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On Laying Blame for Cuba

Mrs. Eleanor Roosevelt lectured here yesterday and among the matters she discussed in an interview was the Cuban situation.

Our Mr. Wayne Woodlief reported in the columns of this newspaper that Mrs. Roosevelt blamed former President Eisenhower for our troubles.

A quote:

"We inherited a situation in Cuba which the President (Mr. Kennedy) was told he must face. I would hate to think we Democrats should be blamed for the trouble in Cuba."

Well, so far as we or anyone else seems to know, Mr. Eisenhower didn't tell Mr. Kennedy what he had to do about Cuba. Mr. Kennedy knew all about Cuba, except possibly the plans of the CIA to have rebel exiles retake it, long before he was sworn in. He even debated Cuba with his opponent, Vice President Nixon.

Further, there is not very much that one president can begin, so far as plans go to help refugees regain their country, that his successor couldn't stop. Even President Kennedy took pains to halt suggestions that Mr. Eisenhower was somehow to blame.

But let us go on. Further along in her talk to reporters, Mrs. Roosevelt said that "our dealings" with Batista were largely to blame for what happened in Cuba. This country, she said,

had aligned itself for too long with the Batista regime.

Well, let us look at the record, as another Democrat used to say. The record shows Batista came to power as chief of staff to Carlos Mendieta in 1933 and ruled through a succession of presidents until 1940, when he was elected president himself and served until 1944. That year Grau San Martín was elected president, and he was succeeded by Carlos Prío Socarrós in 1948. Socarrós led the country leftward politically, and Batista returned to power in a bloodless coup in 1952, held elections in 1954, and left the country just before Fidel Castro assumed power in January, 1959.

Thus, as anyone who can add can ascertain, Batista was in power twice in Cuba—once for 11 years and once for about six years. Once during Democratic administrations and once during Republican administrations.

Now nobody would be so unfair as to suggest that the late President Roosevelt ought to be blamed because Batista was in power during the Roosevelt years. For the fact is that "we Democrats" are as much to blame for Batista as "we Republicans" are.

At least Mr. Kennedy knows that to be true, for he knows Cuba to be a national problem, inherited not just from Mr. Eisenhower.