepreneurs and investors continued to broaden Canadian-Cuban commercial relations. Banks and insurance companies continued to be the most influential among them. The Royal Bank remained so influential on the island that Allan Anderson, a one-time branch manager in Cuba and future ambassador, recommended that its representatives offer briefings for all heads of mission in Latin America.¹²⁰ Overall, Canadian-Cuban trade grew in the 1950s. Despite fluctuations, the balance tilted slightly in Canada’s favour; its exports to Cuba rose from \$4.5 million in 1945 to \$18 million in 1950, peaking at \$24 million in 1952 before settling between \$14 and \$18 million in the 1955–58 period. Canada’s Cuban imports varied, mirroring

the boom and bust of sugar prices. In 1950, they were valued at \$4.1 million, only 45 percent of the 1945 figure, while two years later, they rose to \$18.6 million before falling back into the \$10 to \$14 million range between 1953 and 1957. They peaked again in Batista's last year at \$18 million, by which time Cuba ranked eighteenth for Canadian exports and twentieth for imports.¹²¹ Canada exported newsprint, wheat, flour, codfish, malt, and machinery parts, all valued at more than \$1 million per year. Further down the list but also significant were seed potatoes, electric motors, and chemicals. In turn, Canada imported Cuban sugar, molasses, and produce.¹²² On the eve of the revolution, Canadian entrepreneurs were seeking entry into new sectors, particularly the growing tourist trade – an effort Castro's victory would stunt for over a decade.¹²³

Following the December 1956 voyage of the *Granma* and the launch of Fidel Castro's insurgency, Canadian embassy reports reflected a deep skepticism that Castro would favourably change Cuba. While less alarmist about communism than his American colleagues, Allard was still suspicious about its influence in the Cuban insurgency, despite the Cuban Communist party's ambivalence to the 26th of July Movement. Mostly in error, the Canadian ambassador reported that "the fine hand of communism can be seen in most of the terrorist acts that took place during the year in Havana and outside the fringe of revolutionary activity."¹²⁴ Arguing that Cuba was "a country where personalismo is not a theory but a reality," Allard believed the insurgency would only accentuate Batista's repression (which it did) and that Fidel Castro was a dangerous megalomaniac who in power would be a good deal worse than Batista.¹²⁵ Allard's successor, Allan Anderson, saw the situation slightly differently; even in criticizing Castro's harsh revolutionary justice, Anderson begrudgingly conceded that Cuba's new leader at least offered "honest government."¹²⁶

Allard and US Ambassador Smith had similar views; thus, they developed a close friendship. Smith confided to Allard that Havana was a post in which "US Ambassadors could not win."¹²⁷ The Canadian was largely sympathetic to the difficult assignment Smith faced, "[to] cause Americans to be more trusted and better loved in Cuba" than had been the case under his predecessor, Gardner.¹²⁸ Allard recognized that even for seasoned diplomats, the US Havana post was "ticklish," and his reports lamented how Eisenhower had selected ill-prepared political cronies for the job.¹²⁹ Allard's

sympathy for the increasingly hapless Smith outlived both their tenures in Havana. From his Copenhagen post in 1961, Allard reported: “If only the State Department had followed Earl E.T. Smith’s repeated suggestions,” the outcome might have been different, adding that he hoped the ex-US ambassador would write about his time in Cuba, as Smith would do in 1962.¹³⁰ Canadian and American assessments on the ground during the Castro insurrection differed mostly in tone. This would soon change.

As Cuba’s civil war intensified in the fall of 1958, support for Batista dwindled as the desperate dictator resorted to sheer terror to quell the momentum unleashed by the 26th of July Movement. American and Canadian diplomats alike came to recognize the regime’s unpopularity with most Cubans, and Allard conceded he could not ignore that Batista’s secret police had resorted to “torture, maiming and murder” to save the dictatorship.¹³¹ Washington terminated arms sales in March, and Canada followed suit shortly afterwards – a move that earned it some favour with the new revolutionary government. In July, when Castro’s rebels kidnapped several Americans and Canadians, the Eisenhower administration briefly considered reversing its arms embargo. While many in the State Department’s Inter-American Affairs division, including the Assistant Secretary Roy Rubottom, supported the ban, Ambassador Smith and members of the US military strongly opposed it, believing that it ultimately served communist interests.¹³² When Smith urged the release of T-28 training aircraft to the Cuban air force, his departmental superiors suggested the Cubans be directed to Canada as an alternative source.¹³³ The State Department put forth mixed signals and later rebuffed Canadian queries regarding this suggestion, much to the disgust of a now very frustrated US ambassador.¹³⁴ Whether Batista’s government would have survived much longer had Smith’s requests been granted is speculation. In the absence of US military aid, the Cuban military’s ability to fight Castro’s insurgency weakened considerably.

Consultations with the Americans over how to respond to Batista’s arms requests started a pattern for Canada that continued after the revolution. In October, synchronizing its policy with the Americans, Canada denied Cuba an export permit for military aircraft, forcing it to turn to the British.¹³⁵ American Division officials at External Affairs saw the arms embargo as essentially “taking sides in the Cuban civil war,” which all but ensured

Batista's defeat.¹³⁶ The Cubans persisted in asking for Canadian help, and Marcel Cadieux, then legal adviser and assistant undersecretary, advised Robertson to instruct Allard only after receiving confirmation on the status of the US ban.¹³⁷ This became a moot point. While the Canadians wavered in tandem with the Americans, developments in Cuba accelerated beyond the control of either.

Washington's arms embargo aided in the disintegration of Batista's army, as the insurgency grew in strength and support.¹³⁸ Yet for many Cubans, the US government's withdrawal of materiel support for Batista meant little, given the many years it had amply supplied the dictator with his weapons of repression. By early December, it was readily apparent that Batista's government was finished. Still, Eisenhower seemed unaware until the eleventh hour that Castro would likely win and might permit communists in a new Cuban government. Acting Secretary of State Christian Herter (filling in for the terminally ill John Foster Dulles) sought to reassure his boss that Castro's insurgency was not communist-controlled, but this did not stop a last-ditch effort to prevent its victory.¹³⁹ Several CIA operatives, military officials, and Ambassador Smith scrambled to facilitate a third-party coup and to resume aid to the Cuban army. No individual or group in Cuba was up to the task, so the effort fizzled.¹⁴⁰ In the closing hours of 1958, Batista, along his family, and several of his most senior officials fled Cuba, taking with them large sums of money. Within days, Fidel Castro would march triumphantly into Havana, and a new chapter in the history of the hemisphere would begin.

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Library and Archives Canada Cataloguing in Publication

Title: A cooperative disagreement : Canada-United States relations and revolutionary Cuba, 1959-93 / John M. Dirks.

Names: Dirks, John M., author.

Series: C.D. Howe series in Canadian political history.

Description: Series statement: C.D. Howe series in Canadian political history | Includes bibliographical references and index.

Identifiers: Canadiana (print) 20220209820 | Canadiana (ebook) 20220209855 | ISBN 9780774865807 (hardcover) | ISBN 9780774865906 (PDF) | ISBN 9780774866002 (EPUB)

Subjects: LCSH: Canada – Relations – United States. | LCSH: United States – Relations – Canada. | LCSH: Cuba – History – Revolution, 1959.

Classification: LCC FC249 .D57 2022 | DDC 327.71073 – dc23

Canada

UBC Press gratefully acknowledges the financial support for our publishing program of the Government of Canada (through the Canada Book Fund), and the British Columbia Arts Council.

Additional funding was provided by the C.D. Howe Foundation.

Set in Perpetua and Minion by Apex CoVantage, LLC

Copy editor: Lesley Erickson

Proofreader: Sophie Pouyanne

Cover designer: Will Brown

UBC Press

The University of British Columbia

2029 West Mall

Vancouver, BC V6T 1Z2

www.ubcpres.ca