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Lesson From Cuba

Whatever the whole story behind the fiasco of the "invasion" of Cuba, the United States government — and future governments — should have learned two lessons. If we are going to aid a rebellion against a tyrant, it should be a successful one. And the situation that led to the necessity for a revolt should never have been allowed to develop.

The whole Cuban affair is still clouded in mystery. We do not know whether the Central Intelligence Agency really had a hand in it, whether the Cuban rebel leaders themselves were so split by rival ideologies and jealousies that they could not unite, whether the Guatemalan president really feared returning Reds would prevent the launching after a few weeks. Neither do we know whether there are imminent new landings, how many escaped into the Cuban mountains, how strong and well-led they are. After all, Castro was one of a reported 11 survivors of just such a landing when Batista held the mainland.

But we do now know that whether we intervene or not we will be so branded. We do know now that a great many people in the world recognize force as the primary source of control. We should at long last have grown past our adolescent desire to be loved around the world. This is not the century for world rule by means of a popularity contest. There is a hideous beast at large, ever devouring, ever growing and there is not time to reason with his prospective victims.

In the purely practical aspect we do not dare again allow any territory in this hemisphere to be placed, even doubtfully, in the sphere of influence of the Soviet Union. The reason is not merely that we would lose face

around the world. Russia must not be placed in a position whereby it has to fight for something in this territory. Russia will fight for Hungary or Poland or Albania; it dares not risk their allegiance elsewhere. Russia is not yet ready to fight for Berlin; thus our strong stand in that area has not been challenged except in the bluff and bluster field.

But if Russia should come to feel that the defeat of Castro in Cuba would be a serious defeat for the Soviet Union and so recognized around the world, we would face a serious situation. We may suspect that it was concern that such a situation had already come, which led to the confusion and apparent disputes at high levels in Washington about our role in the Cuban action.

The Soviet Union does not mind being defeated in the United Nations. The labels of tyrant and aggressor which have been hurled at it for decades bother it little. We should also note that some of the leaders of the neutral nations are not upset by the epithets either. They are more interested in being on the winning side than necessarily on the kindest.

"Our restraint is not inexhaustible," President Kennedy warned. The warning should be directed most especially at the other nations in this hemisphere who play footsie with the Communists and seek to use them against us for their own ends. Non-intervention is a nice term and we could happily live with any sort of tyranny in other American nations if they kept their wars at home. But when their ties are to the Soviet Union through ideology or military aid, our security is threatened.

That message should ring loudly and clearly to the Latin American people. If it smacks of imperialism and Yankee pressure, so be it.