CUBA
Intervention and Interdependence

(The Independent Observer, MARION H. MCVITTY)

When the Cuban issue was debated in the U.N., the crucial question was the doubtful legality of indirect assistance to the rebels. No one doubted that the United States had given such aid, although Stevenson neither admitted nor denied it.

Now that the extent of the fiasco is known, many in this country believe that any violation of principles would have been overlooked had the anti-Castro landings succeeded. The expediency of that victory would have outweighed ethics.

This is a point of view somewhat comforting to those Americans who cannot sustain both the failure and the criticism. It promotes the hope for "better luck next time", if our leaders have learned that it is better to break, than merely to bend, the law. Indeed a nostalgia is invoked for the good old-fashioned, redblooded courage that beat in the national veins before there was any United Nations to vitiate our sovereign will.

What has, apparently, not been generally understood is that our loss of principle may be more detrimental to our national interests than the loss of Cuba. The legalities we set aside may well be vital to our national purpose.

Mr. Padillo Nervo of Mexico expounded on the significance of the political consequences . . . "The side of the Western democracies is engaged in a large-scale struggle, which has been imposed on them, and in which the victory will not be decided on the field of battle, but in the minds of men. Because of the character of this struggle, the most powerful weapons of the democracies are found in moral principles, in scrupulous respect for treaties . . . the West has resisted and at present is resisting in other parts of the world attempts to gain control over countries through the use of third parties, that is, through the employment of dissident groups inspired, financed and supplied from abroad.

"It is imperative," Nervo concluded, "that the democracies preserve all their moral authority to denounce and combat other cases of internal revolution instigated and aided from abroad."

The Mexican delegation was not the only one in the Assembly concerned for the principle of non-intervention which justified the Congo operation, the principle that must be applied to protect Laos from Soviet machinations, the principle that would sanction forthright action on the part of the United States if Castro, himself, should undertake adventures elsewhere in Latin America.

In the final hectic hours of the UN Assembly a resolution was passed on the Cuban complaint which did little more than beg the question: When a major power subordinates legality to expediency, small states, however numerous their voices and votes, feel impotent to affect the situation. The prestige of the major power and of the UN, itself, are, nonetheless, diminished.

Remembering the Hungarian situation and how the USSR has flouted the judgment of the United Nations in that regard over the years, the present Cuban affair may seem a minor lapse on the part of the United States. It is understandable that the UN is often dismissed as a moralistic organization whose members hypocritically censure others for what they have done themselves or might do, if the need were great.

In the minds of the United Nations delegations, however, the Soviet Union is expected to default. The United States is expected to be different. Perhaps the United States is the only nation powerful enough to afford the luxury of adherence to principle. It certainly cannot afford not to, if it intends to replace the rule of force with the rule of law.

All in all, it is doubtful if interference in the affairs of other nations **can** be eliminated from a world that **has** become so interdependent, unless and until the United Nations becomes an impartial agency empowered to insure the security of all, through which adequate economic aid can be channeled and which can by legal processes decide disputed issues among its members. Only then will international differences be resolved with equal justice.

If in the meantime Americans decide that the UN is a moralistic encumbrance in a power politics world, this country can, of course, let the world organization go the way of the League of Nations. What we cannot do is ignore it at our pleasure and heed it at our convenience. If we consider it an essential institution, we must make to it a genuine committment.

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