

Cuba

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Letters to The Times

No Talks With Castro

Senator Believes Any Accord Would Injure Us in Latin America

TO THE EDITOR:

It was with great concern that I read your July 8 editorial on Fidel Castro's recent overtures to the United States. You state that Castro's desire for a rapprochement is "encouraging," implying by your tone that we should be prepared to reach an agreement with his Government.

I feel that the only encouragement we can take from Castro's statements lies in the fact that they indicate the seriousness of his present predicament and the success of some of the policies followed in our efforts to rid the hemisphere of his form of Communism.

It would be inexcusable—in the light of our knowledge that Castro-inspired terrorists are threatening democratic governments throughout Latin America—to sit down at the conference table and bargain for the cessation of activities that violate hemispheric treaties and international law.

Further, even if Castro were to halt all subversion before entering into any proposed talks, we could not ignore what experience has taught us, the complete unreliability of his promises. Castro would respect the sovereignty of his neighbors as long as he felt it would serve his ends—in other words, only until he felt an easing of the eco-

nomie and political pressures the United States has brought to bear against him so far.

Effect of Weakness

A show of weakness on our part, which any accord reached with Castro would be, could only undercut our position in the rest of Latin America, lessening respect for the United States, and making the avowed aims of the Cuban Communists easier to attain.

Very likely, the Organization of American States meeting, which will convene later this month, would not result in any meaningful action on Venezuela's charges of aggression against Castro if the foreign ministers doubted our resolve.

Beyond the immediate and pressing question of Communist subversion in the hemisphere, we cannot simply ignore the past crimes perpetrated under the name of the "Cuban Revolution." We cannot give Castro the illusion of respectability by suddenly forgiving and forgetting the mass executions conducted in public, the incarceration of over 70,000 political prisoners, and the oppressive internal atmosphere that has driven more than 350,000 Cubans from their homeland.

I am convinced that we have a moral as well as a legal responsibility to pursue a policy that will lead to Castro's downfall, and were we to begin bargaining with him, I feel we would be failing that responsibility.

GEORGE A. SMATHERS
United States Senator from Florida
Washington, July 9, 1964.