‘The Best of Friends and Neighbors’: USIA and American Public Diplomacy Strategy in Cuba, 1953-1962

by

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Abstract

This dissertation examines the United States Information Agency's (USIA) public diplomacy strategy in Cuba from 1953 to 1962 through both the agency's United States Information Service (USIS) field office on the island and the USIA's offices in Washington, DC. Within the context of the Cold War, USIS-Havana personnel distributed messages to Cuban audiences that explained US foreign policies, championed US political and economic ideals, and promoted US cultural and scientific achievements. Local staff depended upon a cooperative, modern Cuban media and communications network to distribute their materials throughout the island.

The USIA strategy in Cuba adhered to the agency's larger Latin American objectives and reflected long-standing US assumptions regarding Cuban-US relations. USIS-Havana personnel believed that the Cuban public possessed a wealth of good will towards the United States based upon decades of shared history and US influence on the island. These assumptions dominated field office planning, even as events in Cuba soured local public opinion of the United States government amid the Fidel Castro-led insurgency against Cuban president Fulgencio Batista.

Assuming power in January 1959, Castro and his revolutionary government embarked on a reform program and propaganda campaign to rid Cuba of US influence. USIS-Havana staff did little to respond directly to Castro's propaganda against the United States until the Eisenhower administration pursued a more aggressive approach against

Castro after winter 1959. Yet by this time, traditional USIS messages had little influence on the island, as local audiences no longer accepted US programming advocating anticommunism or promoting the United States as a partner in Cuban advancement. Losing access to the Cuban media that spread their messages compounded the post's ineffectiveness. Instead, the USIA assumed a regional approach to explain the Cuban issue and to curb Castro's popularity to Latin American audiences. Following first the Eisenhower, then the Kennedy administrations' policies, USIA strategists presented Cuba as a communist beachhead in Latin America and portrayed Castro as an oppressive ruler who threatened to disrupt both peaceful regional progress and inter-American solidarity so vital to "free world" victory in the Cold War.

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List of Abbreviations

CANF	Cuban American National Foundation
CAO	Cultural Affairs Officer
CIA	Central Intelligence Agency
CIAA	Office of the Coordinator of Inter-American Affairs
CPI	Committee for Public Information
IBS	International Broadcasting Service (Voice of America)
IO	Information Officer
NSC	National Security Council
OAS	Organization of American States
OWI	Office of War Information
PAO	Public Affairs Officer
PSP	Partido Socialista Popular
USIA	United States Information Agency
USIS	United States Information Service
VOA	Voice of America

INTRODUCTION

> "The rapid deterioration of relations between the United States and Cuba, the best of friends and neighbors from the start of their history, has drawn world attention to a most perplexing diplomatic problem of immediate concern to the Government and people of the United States."
>
> – US Department of State Instruction, March 15, 1960

William Lenderking had only recently completed his training with the United States Information Agency (USIA) when he assumed his first assignment in Havana, Cuba in 1959. For his year-long rotation in the agency's United States Information Service (USIS) field office, what the USIA called its overseas posts, the new employee was to acquaint himself with the various activities that USIA information and cultural officers carried out within a foreign field office. Gaining practical experience in the various sections that comprised USIS-Havana's public diplomacy effort on the island, Lenderking's assignment would prepare him for work as an officer in the agency, the US government's official information mouthpiece to audiences abroad.[1] The junior officer and his wife arrived on the Caribbean island during a tumultuous period in the US-Cuban diplomatic relationship. Recalling his time in Cuba decades later, Lenderking spoke of a

[1] Scholar Nicholas J. Cull defines public diplomacy as "an international actor's attempt to conduct its foreign policy by engaging with foreign publics." See Nicholas J. Cull, *The Cold War and the United States Information Agency: American Propaganda and Public Diplomacy, 1945-1989* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), xv. Cull notes USIA personnel began using the term in the mid-1960s, as the agency needed a "respectable" phrase, distinct from the "anodyne term information or the malignant term propaganda." See Nicholas J. Cull, "Public Diplomacy before Guillon: The Evolution of a Phrase." Nancy Snow and Philip M. Taylor, *Routledge Handbook of Public Diplomacy* (New York: Routledge, 2008), 21.

field office and diplomatic mission besieged by the new revolutionary government on the island: "Castro was denouncing us all the time," the young staffer remembered, "There were demonstrations, intrigue, high emotions," adding, "It was very exciting."[2]

Certainly exciting times for Lenderking, but it was also a very turbulent time for the small USIS field office on the island. The abrupt change in Cuban leadership brought with it distinct challenges for US-Cuban diplomacy and for US public diplomacy efforts among the Cuban people. Since its inception six years prior as an independent agency for promoting US foreign policies and culture to audiences in other nations, USIA operations in Cuba had encountered little resistance to their messaging. Cuba's long association with the United States, US officials presumed, assured a people and government amenable to both US policy and culture; a vital link for US Cold War foreign policy. Such assurances were critical, as US Cold War policies relied upon an anticommunist consensus among Latin American nations and a secure, stable hemisphere allied with US interests, which allowed the US government to concentrate on containing communism elsewhere in the world. Thinking Cuban interests firmly aligned with the United States politically, economically, socially, and ideologically, the USIA offered only basic programming for their audience on the island.

Field office programming in Cuba between 1953 and 1961 consisted of both informational and cultural activities that station staff believed Cubans were open to receiving based upon US perceptions of the political, social, and economic ties between

[2] William Lenderking, interview, March 5, 2007, transcript, interview by Charles Stuart Kennedy, Foreign Affairs Oral History Collection, Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training, Arlington, VA (hereafter cited as ADST), http://adst.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/12/Lenderking-William.toc_.pdf (accessed February 25, 2016).

the two nations. More significantly, these programs and the themes that USIS-Havana staff stressed in their messaging corresponded to broader US foreign policy goals for Latin America that US strategists considered vital to the Cold War. Matching the region-wide goals USIA officials set for Latin America, the agency's primary objectives in Cuba were to keep communism from taking root within the Western Hemisphere, to maintain US-dominated inter-American solidarity among Latin American nations as part of the nation's global strategy to defeat the Soviet Union, and to promote the benefits of a free-market economic system. Through all their objectives, the USIA stressed US friendship and cooperation in these endeavors to their audiences.

Anticommunism served as the foremost USIA message to the Americas, and influenced aspects of all other messaging in the process. Programming championing US culture, science and technology, and political and economic systems represented not only efforts to advertise the United States to audiences abroad, but also provided opportunities to demonstrate North American superiority over communism. Inter-American solidarity messaging, meanwhile, portrayed the United States as an ally to Latin American progress and positioned the US to carry out its Cold War strategies in the region under the cloak of hemispheric cooperation and support. Though USIS field office personnel emphasized these themes to varying degrees over the period, their goals remained relatively static even as Cuban public opinion of the US-Cuban relationship changed amid the Cuban Revolution.

However, in 1959, after two years of insurgent fighting leading to a popular new revolutionary government under Fidel Castro, a different dynamic emerged in Cuba. Castro's rise to power ushered a wave of revolutionary furor and nationalistic sentiment

that drastically, and rapidly, altered the existing political, economic, and social hegemonic relationship between the two nations. USIA personnel working in the Havana office now encountered an audience less inclined to accept their traditional informational and cultural messaging and faced increasingly closed access to the Cuban mass media network, which USIS-Havana staff depended upon to disseminate their programming on the island.

In the new political and cultural environment, USIS-Havana staff at first re-prioritized their objectives to fit public opinion in Cuba, but did so without significantly altering their original messaging. The mainstays of USIS programming on the island: anticommunism, hemispheric cooperation, and the superior US economic system, garnered little interest among Cuban audiences in the years during and after the insurgency; this nullified the post's primary messages. Compensating for the changes, the field office staff on the island disseminated less controversial messages by 1960 that local media outlets might still publish. This innocuous programming relied upon material that offered little ideological impact, and certainly nothing actually critical of the Cuban government. Yet, with no such restrictions on their off-island messaging, USIA strategists offered an increasingly aggressive rebuttal to Castro's anti-US rhetoric primarily through the Voice of America radio network. This was particularly true as the diplomatic relationship between the two nations soured over the summer of 1960. In their messaging both on and off the island however, US information personnel continued to stress US friendship and support for the Cuban people despite the ongoing dispute with the Cuban government.

After 1959, the USIA also confronted a tougher public diplomacy mission abroad in Latin America. Castro's charisma and revolutionary message spread beyond Cuban shores into other Latin American nations, finding purchase among groups restless for political, social, and economic change. Castro's anti-US rhetoric appealed to audiences already chafing under the hovering northern giant's traditionally powerful influence in the region. For President Eisenhower and US foreign policy officials in Washington, DC, as well as US embassies throughout the hemisphere, the downwardly spiraling diplomatic relationship with Cuba threatened to disrupt regional stability by undermining the US-dominated inter-American system and the anticommunist consensus in Latin America. Such instability, in turn, endangered the US Cold War effort against the Soviet Union and its communist allies elsewhere in the world.

Thus, Anti-Castro programming emerged as an important theme in USIA messaging after 1959 to complement the Eisenhower administration's renewed emphasis on Latin American foreign policy. This strategy continued with the Kennedy administration as the new president planned significant policy changes for the region. In both instances, more positive and hopeful messages led the US propaganda charge to Latin Americans, particularly with Kennedy's Alliance for Progress program. Still, USIA regional strategy also remained committed to preventing communism from gaining hold in the region, and agency officials wasted little time in conflating anti-Castro themes with their longstanding anticommunist messaging. Castro became the threatening specter the USIA needed for its Latin American programming. This region-wide campaign buttressed the USIA's continuing informational programming to Cuban audiences, as Voice of America broadcasts filled the airwaves with messages intended primarily for

Cubans that expressed sympathy and support for those on the island. Now portraying Cubans as captives to Castro's totalitarian rule, USIA messages promised Cubans that upon Castro's removal from power, their lives would change for the better as they reentered the inter-American fold.

This study offers an account of ground-level public diplomacy in Cuba, examining the point at which broad regional public programming strategies supporting US foreign policy objectives entered the host country through the creative outlets of the USIA's staff in the field. Ample agency-level studies addressing the larger global themes USIA staff developed during the Eisenhower period already exist.[3] Though USIS personnel in Cuba promoted these ideas and distributed materials as part of the agency's larger global campaigns, this work concentrates on those objectives and programs USIS information officers designed specifically for Cuba. USIS field offices followed global and regional agency-devised themes, but local USIS personnel possessed the leeway to prioritize objectives and determine how to best engage local audiences.

This work analyzes the products that local USIS personnel developed to gain Cuban support for US Cold War foreign policies and to promote US culture. These messages emphasized US-led anticommunism and hemispheric solidarity in an effort to prevent the ideology from making inroads both in the region and globally. USIS messaging also promoted the continued tradition of strong US influence in Cuba by portraying the United States both as a cooperative ally and a model to emulate in the

[3] For in-depth analysis of these centrally-produced USIA campaigns, see Kenneth Osgood: *Total Cold War: Eisenhower's Secret Propaganda Battle at Home and Abroad* (Lawrence: University of Kansas Press, 2006) and Laura Belmonte, *Selling the American Way: US Propaganda and the Cold War* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2008); and Nicholas J. Cull, *The Cold War and the United States Information Agency*.

Cuban effort to improve local socio-economic conditions. This message, too, possessed Cold War tones, as USIS field station personnel touted the superior political, economic, technological, and cultural offerings that the US offered over those of the Soviet Union and other communist countries. Station personnel framed many of their products with appeals to the long history between the two nations and the friendship and respect North Americans had for their Cuban neighbors, sentiments that both the field office and home office in Washington, DC, stressed to an even greater degree after 1959.

This study also examines how US Information Agency personnel disseminated their programming in Cuba. USIS staff cultivated relationships with Cuban media ownership and staffers in print, radio, and television. These connections allowed the local US employees to place their products within the pages and on the airwaves of local media outlets, providing a sense of legitimacy to the US government-sponsored message as these messages appeared in Cuban publications and broadcasts. Despite USIS influence and access, Cubans were not simply passive audience members for USIA messaging. Local Cuban media outlets served as the gatekeepers for much of the programming the USIA crafted for the local population. Though USIS officers had the attention of many newspaper editors and reporters, and television and radio commentators, producers, and ownership, these local actors retained editorial control of what they did and did not publish or broadcast. Cuban audiences, too, determined USIS-Havana's activities.

Finally, this dissertation addresses the centrally-devised strategies and messages that the USIA developed to counter Cuban propaganda and Fidel Castro's popularity regionally after January 1959. Following the Eisenhower administration's lead, the

agency initially hesitated to criticize the new revolutionary government upon Castro's ascent to power, emphasizing instead messaging that offered little controversy or provided Cuban propagandists with additional ammunition for criticizing US foreign policy. Again matching the administration's changing stance on Castro and the Cuban situation, USIA programming turned increasingly aggressive after the summer of 1960, particularly in messaging directed to audiences in other Latin American nations. By the beginning of 1960, the Cuban situation emerged as a distinct theme in the USIA's Latin American strategy as the agency portrayed the Cuban leader as a danger to the region on par with communist subversion; themes that remained present in US messaging for the remainder of the twentieth century.

US Public Diplomacy in the Twentieth Century

In examining the US Information Agency's activity in Cuba and other Latin American nations, it is important first to understand the USIA's origins and previous efforts to promote US policies and culture to foreign audiences. Scholars have addressed the almost messianic manner in which North Americans spread the "American blueprint around the world in the twentieth century."[4] Such practices typically remained in private hands, but the US government took greater interest in public diplomacy during both World Wars. During the former, the Woodrow Wilson administration created the Committee for Public Information (CPI); an agency that created programming for both US public consumption and for residents in allied and neutral nations worldwide. [5]

[4] See, for instance, Emily S. Rosenberg, *Spreading the American Dream: American Economic and Cultural Expansion, 1890-1945* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1982).

[5] George Creel, *How We Advertised America* (New York: Arno Press, 1972), 237.

Mobilizing for the latter conflict, US officials merged what were initially several separate operations in June 1941 to form the Office of War Information (OWI).

Both agencies laid the groundwork for US public diplomacy efforts in the Cold War, with OWI strategists building off the CPI's forays into the field. Programming featuring factual news served as the cornerstone of the organization's international efforts, which the office's Voice of America radio news service broadcast overseas. OWI's staff in the foreign branch of the service created pamphlets and documentaries for international audiences and established field posts abroad.[6] Though factual news served as the cornerstone of the organization's international effort, OWI messaging also presented a cultivated image of American life and ideology to its international and domestic audiences. It promoted the US as a powerful, benevolent nation of hard-working citizens committed to winning the war and ready to lead in the post-war world.[7]

The war concluded and the Allies victorious, the United States emerged as the leading economic and, particularly with its nuclear capabilities, military superpower in the world. Now determined to remain involved in international affairs under President Harry Truman, the US government devised new strategies to maintain US influence globally and to forestall any actions that could potentially disrupt the economic, political, or social status quo. The culprit most likely to wreak such havoc was the Soviet Union and its communist ideology; this concern quickly grew to such ominous proportions that

[6] Allen J. Winkler, *The Politics of Propaganda: The Office of War Information, 1942-1945* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1978), 78. These field posts incorporated ten initial posts created under the earlier Foreign Information Service, spreading to forty stations by the end of the war, Winkler, 70; for an overview of the VOA in World War II and into the early 1950s, see Allen L. Heil, *Voice of America: A History* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2003), 32-57.

[7] Winkler, *The Politics of Propaganda*, 154-157.

it dominated not only the Truman administration's foreign policy planning, but also wholly influenced American politics and society.

Truman and his advisors developed strategies to deter Soviet aggression and contain communist expansion. These policies included economic and military support for democratic governments to repel communism and to align these nations with US interests.[8] US containment policies and concern over communist encroachment included European and Asian nations vital to US economic interests. However, other areas also emerged in the post-war world to occupy US interests and concerns. Emerging from the shadows of colonial rule, new nations appeared in the world arena to provide both superpowers with markets for their economic, political, and cultural philosophies.[9]

Ideology also factored into US Cold War planning. Historian John Fousek observes that when the United States entered the international arena permanently in the aftermath of World War II, policymakers brought with them longstanding assumptions of the US and its "uniqueness" among nations, the idea that the United States served as an example of political, economic, and social greatness that others could emulate, and the belief in the "universal values" of "freedom, equality and justice under the law" that the

[8] John Lewis Gaddis explains this early support for governments repelling communist efforts to seize political control, known as the "Truman Doctrine," and the theories and early containment policies in *The United States and the Origins of the Cold War, 1941-1947* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2000) and in *Strategies of Containment: A Critical Analysis of American National Security Policy During the Cold War* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005). For additional analyses of the early Cold War period, see Walter LaFeber, *America, Russia, and the Cold War, 1945-1996* (New York: McGraw Hill, 1997) and Melvyn P. Leffler, *A Preponderance of Power: National Security, The Truman Administration, and the Cold War* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1992).

[9] For an overview of early US interaction with these newly developing nations, see Scott L. Bills, *Empire and Cold War: The Roots of US-Third World Antagonism, 1945-1947* (New York: St. Martins' Press, 1990).

US should promote throughout the world.[10] Propaganda emerged as an important component in US planning to persuade audiences in other nations to reject communism and Soviet influence in favor of the United States; a portrayal scholar Scott Lucas contends which the Truman administration framed as "a clash of cultures and ideologies."[11]

The US response to unrest taking place in Greece, China, Korea, and elsewhere incorporated public diplomacy into their strategies to counter communist advances. In former Axis nations that the Allies controlled after the war, the United States government introduced wide-ranging propaganda initiatives to "reeducate" the local citizenry, encouraging them to accept democratic ideals and to reject fascist and soon communist ideologies. The massive US aid effort to European nations, popularly dubbed the "Marshall Plan," also featured a strong public diplomacy push to promote the United States and its ideals to audiences in Western Europe. The most critical document in forming US Cold War policy, NSC 68, promoted a coordinated propaganda effort to deter the communist advance. "'Containment,'" as Nicholas J. Cull observes, "provided a clear logic to retain and expand US information [activities]."[12]

Recognizing the importance of continuing information programs that presented a complete picture of the United States to the world, Truman placed informational programming under the control of the US Department of State in August 1945, with

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[10] John Fousek, *To Lead the Free World: American Nationalism and the Cultural Roots of the Cold War* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2000), 7.

[11] Scott Lucas, *Freedom's War: The US Crusade against the Soviet Union, 1945-1956* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1999), 2.

[12] Nicholas J. Cull, *The Cold War and the United States Information Agency*, 36.

public diplomacy personnel augmenting US foreign policy strategy. Truman entrusted the new International Information Service to conduct "those functions…performed abroad which consist of or are concerned with informing the people of other nations about any matter in which the United States has an interest."[13] US diplomats now had a tool to present US foreign policy directly to the masses. Employing that tool became ever important as the US-Soviet relationship became increasingly adversarial and the former wartime ally launched its own propaganda campaign to sway public opinion away from the US and into their own sphere of influence.

Eisenhower Creates the USIA

Eisenhower's presidential victory in 1952 ensured that propaganda would become an even more critical component of US foreign policy, particularly while waging the Cold War. As a scholar of Eisenhower's psychological warfare policy, Kenneth Osgood notes that Eisenhower "Eisenhower had come to believe that psychological warfare was a vital component of modern total war" while commanding US European forces in World War II.[14] The new president considered propaganda as a potential force to help contain, or even roll back communism world-wide. In a nuclear-tipped environment where armed

[13] Cull, 24. For a detailed examination of the OIC and its successor organizations in the Truman administration, see Cull, 22-80; Laura A. Belmonte, *Selling the American Way: US Propaganda and the Cold War* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2008), 9-49; and Shawn J. Parry-Giles, *The Rhetorical Presidency, Propaganda, and the Cold War, 1945-1955* (Westpoint: Praeger, 2002), 5-73. Between 1946 and 1953, the Department of State's propaganda office went through four name changes before finally becoming the independent US Information Agency.

[14] Kenneth Osgood, *Total Cold War: Eisenhower's Secret Propaganda Battle at Home and Abroad* (Lawrence: University of Kansas Press), 2006, 47. For additional information on Eisenhower's employment of propaganda in his Cold War policy, see Chris Tudda, *The Truth is Our Weapon: The Rhetorical Diplomacy of Dwight D. Eisenhower and John foster Dulles* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2006).

conflict could mean disaster, propaganda activities advanced US interests with less danger of the Cold War turning hot.

President Eisenhower and his advisors in propaganda conceived changes in both course and tone from the Truman administration's overseas messages to allies, neutrals, and those behind the Iron and Bamboo Curtains. Shawn J. Parry-Giles notes that the new messaging moved away from McCarthy-esque hysteria toward the communist menace and early US-centric messaging. Instead Eisenhower's propaganda embraced a more understanding internationalist tone, as "American propagandists became more sophisticated about the need to link propaganda to specific policies, identifying those policies with the foreign peoples."[15] Eisenhower's strategy still touted democracy's superiority and communism's dangers, but "in a much more covert and subtle manner."[16]

In April of 1953, the Eisenhower's Advisory Committee on Government Organization released its report on restructuring the government's information program. Among their recommendations was to create an independent body responsible for creating and distributing propaganda abroad.[17] Agreeing with this recommendation, and buoyed by the findings of an additional committee report two months later, President Eisenhower pushed legislature through the US Congress to establish the USIA.[18] On

[15] Shawn J. Parry-Giles, "Rhetorical Experimentation and the Cold War, 1947-1953: The Development of an Internationalist Approach to Propaganda," *Quarterly Journal of Speech,* 80, no. 4 (November 1994): 449.

[16] Shawn J. Parry-Giles, "Rhetorical Experimentation and the Cold War, 1947-1953," 449.

[17] Cull, *The Cold War and the United States Information Agency*, 90-91; Osgood, *Total Cold War*, 88-89. For the full report, see "Memorandum for the President by the President's Advisory Committee on Government Organization," April 7, 1953 in *Foreign Relations of the United States* (hereafter cited as *FRUS*), *1952-1954*, II, Part II, National Security Affairs, doc. 324.

[18] Cull, 91.

August 1, 1953 the United States Information Agency emerged as an independent organization within the United States government, posed to counter communist propaganda, promote the United States, and support US foreign policy throughout the world.

Historiographical Context

When concentrating on US propaganda activities after the Second World War, authors generally focus on how the Truman and Eisenhower administrations incorporated propaganda into their larger national security policies as the nation took on a greater role in global affairs and the intricacies of forming the USIA. Agency histories include details on organizational structure and examinations of different messages and strategies USIA officials developed to persuade audiences abroad to support US policies and champion US culture. These have traditionally focused on activities taking place within the USIA's offices in the United States, but several do travel to other parts of the world to offer regional or country-specific observations on US public diplomacy planning within US foreign policy strategy. More recent contributions to the field have also examined not only USIA messaging, but also analyze the local response to agency programming.

Early works addressing the US Information Agency's origins included former agency employee efforts to illuminate readers on the endeavor to promote the United States during the Cold War by supplying the rest of the world with information on the US, current news from the country, and demonstrations of American culture. Treatments of the USIA from former staff include works such as Thomas Sorensen in *The Word War: The Story of American Propaganda* and Wilson Dizard's agency history in two

works: *The Strategy of Truth: The Story of the US Information Service* and his updated *Inventing Public Diplomacy: The Story of the US Information Agency.* These first-hand accounts, along with earlier administrative histories, provide insightful documentation of the agency's origin and the inner workings of the USIA in both Washington, DC, and in the field.[19]

Authors writing on the US government's initial forays into public diplomacy have also addressed the discipline within the emerging Cold War period.[20] Frank Ninkovich's *The Diplomacy of Ideas: US Foreign Policy and Cultural Relations, 1938-1950* and Justin Hart's *Empire of Ideas: The Origins of Public Diplomacy and the Transformation of US Foreign Policy* both address the origins of US public diplomacy in the pre-war period and carry their narratives through World War II and into the 1950s. Focusing on cultural diplomacy as a distinct aspect of public diplomacy, Ninkovich traces the manner in which the US government acquired the enterprise from private hands to augment its larger propaganda efforts during and after the war. Hart's focus, meanwhile, is why US officials chose to incorporate public diplomacy, concluding their decision "stemmed directly from policymakers' recognition that US foreign relations had entered a new era

[19] See also Oren Stephens, *Facts to a Candid World: America's Overseas Information Program* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1955); Robert Elder, *The Information Machine: The United States Information Agency and American Foreign Policy* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1968).

[20] These works in include Frank Ninkovich, *The Diplomacy of Ideas: US Foreign Policy and Cultural Relations, 1938-1950*, and Justin Hart, *Empire of Ideas: The Origins of Public Diplomacy and the Transformation of US Foreign Policy.* As part of the discourse on the USIA, scholars have also addressed the sometimes awkward pairing of informational and cultural programming within the agency under the broad banner of public diplomacy. Similar to Ninkovich, Richard Arndt, a former USIA employee in the agency's cultural division, also addresses the history of cultural diplomacy in the United States in Richard T. Arndt, *The First Resort of Kings: American Cultural Diplomacy in the Twentieth Century* (Washington: Potomac Books, 2005). While both authors offer evidence of the difficulty USIA officials experienced in combining informational and cultural programming under one roof, Arndt unhesitatingly criticizes the post-war merger.

in which the US government could no longer remain indifferent to perceptions of the United States abroad."[21]

Nicholas Cull's more recent examination of the USIA in *The Cold War and the United States Information Agency: American Propaganda and Public Diplomacy* offers perhaps the most comprehensive overview of the agency's organizational lifespan. Cull links the USIA to earlier US efforts at public diplomacy and propaganda, ending his work with the eventual absorption of the agency within the Department of State in 1999. Though concerned primarily with the USIA as an organization and its adherence to US Cold War policies, and less with field-related activities and programming, Cull's work is grand in both scope and rich in details documenting the agency's activities throughout the latter half of the twentieth century.

Other researchers have restricted themselves to examining public diplomacy during the opening stages of the Cold War to address the US government's incorporation of propaganda into their standoff with the Soviet Union. These studies incorporate the administrative history of the USIA, and also its institutional predecessors during the Truman and Eisenhower administrations. Laura Belmonte examines the two administrations in her work, *Selling the American Way: US Propaganda and the Cold War*, addressing how US propaganda efforts incorporated preconceived assumptions of an "American" national identity into their programming for audiences abroad. "Through radio shows, film, and publications," Belmonte asserts, "U.S. policymakers propagated a carefully constructed narrative of progress, freedom, and happiness."[22] Such narratives

[21] Justin Hart, *Empire of Ideas: The Origins of Public Diplomacy and the Transformation of US Foreign Policy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 5.

[22] Laura Belmonte, *Selling the American Way*, 7.

proved difficult to employ, Belmonte observes, as even those creating the programming realized their messages could not always adequately capture the intricacies of life in the United States. Still, US propagandists melded these ideals with messages justifying US foreign policy to persuade audiences to "reject communism and adopt democratic capitalism."[23]

Like Belmonte, Shawn Parry-Giles explores propaganda during the Truman and Eisenhower administrations in *The Rhetorical Presidency: Propaganda and the Cold War, 1945-1955.* Through his work, Parry-Giles examines the presidential policies and external events that took place in the early stages of the Cold War leading to a centralized US propaganda agency, the USIA, in 1953. The author notes that both US leaders had their own opinions on the nature and role of propaganda, both at home and abroad, which steered programming and the development of the official US mouthpiece in the period. US propaganda, Parry-Giles contends, moved from a journalism-centered endeavor to a government-controlled covert propaganda program under Truman to a more centralized, further militarized operation controlled exclusively by the Executive Office in the Eisenhower administration.[24]

Kenneth Osgood's study of the USIA and propaganda during the Eisenhower administration discusses the agency's origin and its messaging under a president who valued propaganda as a weapon against the Soviet Union. Osgood offers a comprehensive survey of the political thought and issues leading to the USIA's birth in a period of mass mobilization against communism in the United States, a war the American

[23] Ibid., 7.

[24] Sean Parry-Giles, *The Rhetorical Presidency, Propaganda and the Cold War, 1945-1955* (Wesptort: Praeger, 2002), xxi-xxiii.

public came to view as one of propaganda and ideas. The administration incorporated psychological warfare into US foreign policy and domestic life in an attempt both to persuade international audiences and sustain Americans for the long Cold War effort.[25] This all-out effort to defeat the Soviet enemy included a comprehensive psychological campaign not only against the Soviet Union and its allies, but to US allies, neutral parties, and the American people.

These authors address USIA programming and messaging as part of their analyses, but make little mention of the programming that local USIS post staff created to promote US interests. As this study demonstrates, USIS posts were not merely clearing houses for USIA-produced propaganda. Field office staff did not simply pass along press releases to local media, nor just unbox the most recent shipment of pre-packaged materials to distribute to local audiences, though this certainly did happen. Instead, as this dissertation demonstrates, personnel in local USIS posts also created their own informational products: Presidential speeches and Department of State papers became publications; photographs, cartoons, and press releases became pamphlets; and, later, exile accounts served as the basis for radio dramatizations, as USIS staff combed through the volumes of informational materials that the home agency supplied to create their own products.

Published studies that escape the confines of the USIA offices in Washington, DC, to examine agency operations in the field, which this analysis provides, are less common. Such a hole is remarkable considering that it was in the individual countries where USIA field offices, and the personnel who staffed them, informed USIA planning

[25] Osgood, *Total Cold War*, 2-3.

and where the agency received feedback on how its strategies were working. Still, some works exist that address the US public diplomacy effort at ground level, both regionally and by nation. These authors frame their studies as examinations of USIA activity within the broader theory of "Americanization;" a catch-all term for US political, economic, and cultural influence within other countries.[26]

Reinhold Wagnleitner studies US cultural influence in post-war Austria, much of which the US government provided, in *Coca-Colonization and the Cold War: The Cultural Mission of the United States in Austria after the Second World War,* explores US-produced music, television, film, radio, and publications that promoted US ideals and culture to Austrian audiences. He contends that these messages portrayed United States as the ideal for "wealth, a comfortable standard of living for the masses, freedom, modernity, the culture of consumption, and a peaceful life."[27] Wagnleitner asserts that Austrians embraced US messaging, concluding: "It hardly seems too presumptuous to assert that the dreams of the 'American dream'…played an absolutely decisive role in the political developments of the Second Republic."

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[26] Scholarship in "Americanization" and other associated ideas, such as "cultural transfer," "cultural imperialism," and "soft power" in the post-war period are numerous. Excellent overviews of the subject and the debate over the terms include Jessica C.E. Gienow-Hecht, "*Shame on US?* Academics, Cultural Transfer and the Cold War--A Critical Review." *Diplomatic History,* 24, no. 3 (Summer 2000), 465-494; see also Richard Kuisel, "Americanization for Historians." *Diplomatic History*, 24, no. 3 (Summer 2000), 509-515; John Tomlinson, *Cultural Imperialism: A Critical Introduction* (New York: Continuum, 2002); and Joseph S. Nye, *Bound to Lead: The Changing Nature of American Power* (New York: Basic Books, 1990). For US cultural transfer case studies in Latin America specifically, see Gilbert M. Joseph, Catherine C. Legrand, and Ricardo D. Salvatore, eds. *Close Encounters of Empire: Writing the Cultural History of U.S. – Latin American Relations* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1998).

[27] Reinhold Wagnleitner, *Coca-Colonization and the Cold War: The Cultural Mission of the United States in Austria after the Second World War* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1994), 277-278. Wagnleitner rejects the idea of "Americanization," arguing instead that the phenomenon is in actuality the continuing result of "Europeanization," Wagnleitner, 6.

Simona Tobia examines the USIS mission in Italy at the end of World War II through Eisenhower's first term as president. Tobia places her work, *Advertising America: The United States Information Service in Italy (1945-1956)*, within the literature tracing US attempts to "Americanize" other nations after the Second World War. Her examination of USIS activities include both informational and cultural programming during World War II and into the Eisenhower Presidency, and how the local field office promoted US culture and policy in the strategic European nation. Tobia contends that the USIS mission was to influence Italians that their nation's future success depended upon their adherence to "American models" of freedom and democracy.[28] Unlike in Wagnleitner's Austria, however, Tobia asserts that USIS activities in Italy did not have similar success in influencing local opinion. Instead, she argues target audiences selected only certain facets of "Americanization" that the USIA promoted that offered benefits to their current culture, "not allowing others," Tobia concludes, "to impose models [the Italians] were not willing to accept."[29]

Studying US propaganda throughout Southeast Asia, Marc Frey addresses USIA activities in the region in "Tools of Empire: Persuasion and the United States' Modernizing Mission in Southeast Asia." Frey' focuses on the overall objectives the USIA outlined for the region and the methods the agency employed to distribute programming to audiences, concluding that the USIA offered a mixed message of anticommunist and pro-United States programming along with more positive messages

[28] Simona Tobia, *Advertising America: The United States Information Service in Italy (1945-1956)* (Milan: LED, 2008), 18.

[29] Tobia, 283-284.

promoting modernization and independence from colonialism.[30] Yet, as USIS officials did not fully comprehend the audiences they attempted to persuade, Frey considers their efforts as little more than paternalism and concludes that, ultimately, US Cold War policies outweighed any such positive messaging.[31]

S.R. Joey Long remains in the region with his study of USIA operations in Singapore in "Winning Hearts and Minds: US Psychological Warfare Operations in Singapore, 1955-1961." Whereas Frey's analysis of USIA programming in Southeast Asia contends that the agency did not provide messages that resonated among regional audiences, Long's appraisal of USIA efforts in Singapore offer a different conclusion. Long argues that USIA activities in the island city-state proved successful in aligning local sentiment with US policies during the period through programming that "undermined communism's appeal, enhanced the United States' image as an advanced society that was worth emulation, and cultivated local sympathies for American foreign policy."[32] Frey's assessment is perhaps colored by his examination of USIA activities at a regional level, which allows for only a broad-based conclusion. In contrast, Long's country-specific analysis allows him to concentrate on one particular field office's informational and cultural offerings and objectives.

This study incorporates elements of the analytical framework from those authors who place the USIA within the host-nation to offer a granular examination of both a singular field office and the messaging strategies for a specific country. USIA

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[30] Marc Frey, "Tools of Empire: Persuasion and the United States' Modernizing Mission in Southeast Asia" *Diplomatic History*, 27, no. 4 (September, 2003): 568.

[31] Frey, 568.

[32] S.R. Joey Long, "Winning Hearts and Minds: US Psychological Warfare Operations in Singapore, 1955-1961. *Diplomatic History*, 32, no. 5 (November 2008): 903.

information and cultural officers in the field comprised an important component to US diplomatic missions, often serving as the most public representative to audiences in the host country. It was these personnel, acting as public relations specialists for the United States, who met with local audiences as the friendly face of America, arranged for events that promoted the US, and made inroads with local media and influential figures in each country to gain domestic support for US policies. While these staffers followed USIA guidance in promoting US objectives, they also possessed the flexibility to devise programming for their assigned area based upon their own observations. They, too, influenced larger USIA and US State Department planning through their reports and interactions with local audiences and prominent individuals in their respective countries.

Post-war public diplomacy in Latin America has received only slight scholarly attention to date. Broader examinations, such as Cull and Osgood, devote minimal attention to USIA activities in the region, as their focus is elsewhere. Osgood offers an abbreviated account of USIA Latin American planning as part of a series of summaries encompassing the agency's regional outlook during Eisenhower's two terms in office. Cull's agency history drills deeper into USIA operations during the Bay of Pigs, the Cuban Missile Crisis, and other key moments in USIA Latin American efforts, but without any true field-level analysis.

Other published works that do address country-specific public diplomacy activities in Latin America include Gerald K. Haines' chapter on the USIS in Brazil between 1945 and 1954 in his work *The Americanization of Brazil*, and Seth Fein's study of USIS mobile field unit activity and programming in Mexico in the early 1950s. Haines' larger work concentrates on US Cold War policies in Brazil, which the author

contends reflected the basic US strategies of anticommunist containment and maintaining access to raw materials and markets, and the "American efforts to control, influence, and mold Brazil's progress toward modernization."[33] US information programming assisted in the effort to align Brazilians with US interests and ideologies. Through their efforts, the USIS offices in the important South American nation promoted US economic and anticommunist policies while also attempting to explain US life and culture to their Brazilian audience. "With an almost missionary zeal," Haines observes, "USIS officials attempted to develop individualistic and democratic traits in Brazilians, to get them to 'think things through in patterns similar to our [US] own in politics, economics, and social welfare.'"[34]

Fein, meanwhile, analyzes the characteristics of the transnational collaboration between Mexican and US government officials using US-produced films as a tool for both parties to gain favor among local Mexican audiences in his essay "Everyday Forms of Transnational Collaboration: US Film Propaganda in Cold War Mexico." Noting the US-centric approach most foreign policy researchers take when addressing US diplomacy, Fein instead focuses on the idea of "contact zones," to frame his examination.[35] Fein's study demonstrates that while the USIA used their programming to promote US goodwill to foreign audiences, Mexican officials, too, gained political

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[33] Gerald K. Haines, *The Americanization of Brazil: A Study of US Cold War Diplomacy in the Third Word* (Wilmington: Scholarly Resources, Inc., 1989), xi.

[34] Haines, *The Americanization of Brazil,* 162.

[35] Seth Fein, "Everyday Forms of Transnational Collaboration: US Film Propaganda in Cold War Mexico," in Gilbert M. Joseph, Catherine C. LeGrand, and Ricardo D. Salvatore, eds., *Close Encounters of Empire: Writing the Cultural History of US-Latin American Relations* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1998), 403. Fein uses Mary Louise Pratt's definition of "contact zone" to explain the term as "social spaces where disparate cultures meet, clash, and grapple with each other, often in highly asymmetrical relations of domination and subordination."

benefit through promoting these endeavors, noting that the screenings aided both parties in their "pursuit of convergent (although independently motivated) goals: the incorporation of peripheral communities, marginalized social sectors, and politically disaffected groups into a hegemonic culture through new forms of audiovisual discourse."[36]

This study compliments these works, illuminating USIA planning and messaging by focusing on a singular nation during a defined time period that featured an abrupt alteration to traditional US influence in that country. Such upheaval in a specifically defined time-frame allows this work to examine how US Information strategists altered their strategies in conjunction with changing local public opinion and larger US foreign policy. Incorporating methodology similar to what others have employed in their own studies to analyze USIA organizational history and the agency's regional and country-specific objectives and programming, this work drills even deeper to examine specific strategies, themes, and objectives USIS-Havana personnel engaged in to promote US interests in a region underrepresented in Cold War era public diplomacy scholarship.

Chapter Structure

This work offers a chronological account of USIS-Havana activities and strategies in Cuba between 1953 and 1961. It then expands to analyze how the USIA incorporated Fidel Castro into the agency's planning for Latin America and explain the US position on Cuba beginning in 1959. The chapters reflect four different periods Cuban history during the tumultuous mid-decade of the twentieth century and in the Cuban-US diplomatic relationship in those years.

[36] Fein, 436.

Chapter one introduces the United States Information field office in Cuba. It explains the organizational structure of USIS-Havana and the various ways field office personnel communicated with Cuban audiences. These methods included newspaper articles, television and radio broadcasts, motion picture screenings, cultural and educational exhibits and performances, and distributing informational publications. This chapter also provides an overview of the Cuban media and communications outlets that USIS field staff relied upon to aid them in their efforts. USIS field staff relied upon existing modern Cuban media outlets and communications networks to aid them in their efforts.

Chapters two and three provide an overview of USIS-Havana activities and objectives between 1953 and 1958. These chapters explain how field office personnel promoted the USIA objectives for Latin America in Cuba, tailoring these messages to correspond to the local situation and producing programming that USIS staff believed would appeal to Cuban audiences. USIS staff assumed the Cuban people to be intimately tied to US interests and supportive of US policies. The insurgency, beginning in late 1956, did little to alter USIS-Havana objectives. Only late in the struggle did field office staff revise their plans, but with messaging that did not adequately address the Cuban public's concerns with US policy and influence.

Chapters four and five examine USIS-Havana operations in the aftermath of Fidel Castro's victory over Fulgencio Batista and amid the new Cuban government's efforts to consolidate its power and begin enacting reform programs on the island. As chapter four demonstrates, the field office's early optimism for renewed programming on the island quickly gave way to a more pessimistic appraisal, as the revolutionary government

enacted social and political reforms that threatened US hegemony in Cuba, gained greater control over the island nation's mass communications network to promote their own messaging, and increasingly portrayed the United States as an obstacle to Cuban progress. Chapter five continues this analysis, demonstrating that by 1960 USIS-Havana staff had no access to Cuban media outlets, leaving them unable to effectively counter Cuban anti-US messaging on the island. The USIA assumed greater responsibility to promote US interests on the island with messages of assumed friendship between Cubans and the United States, but even the agency lacked the proper resources to reach Cubans in large numbers.

Chapter six assumes a regional perspective to examine the USIA as agency strategists incorporated the Cuban issue into their broader objectives for Latin America. Castro's rhetoric and actions ignited a firestorm of unrest among populations in the region, particularly after his revolutionary forces assumed control of the Cuban government in January 1959. The USIA contended with a new actor in the word war and, in response, agency officials attempted to demonstrate Castro's danger to the region and garner support to remove the Cuban leader from power. Simultaneously, the USIA continued to send messages to Cuban audiences stressing the US actions were in response to the revolutionary government, not the Cuban people.

Inherent within all of these chapters are several concepts that tie this study together. Examining what USIS-Havana staff considered to be the most important objectives in Cuba demonstrates how the island nation fit into US Cold War strategies both globally and in the region, while the messages they used to promote US Cold War policies reflect how the USIA promoted Cold War policies to regional audiences.

Additionally, through USIA messaging, this examination reveals the assumptions many in the US had regarding their nation's relationship with Cuba and the way in which North Americans viewed the Cuban people. These assumptions were byproducts of decades of US interaction with the country and its people, interspersed with North American concepts of what it meant to be economically, politically, and socially "advanced." A final theme within this work is the demonstration that the USIA depended upon a willing local communications network to assist USIA staff in spreading their programming within their host country, particularly in areas where the Voice of America did not have a strong presence. Without such networks, field office staff had little opportunity to practice effective public diplomacy.

The USIA's role in Cuba must be kept in perspective, lest this dissertation over-inflates its importance in the events leading to the break in US-Cuban diplomatic relations. The actions and reactions leading to that splintering were numerous within both governments. USIS-Havana's role was no more influential than any other agency or actor in the events. Public diplomacy is only one tool in the foreign policy arsenal and propaganda alone is not enough to alter public opinion; words must match deeds.

This study also recognizes that USIA programming did not exist in a vacuum. The US government's official messages to audiences abroad were only one current within a greater flood of ideas, imagery, symbols, and messages from North America to the rest of the world. USIA personnel competed with a multitude of private interests "selling America" abroad for commercial, altruistic, or ideological reasons. These other voices often did not correspond with USIA messages, creating discrepancies in their image of "America" that the government-led initiative could not always overcome.

With those caveats in place, studying the USIA public diplomacy messaging and strategies in Cuba offers important contributions to the study of the US-Cuban relationship. As the official mouthpiece for the US government to foreign audiences, USIA programming illustrates how US government officials approached the diplomatic relationship with Cuba and how that nation fit within Eisenhower and Kennedy's greater Cold War policies, through an underexplored facet of US-Cuban diplomacy. The messaging USIS-Havana staff employed also reveals how US policymakers envisioned the United States' influence in Cuba and their assumption on Cubans perceived the United States. As an organizational history of the USIA and its USIS office in Havana, this work stresses how local realities interfered with the agency's global and regional objectives at the field level, and the leeway USIS field post staff had in meeting local challenges. This is also a case study demonstrating how the both USIA and its field posts could or could not respond to a changing situation and incorporate new objectives and themes on short notice. Finally, examining the public diplomacy effort in Cuba between 1953 and 1961, and thereafter the effort to reach Cuban audiences via external sources, provides evidence of the influence and credibility US government messaging possess amid periods of nationalistic fervor and overwhelming popular propaganda messages from other actors. Perhaps most importantly, this study demonstrates the consequences of actions not always matching words.

CHAPTER ONE

Limited Resources, Dynamic Activity: The USIS Field Office in Cuba

> "The USIS-Cuba operation is a very good one. The program is both ambitious and dynamic. Although the staff is relatively small, the entire output is very large and, in addition, the quality of the output is of a high order."
>
> – *USIA Inspection Report*, September 30, 1954

The United States Information Service (USIS) field office in Havana managed the United States Information Agency's (USIA) informational and cultural operation in Cuba from 1953 to 1961.[1] Located within the US Embassy, USIS personnel worked with their USIA colleagues, the United States Department of State in Washington, DC, and the United States diplomatic mission in Havana to promote US interests among the Cuban public.[2] Serving as the US government's official mouthpiece, USIS officers gauged local public sentiment to establish objectives for their efforts in Cuba to promote US foreign policy and the American "way of life" in a manner that they believed Cuban audiences would accept. Much of the programming USIS-Havana personnel employed to advertise

[1] The USIA officially labeled nation-wide public diplomacy activities in Cuba as "USIS-Cuba." Larger USIS operations abroad often featured multiple field offices and sub-offices in various locations within a country. However, save for a pair of small branch offices, the main USIA presence on the island was the field station in Havana. For simplification, this dissertation uses USIS-Havana when discussing nation-wide planning and programming in Cuba.

[2] Much of the documentary source material spells Havana with the Spanish form, "Habana." This dissertation uses the English spelling "Havana," except when using the word in direct quotes and citing primary materials.

US culture and foreign policy originated within the USIA's offices in Washington, DC, but information and cultural officers in Havana regularly used both agency-supplied materials and their own designs to craft programming for local audiences.

The USIA relied upon its network of United States Information Service field offices located in countries throughout the world to disseminate these messages. USIS offices were more than simply clearinghouses for US propaganda; they actively collaborated with USIA strategists in developing a messaging strategy for their assigned country. These stations served as the USIA's eyes, ears, and voice abroad. USIS personnel were often the face of the United States government for the local population. Through informational and cultural activities in their assigned country, USIS staff promoted US interests directly to individuals with personal contact and through local communications mediums. Working with the local US embassy staff, USIS personnel also observed and reported on current conditions within their assigned country. They particularly reported on local reaction to the home-nation's government and public opinion of US policies. USIA executive staff in Washington, DC, in turn, used this data to refine their propaganda strategies.

USIS-Havana personnel depended on access to a modern Cuban communications network of radio, television, film, and print sources to spread their programming and reach a broad Cuban audience, who were already well-versed in consuming mass media messaging. The local USIS field office worked with private Cuban media ownership, journalists, media personalities, and also the Cuban government to foster an atmosphere where those entities were amenable to incorporating USIS materials into their products. With local media approval, USIS staff often obscured themselves as the source of these

products and programming, only identifying the field office as the originator when it proved advantageous or necessary.

USIS-Havana Operations

USIS-Havana personnel worked under challenging conditions as the fledgling US Information Agency began operations in the summer of 1953. US Cold War planning dictated that the USIA focus its budget on more pressing areas in the world, particularly Europe and Asia. Save for a few troubled areas, foreign policy experts in the Eisenhower administration considered Latin America to be well aligned with US Cold War interests and in little danger of communist penetration. The region remained a low priority throughout the 1950s for the Eisenhower administration's foreign policy, only attracting greater interest after 1959. Fittingly, USIA officials allotted far less financial and material resources for Latin American operations than they did for other regions during much of the decade.[3]

The USIS effort in Cuba was one of twenty-twp such Agency missions operating in Latin American countries during the period. Examining the station budget and personnel the USIA allotted for each field office during the era demonstrates that while the agency considered Cuba of minimal concern in its region-wide programming, USIS operations on the island received one of the larger budget allocations for the area. In its

[3] USIA budgeting information between 1954 and 1961 reveals that the USIA's Latin American Division consistently ranked last in funding for all geographic regions. See US Information Agency, *Report to Congress*, volumes 1-21, retrieved from HathiTrust Digital Library (hereafter referred to as HathiTrust), https://catalog.hathitrust.org/Record/000500841 (accessed February 25, 2016); Senate Appropriations Committee Hearings, 1955-1960, HathiTrust, https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=mdp.39015018402407;view=1up;seq=927 (accessed February 25, 2016); and House Appropriations Committee Hearings, 1954-1963, HathiTrust, https://catalog.hathitrust.org/Record/002137524 (accessed February 25, 2016).

first full year under the USIA, USIS-Havana personnel expended $105,915, ranking it eighth out of twenty-two Latin America field offices. In comparison, Bolivia, the ninth-ranked station, spent $2,330 less on its operations than Cuba that first year, while seventh-ranked Guatemala spent $11,196 more than its Cuban counterpart.[4] The station rarely wavered from this position in the years that followed before the Cuban government changed hands in 1959.

Those funds supported the activities of the twenty eight staff members who managed informational and cultural programming in Cuba. By 1954, six US USIA staffers filled the Havana office, housed within the US Embassy in Havana, along with eighteen Cuban employees. Additionally, the station supported small branch offices in Camaguey and Santiago de Cuba, staffing each location with two additional Cuban employees in both offices.[5] As with funding, USIS-Havana's staffing complement ranked well above most Latin American posts through much of the period this dissertation examines.[6]

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[4] *Departments of State, and Justice, the Judiciary, and Related Agencies Appropriations, 1956, Hearings Before the Subcommittee on the Committee on Appropriations, United States Senate* (hereafter cited as *Senate Appropriations Committee Hearings*),*Eighty-Fourth Congress, First Session, HR 5502, 1956* (American Republics Program, Justification and Summary Tables) (Washington: USGPO, 1955), 919, Hathitrust, https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=mdp.39015018402407;view=1up;seq=927 (accessed March 5, 2016). In comparison, USIS Brazil topped the region with $665,882 in expenditures, whereas USIS-Trinidad spent the least, with $14,241.

[5] "Inspection Report of USIS Cuba, June 15 – July 2, 1954," September 30, 1954, Cuba, June 14, 1958; Nov. 8, 1955; Sept. 30, 1954 Inspection Reports and Related Records, 1954-1962 (hereafter cited as Inspection Reports), box 2, Records of the United States Information Agency, Record Group 306, National Archives at College Park, College Park, MD (hereafter cited as RG 306, NACP). USIS-Brazil again led all posts in the region with 106 employees, while USIS-Haiti and USIS-Dominican Republic tied for last with two staff members each, see USIA, *1st Report to Congress*, July 1 – December 31, 1953, 24, HathiTrust, https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=mdp.39015028986845;view=1up;seq=16 (accessed March 5, 2016).

[6] US Information Agency, *1st Report to Congress*, July 1 – December 31, 1953, 24, HathiTrust (accessed March 5, 2016), Until 1960, USIS-Havana staffing numbers ranked well in the upper half of the Latin American region, see US Information Agency, *Report to Congress*, vols. 1-16 and *Senate Appropriation Hearing* and *House Appropriations Hearing* publications between 1954-1962 (Washington: USGPO).

The US Information Agency's field stations world-wide observed similar organizational characteristics when it came to staffing and operations. USIS-Havana personnel included a Public Affairs Officer (PAO), initially Jacob Canter, who had been with station prior to USIA oversight. The PAO supervised both the station's informational and cultural programs and guided daily operations from the Havana office. A senior staff consisting of an Information Officer (IO) and Cultural Affairs Officer (CAO) reported directly to the PAO. Richard G. Cushing initially held the IO position, which directed the Press, Radio, Motion Pictures, and Production and Distribution employees within the post. Francis Donahue served as USIS-Havana's CAO, administering to the cultural aspects of the USIS mission.[7]

As policy, USIA personnel typically remained at one position or duty station for only a few years before rotating to another assignment. Canter, for instance, returned to the USIA in Washington, DC, in 1954 to lead planning for the Agency's cultural programming. In his place, Cushing assumed the PAO position, before also moving on to a Washington, DC, posting in 1958. These turnovers presented administrative challenges for Cuban operations as USIA inspectors noted that field office leadership did not always adequately plan for employee transfers. This often led to long gaps in local staffing and in training new employees for their positions on the island.[8]

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[7] US personnel also included an Assistant IO, Assistant CAO, and a Secretary. "Inspection Report of USIS Cuba, June 15 to July 2, 1954," September, 30, 1954, Inspection Reports, box 2, RG 306, NACP.

[8] "Inspection Report of USIS Cuba, June 15 – July 2, 1954," September 30, 1954, Inspection Reports, box 2, RG 306, NACP. USIS leadership responded to the findings, noting that they were taking measures to ensure proper staffing and a seamless transition between departing and incoming US employees. See "Summary of Actions Taken on Inspection, USIS-Cuba, November 8, 1955," Inspection Reports, box 2, RG 306, NACP. Inspectors noted that the field office no longer had such personnel issues by their next inspection in 1958. See "Inspection Report, USIS-Cuba, June 14, 1958," June 24, 1958, Inspection Reports, box 2, RG 306, NACP.

USIS field stations employed local personnel in support positions within the country of operations. During his annual budget presentation to the US Senate, USIA Director Theodore Streibert stressed the importance of such personnel to USIA efforts on foreign soil, stating "They are people who know the language. They know the country. They know the people. They can be of immense help in this kind of work where they know what would be effective, know the customs and background better than any American can know them."[9] Unlike US personnel, local USIS employees did not have similar restrictions on their time with the field office. [10] Referring to all foreign nationals in USIA employ, Streibert noted that it was these long-serving employees who provided the "basic continuity of our programs" within other countries; an important factor considering the relative short stints USIA personnel served in the field.[11]

For USIS-Havana, Cuban citizens staffed the subordinate offices operating under the PAO, CAO, and IO, and managed the branch facilities in Santiago and Camaguey.

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[9] *Hearing before the Committee on Foreign Affairs, House of Representative, Eighty fourth Congress, First Session, February 15, 1955* (Statement of Honorable Theodore C. Streibert, Director, United States Information Agency), (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1955), 6-7, HathiTrust, http://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=umn.31951d020918440;view=1up;seq=3 (accessed February 25, 2016); Kenneth Osgood notes that foreign national employees "were also less expensive than American employees, and they helped reduce the public profile of U.S. information operations." See Kenneth Osgood, *Total Cold War: Eisenhower's Secret Propaganda Battle at Home and Abroad* (Lawrence: University of Kansas Press, 2006), 93.

[10] For instance, senior projectionist Gabriel Quintero served in the field office beginning at least in 1953 and well into the 1960s as a USIA employee in the Miami area. Quintero's name first appears on a list of employees in "Inspection Report of USIS-Cuba, June 15 to July 2, 1954," September 30, 1954, Inspection Reports, box 2, RG 306, NACP. Paul D. Bethel also mentions the Quintero in his account of his time on the island in the late 1950s as a USIA employee in *The Losers: The Definitive Report, by an Eyewitness, of the Communist Conquest of Cuba and the Soviet Penetration of Latin America.* (New Rochelle: Arlington House, 1969), 41. Quintero next appears in a newspaper article on USIS-Miami operations in a 1964 Florida newspaper article. See *The Miami News*, October 17, 1964.

[11] *Senate Appropriations Committee Hearings, Eighty-fourth Congress, First Session, on H.R. 5502, 1956* (Employment of Foreign Nationals), 897, HathiTrust, https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=mdp.39015018402407;view=1up;seq=905 (accessed February 26, 2016).

Cuban employees included cultural assistants, press assistants, clerks, photographers, machine-operators, and film projectionists. Agency observers noted that while Cuban staffers proved "enthusiastic" in their duties, they often acted individually and not in conjunction with larger field office plans.[12] USIA inspectors recommended that the local staff institute an orientation program for Cuban employees, so that they could be better integrated into local programming strategies.[13]

The station's PAO, CAO, and IO directly assumed much of the responsibility for programming and daily operations in Cuba, leading to highly centralized organizational structure, where only a few controlled the planning and administration activities within the field office. Agency observers cautioned USIA officials that the Havana Public Affairs Officer was under considerable strain due to his close involvement in so many of the station's daily operations.[14] Much of the senior leadership's involvement in daily tasks resulted from staff shortages within the field post, forcing them to allocate time to administrative functions, and due also to the senior staff's well-established personal connections with their Cuban counterparts in both the media and government circles. Such familiarity allowed the USIS senior staff to work easily with local media and government. Similarly, station personnel also closely collaborated with their colleagues in the US embassy to coordinate the US Ambassador's public relations activities on the

[12] "Inspection Report of USIS-Cuba, June 15 – July 2, 1954," September 30, 1954, Inspection Reports, box 2, RG 306, NACP.

[13] "Summary of Actions Taken on Inspection, USIS-Cuba, November 8, 1955," Inspection Reports, box 2, RG 306, NACP.

[14] "Inspection Report of USIS-Cuba, June 15 – July 2, 1954," September 30, 1954, Inspection Reports, RG 306, NACP.

island.[15] The disadvantage to such hands-on management, USIA inspectors concluded, was that senior staff did not always devote adequate time to aspects of the station's operations in which they were not immediately involved. This loose supervision led to subordinate programs, such as motion picture showings and administrative activities, with little direct guidance.[16]

Like all overseas field posts, USIS-Havana personnel based their objectives and operations on their Country Plan. USIA officials, in their desire to provide content to foreign audiences personalized to regional tastes and issues, decentralized much of the country-by-country programming. Under the PAO's guidance each field office created its own plan, in conjunction with the needs of the local US embassy and diplomatic mission and reflecting the broader goals that the USIA dictated regionally and globally.[17] For their part, USIS-Havana personnel did not routinely submit country plans to their USIA superiors. Instead, the field post staff drafted only a few plans during the 1950s, adhering to earlier objectives even as events in Cuba destabilized after 1956.

Despite criticizing such administrative deficiencies, the USIA inspectors lauded the Havana staff for their operations and the content they produced on the island, noting that the small office distributed large amounts of programming across the island.[18] As

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[15] Ibid.

[16] Ibid.

[17] US Information Agency, *8th Review of Operations, January 1-June 30, 1957*, 3-4, HathiTrust, https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=mdp.39015028986845;view=1up;seq=291 (accessed March 5, 2016); Nicholas J. Cull, *The Cold War and the United States Information Agency: American Propaganda and Public Diplomacy, 1945-1989*, 95, 103; Kenneth Osgood contends that Country Plans simply incorporated USIA central themes to more closely fit local needs. See Osgood, *Total Cold War*, 105-106.

[18] "United States Information Agency, Inspection Report of USIS Cuba, June 15 – July 2, 1954," September 30, 1954, Inspection Reports, RG 306, NACP.

the introduction to this chapter summarizes, the 1954 inspection described a relatively small operation with excellent output. Another report four years later echoed its predecessor, noting that despite the contentious local situation limiting their effectiveness, USIS-Havana operations remained "well planned and executed," and that staff shared excellent relationships with Cuban officials.[19]

Message Distribution in Cuba

USIS-Havana staff had a number of mediums at their disposal on the island that they relied upon to communicate with local audiences. Cuban entrepreneurs were at the forefront of the mass communications revolution in Latin America, building the infrastructure necessary to disperse programming nationwide. Dozens of daily newspaper companies circulated thousands of copies of their publications throughout Havana and the interior of the island daily, carrying national and international news and editorials. Newer communication technologies attracted even wider audiences. Motion pictures were a popular form of entertainment in Cuba. A throng of radio stations filled airwaves daily with news, commentary, entertainment, and advertising. The nascent television industry rapidly followed radio's course on the island beginning in 1950. Each medium required large amounts of content to attract and maintain an audience, and owners looked beyond just local offerings to provide such programming. The Cuban telecommunications and newspaper industries' needs for content provided USIS-Havana with the opportunity to spread their messaging to an eager audience.

[19] "Inspection Report of USIS Cuba, June 14, 1958," June 24, 1958, Inspection Reports, box 2, RG 306, NACP.

Newspapers

USIS-Havana information officers regularly placed editorials, articles, and photographs in Cuban newspapers. In the summer of 1954, field post personnel informed their Washington headquarters that there were twenty one prominent daily newspapers and two weekly magazines within Cuba, the majority of which operated in Havana.[20] In describing the dailies, field office staff reported to their parent agency the editorial slant each newspaper expressed and the readership each paper targeted. Though the newspapers varied in their support for Cuban president Fulgencio Batista, their opinion of US Latin American policy, and their political outlook, the field office relayed that seventeen of the publications held anticommunist viewpoints.[21] The Havana Embassy also noted that USIS materials appeared within the pages of five of these newspapers, with an estimated island-wide audience of between 184,000 people daily.[22] Newspapers running USIS articles tended to express a moderate or right-wing stance and the field office noted that the majority of those that included their materials also expressed

[20] Foreign Service Despatch; USIS-Habana to USIA-Washington, "Local Newspapers," January 14, 1954. Department of State Central Decimal File (hereafter cited as DOSCDF), 937.61/1-1454, General Records of the Department of State, Record Group 59 (hereafter cited as RG 59), NACP, *Confidential US State Department Central Files, Cuba, 1950-1954* (Hereafter cited as *Cuba, 1950-1954*), (Frederick, MD: University Publications of America, 1986), microfilm (hereafter cited as mf), Reel 36. The USIS noted an additional five prominent newspapers outside of the capital.

[21] Foreign Service Despatch; USIS-Habana to USIA-Washington, "Local Newspapers," January 14, 1954. DOSCDF, RG 59, *Cuba, 1950-1954*.

[22] Foreign Service Despatch, Amembassy, Habana to the Department of State, Washington, "Data Regarding Most Influential Cuban Periodicals," November 5, 1953. 1953-1956 DOSCDF, 937.61/11-553, RG 59, *Cuba, 1950-1954*, mf, Reel 36. Sunday editions of these newspapers could reach an additional 23,000 readers.

strongly anticommunist viewpoints.[23] An exception was the leftist, anti-Batista newspaper *La Calle*, which Batista initially shuttered prior to November 1953. By the summer of 1955, publishers had reopened *La Calle*, only for the government to again shut it down soon thereafter for its opposition to Batista's rule. Despite routinely criticizing the United States, USIA staff in Washington, DC, facetiously lamented the newspaper's loss, as it "printed more USIS material than any other paper in Cuba."[24]

USIS staff formed friendly relationships with Cuban publishers, journalists, editors, and newspaper ownership to ensure they featured articles and commentary favorable to the US. Station personnel typically accomplished this through direct personal contact with local press figures and ownership, but the US government also assisted in assuring a favorable atmosphere for US news stories by offering Cuban journalists financial grants to tour and work in the United States. USIS and US Embassy staff awarded grants to media members who were, as USIS CAO Francis Donahue wrote of one Cuban columnist, "on our team," meaning, journalists and commentators who wrote or spoke positively of the United States. [25] Upon spending time in the US, USIA officials' reasoned, Cuban commentators would reflect their positive experiences in their coverage of the United States once they returned home.[26]

USIS staff often met with Cuban media ownership and employees both formally

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[23] Foreign Service Despatch; USIS-Habana to USIA-Washington, "Local Newspapers," January 14, 1954. DOSCDF, 937.61/1-1454, RG 59, *Cuba, 1950-1954.*

[24] "Briefing Notes: Latin American Branch," June 30, 1955, Briefing Notes, Latin American Program Files; 1955-1962, Office of Research & Analysis, Area Analysis Division/Latin American Branch. (hereafter cited as Latin American Program Files), box 1, RG 306, NACP.

[25] Francis J. Donohue to Department of State, May 22, 1956. Quoted from Louis A. Pérez, *On Becoming Cuban: Identity, Nationality, and Culture* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1999), 409.

[26] Pérez, *On Becoming Cuban,* 409.

and informally to discuss trends in the Cuban press, or to plant ideas for future articles and features. An example of this latter instance occurred in April 1954, when Havana PAO Jacob Canter had a chance encounter with Cuban journalist Francisco Ichaso. The journalist had recently written an article in March for *Diario de la Marina*, in which he criticized attacks against the United States for its stance on communist influence in Guatemala. In their brief discussion, Canter congratulated the journalist for his work and "expressed the opinion that it would be a good thing if the article and its point of view could receive wider publicity."[27] US Embassy officials noted that within a week of their meeting, a number of Cuban writers met to draft a rebuttal to anti-US sentiment, which several prominent Havana newspapers subsequently published on their front pages.[28]

Batista's control over the Cuban media also assured the USIS office of a press receptive to their materials. The Cuban government had long subsidized newspapers in an effort to manipulate the press and the new Cuban leader continued the tradition.[29] This likely explains the number of conservative, pro-Batista newspapers in Cuba during the period. It also explains the USIS station's ability to easily place their press releases and editorials in certain newspapers. US propaganda promoting cooperation between the two countries and anticommunist messages fit well with Batista's own domestic policies, and his desire to link his administration with the United States. USIS officer Richard G.

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[27] Foreign Service Despatch from Amembassy Habana to the Department of State, Washington, "Cuban Leaders Issue Call in Defense of United States against Attacks from Hemispheric Communists and Leftists," April 30, 1954. DOSCDF, 937.61/4/3054, RG 59, *Cuba, 1950-1954*, mf, Reel 36.

[28] Foreign Service Despatch, "Cuban Leaders Issue Call in Defense of United States against Attacks from Hemispheric Communists and Leftists," April 30, 1954, RG 59, *Cuba, 1950-1954*.

[29] Michael Salwen, *Radio and Television in Cuba: The Pre-Castro Era*. (Ames: Iowa State University Press, 1994), 128-132.

Cushing, noted that the ease in which the station was able to place its materials in the Cuban press was due not only to his own personal influence with individuals in the Cuban media, but also to "the official Batista policy of friendship with the US, and an abhorrence of communism, so that editors were under pressure to follow this line."[30]

USIS staffers typically based their products on the reports and informational materials they received daily from the station's Wireless File: a USIA-operated news feed which the Agency used to transmit information to its USIS posts throughout the world. The Agency's International Press Service (IPS) office supplied field offices with news reports, speeches, and background materials in excess of 7,000 words per day.[31] Agency staff translated these materials in advance before sending them to the field in Latin America to save the local posts time and cost. USIS-Havana staff used these reports directly from the Wireless File, or crafted their own products by merging the information with other materials at their disposal. Staff hand delivered these free products to local publishers in the city or mailed them to newspapers outside of Havana. As the local office staff intended, Cuban newspaper editors included these articles and photographs in their publications, in part or in whole, often without attributing them to the USIA.

Despite the large amount of information USIS-Havana staff offered local Cuban media, the field office still competed with private interests for placing news in Cuban newspapers. Cuba's close ties to the United States created strong public demand for reports on US politics, sports, entertainment, and US foreign policy. Cubans followed

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[30] Richard G. Cushing, interview, June 17, 1988, transcript, self interview, ADST, http://www.adst.org/OH%20TOCs/Cushing,%20Richard%20G.toc.pdf (accessed February 25, 2016).

[31] Nicholas J. Cull, *The Cold War and the United States Information Agency: American Propaganda and Public Diplomacy, 1945-1989* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 112.

US current events closely, and the island's proximity to the United States ensured that Cuban media had options when acquiring news from their northern neighbor other than the USIA-sourced material.

Those newspapers on the island that could afford to do so, subscribed to commercial North American news wire services to publish US news in their daily editions. Though USIS Havana staff noted their success in placing unattributed materials in newspapers in Havana and the interior of the island, they were unable to compete against such private interests. In contributing information on major US foreign policy stories, at least among the major Cuban newspapers, USIS Havana staff considered themselves to be in a supporting role. Their most effective contributions to the articles from commercial wire services were "daily unattributed commentary and followup [*sic*] picture stories."[32]

From their perspective, staff argued, their contribution to foreign policy coverage in the local press was their ability to "keep the story alive longer with commentaries or feature angles."[33] Outside of Havana, among the smaller newspapers in the island's interior, USIS staff believed that their wireless file's information had a greater influence on the local audience. Here, where newspapers could not afford the commercial subscription services, the USIS-Havana staff could persuade editors to include their free materials in their daily editions.[34]

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[32] US Information Agency, "Daily Summary," No. 64, April 1, 1955, I/S – USIA Daily Summary, March & April, 1955, Daily Summaries, 1/1954-6/1962 (hereafter cited as Daily Summaries), box 1, Office of the Director/Office of Public Information (hereafter cited as OPI), RG 306, NACP.

[33] "USIA Daily Summary," No. 64, April 1, 1955, Daily Summaries, RG 306, NACP.

[34] Ibid.

Motion Pictures

USIS-Havana staff also screened motion pictures to Cuban audiences as a way to spread their programming throughout Cuba in support of US foreign policy and bolster Cuban goodwill towards the United States. North American film distribution companies established a strong presence on the island and Cubans had flocked to Hollywood-produced films for decades. By 1955, there were 549 motion picture theaters in Cuba, with more than 500,000 weekly patrons.[35] On a smaller scale, sugar mills and other agricultural plantations showed films to Cuban laborers. Additionally, social organizations often had their own film screenings for audiences.[36]

Though the USIA collaborated with US motion picture industry leaders in placing their films in theaters around the world, the USIS field office staff in Cuba concentrated their efforts on showing films in smaller venues.[37] Using their own equipment, USIS-Havana staff screened motion pictures for Cuban audiences away from the larger theaters. The post showed films in and around Havana, Camagüey, and Santiago de Cuba. The station worked with a US consular official in Sagua la Grande to show motion pictures in that area, supplying him with a projector and films, and also contracted with a Cuban citizen in Santa Clara, who screened USIA movies five nights per week in the area. Station personnel also routinely loaned films and equipment to schools and

[35] Pérez, *On Becoming Cuban*, 285, 514.

[36] Pérez, 285.

[37] For information on USIA film output and collaboration with Hollywood motion picture producers, see Cull, *The Cold War and the United States Information Agency*, 108-111.

universities and other organizations.[38]

Staff relied upon the post's four mobile units to present their films and messaging to even larger segments of the Cuban public. Mobile units were a mainstay in USIA efforts across the world; these rugged vehicles carried informational materials to people living in remote areas. Equipped with movie projectors, public address systems, lighting, and a generator to power the machinery, the field unit screened films, displayed photographs, and distributed pamphlets to audiences. These vehicles extended the field office's reach outside of urban areas to smaller towns and villages. Mobile units allowed staff to communicate directly with remote Cuban campesinos and laborers on the large sugar plantations, directly bringing them the US message.

Writing about his time working in Cuba during the revolution, USIA IO Paul Bethel offered his account of mobile unit operations on the island. In the summer of 1958, he traveled with a Cuban USIA employee as the latter made his circuit through the countryside in the Havana and Pinar del Río provinces in one of the station's vehicles. Bethel described an outdoor film screening at a small village in the Cuban interior:

> We sat there, among the chirping crickets, slapping at mosquitoes and fanning away the bugs. For two hours, several hundred adults and children, many dressed in their best clothes for the occasion, saw motion pictures of the electoral process in the United States, scenes of the Rocky Mountains, and surfing in Hawaii and California. Films of President Eisenhower's inauguration ceremony in 1952 brought a round of thunderous applause.[39]

As Bethel's account attests, these films were not the Hollywood blockbusters playing in Cuban theaters, but were instead primarily documentaries, short-subject films, and

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[38] "Inspection Report of USIS Cuba, June 15 – July 2, 1954," September 30, 1954, Inspection Reports, RG 306, NACP.

[39] Paul D. Bethel, *The Losers: The Definitive Report, by an Eyewitness, of the Communist Conquest of Cuba and the Soviet Penetration of Latin America* (New Rochelle: Arlington House, 1969), 41-42.

newsreels.[40] In examining the USIA's film production and distribution history, Wilson P. Dizard states that the Agency, through its USIS stations, supplemented the US image that Hollywood films promoted internationally. With a catalog of documentary films pertaining to different facets of US life and culture, and a USIS station's ability to transport motion pictures to more isolated audiences, the USIA offered "a factual account of the United States and its aspirations that serve[d] as a balance to the more highly dramatized version of America and Americans presented by Hollywood."[41]

Radio

Radio broadcasts on the island reached an even greater portion of the Cuban population than newspapers or motion pictures. Cubans eagerly adopted radio as a means to transmit and listen to news and entertainment beginning in the 1920s. By the late 1950s, there were over one million radio sets on the island, tuned into more than 160 radio stations.[42] Much of the programming Cuban station owners broadcasted originated in the United States, and US companies used Cuban radio to transmit commercials advertising their products to the Cuban public.[43]

Securing broadcast time on local stations became routine for USIS field posts in Latin America. The USIA did not use the Voice of America (VOA), known within the

[40] While the USIA partnered with US motion picture studios to create and show films internationally, the Agency and individual field posts regularly produced their own films. See Cull, *The Cold War and the United States Information Agency,* 108-111.

[41] Wilson P. Dizard, *The Strategy of Truth: The Story of the U.S. Information Service* (Washington: Public Affairs Press, 1961), 103.

[42] Salwen, *Radio and Television in Cuba,* 19-33; Pérez, *On Becoming Cuban,* 332.

[43] Pérez, *On Becoming Cuban,* 332.

Agency as the International Broadcasting Service (IBS), to transmit programs to the region after May 1953 as a way to save costs and concentrate on broadcasting to more contentious Cold War areas.[44] More importantly, USIA officials noted that Latin American audiences preferred listening to local, medium-wave radio stations. That, and the lack of short-wave radio ownership in the region, contributed the VOA's limited direct presence in the region. Instead, VOA personnel in New York and, later, Washington, DC, sent pre-recorded programs to USIS field offices in the region. Local staff then forwarded materials to radio stations within that nation.[45]

Another contributing factor to the USIA's limited radio effort in Latin America was the presence of Walter Lemmon's privately-owned *WRUL* short-wave radio company. Long a presence in the region, the Massachusetts-based radio station also contracted with local Latin American radio networks to rebroadcast *WRUL* programming, giving the station expansive coverage in Latin America. Adhering to the 1948 Smith-Mundt Act, which encouraged private information activities over government efforts when feasible, USIA officials contracted with *WRUL* to have the network broadcast Latin American-centric VOA-approved programming beginning July 1953.[46]

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[44] For further details on International Information Administration Director Robert L. Johnson's decision to discontinue short-wave broadcasts, and the contention it caused amid Senator Joe McCarthy's attacks on the US State Department, see *Overseas Informational Programs of the United States: Hearings Before a Subcommittee of the Committee on Foreign Relations, United States Senate, Eighty-Second Congress, Second Session, on Overseas Information Programs of the United States, November 20 and 21, 1953* (Statement of Stephen Baladana, Chief, Latin American Division, International Broadcasting Services), (Washington: USGPO, 1953), 1431-1451, HathiTrust, http://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=uc1.b5148817;view=1up;seq=9 (accessed February 25, 2016).

[45] John Hogan, interview, September 21, 1987, transcript, interview by Cliff Groce, ADST, http://www.adst.org/OH%20TOCs/Hogan,%20John.toc.pdf (accessed February 25, 2016).

[46] *New York Times*, "'Voice' Gap Filled," July 16, 1953. For the Smith-Mundt Bill's origins, see Nicholas J. Cull, *The Cold War and the United States Information Agency*, 36, 39-41.

Cuba was no exception to Latin American listening trends, as audiences preferred tuning in to their own local radio stations, or to the broadcasts they received from US commercial radio stations with their medium wave receivers.[47] *WRUL* partnered with twenty-two Cuban radio stations in fifteen cities and towns to rebroadcast the company's programming. By 1956, company-funded surveys claimed a Cuban audience of 515,000 listeners, daily.[48] Acting in concert with the radio giant, USIS-Havana staff also distributed the VOA's pre-recorded packets and supplied Cuban radio stations with their own in-house products, using information from the wireless file to create their local programming.[49]

Television

Though radio dominated the island, Cubans also embraced television during the 1950s. Cuba was the first Latin American country to broadcast television programs beginning in 1950.[50] A Cuban Ministry of Communications survey two years later

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[47] Pérez, *On Becoming Cuban,* 332-333. In their inspection of USIS-Havana's radio programming, the inspection team reported that the VOA broadcasts on the island "were not missed." See "Inspection Report of USIS Cuba, September 30, 1954;" Inspection Reports; RG 306, NACP.

[48] *House Appropriations Committee Hearings, House of Representatives* (hereafter cited as *House Appropriations Hearings*), *Eighty-Fourth Congress, First Session 1956, Subcommittee on Departments of State and Justice and the Judiciary and Related Agencies Appropriations, United States Information Agency* (Stations Receiving WRUL Broadcasts and Rebroadcasting), (Washington: USGPO, 1955), 180, HathiTrust, https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=mdp.39015022382645;view=1up;seq=1276 (accessed February 25, 2016); *Senate Appropriations Committee Hearings, Eighty-Fourth Congress, First Session, 1956, HR 5502, Making Appropriations for the Department of State and Justice, the Judiciary, and Related Agencies for Fiscal Year 1956* (Exhibit I, Estimated Average Evening Listenership to *WRUL* Inter-American Network by Areas), (Washington: USGPO, 1955), 1171, HathiTrust, https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=mdp.39015018402407;view=1up;seq=1179 (accessed February 26, 2016).

[49] "Inspection Report of USIS Cuba, June 15 – July 2, 1954," September 30, 1954, Inspection Reports, RG 306, NACP.

[50] Pérez, *On Becoming Cuban,* 333-335. For a detailed examination of the first Cuban television station, see Michael B. Salwen, *Radio and Television in Cuba,* 34-47.

indicated that there were six television stations operating in five Cuban cities.[51] The US Embassy's own report in 1954 put the number of stations broadcasting in the Havana Province alone in at five, broadcasting to well over 100,000 television sets.[52]

The VOA assumed responsibility for producing the television programs that the USIA exported overseas, establishing an office for the medium in 1952.[53] To augment its efforts to reach international audiences through the new medium, the VOA contracted with the National Broadcasting Company to distribute a number of their programs abroad, including Cuba. Such private US-produced television programming constituted much of the content Cuban stations broadcast to their audience in these early years. Station owners needed to retain their viewership and keep their audiences watching their stations, which provided the USIA and the local field office with the opportunity to spread their messages to a growing, receptive Cuban public. Local television stations on the island requested programs from the US Embassy's cache of film recordings from the start of the technology's emergence on the island. Just weeks before the USIA assumed control of informational and cultural programming in Cuba, Embassy officials informed the agency that a "leading" Cuban network was delighted to air an exclusive regularly televised news program that their office provided. The Embassy labeled the program as "well-liked," and "wholly acceptable as long as [the] stress [is] on news of general interest."[54]

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[51] Salwen, 50.

[52] Pérez notes that there were likely many more television sets in Cuba than reports indicated, as many Cubans purchased them on the black market and while traveling to Miami. Pérez, *On Becoming Cuban*, 333-334.

[53] Cull, *The Cold War and the United States Information Agency*, 111.

[54] Telegram from Habana (Beaulac) to Secretary of State, July 17, 1953. DOSCDF, 937.44/7-1753, RG 59,

Similar to radio and film, USIS personnel competed to place their television programming in front of Cuban viewers within a crowded Cuban market. As television's popularity grew in Cuba, the agency encountered stern competition from private commercial interests both domestically and from the United States for air time. This was especially true when the post tried placing programs on Cuban television stations during coveted peak viewing hours each night. Near the end of the Batista era in Cuba, USIA observers noted that while local staff typically placed all of the programming that IBS sent to the field office on Cuban television, the local stations usually did not air those programs during the most popular periods. Cuban stations preferred to broadcast regularly occurring programs in prime viewing hours of the evening, the field office reported, which placed USIA productions at a disadvantage due to their often unrelated subject matter.[55]

Pamphlets and Publications

In addition to distributing their programming through pre-existing Cuban communications infrastructure, USIS-Havana also mass produced thousands of pamphlets, flyers, and other smaller publications for Cuban consumption. Field office personnel typically released new materials at a rate of at least one new publication per week during this period.[56] This and their efforts at placing unattributed articles in local

NACP, *Cuba, 1950-1954*, mf, Reel 33.

[55] "Inspection Report, USIS Cuba, June 14, 1958," June 24, 1958, Inspection Reports, RG 306, NACP.

[56] Ibid.

newspapers were the two of USIS-Havana's most active programs.[57] The field office staff owned their own multilith press, producing pamphlets in-house, but the station also contracted with Cuban printing companies to produce larger quantities when necessary. Copies of the station's field publications currently available at the National Archives and Records Administration indicate that production runs of USIS-Havana pamphlets usually numbered from a few thousand to 80,000, with most runs ranging between 20,000 and 30,000.[58]

The speed with which the office created and produced pamphlets made them extremely useful for USIS efforts to spread information quickly. These pamphlets reached the Cuban public in a number of ways, appearing in a variety of locations throughout the island. Personnel delivered publications to local organizations, handed out pamphlets while hosting motion picture screenings throughout the island, and distributed them at local exhibitions and fairs and during the post's mobile unit visits to more rural areas on the island. USIS staff also maintained a rack stocked with their publications at Havana's airport.[59]

Attempting to broaden their audience, USIS staff brokered agreements with local newspapers to include pamphlets in their daily editions. The station scored a major victory for its distribution efforts by entering into a partnership with a popular Cuban magazine distributor, who agreed to insert USIS pamphlets within the periodicals the company delivered island-wide. This was a great achievement for the field office, as

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[57] Ibid.

[58] Examples of the pamphlets USIS-Havana pamphlets are available in the Records of the United States Information Agency's Master File Copies of Field Publications, 1951-1979, RG 306, NACP.

[59] Richard G. Cushing, interview, June 17, 1988, ADST.

staff reported that the distributor's inventory included a variety of magazines appealing to various Cuban interest groups, offering the opportunity for the USIS to get its message to "a vast cross section of the people never previously reached."[60] This included labor groups that communists often targeted with their own propaganda.[61]

Pamphlets were a versatile means of distributing information throughout the island. Field post staff developed materials to address varied topics: pamphlets provided biographical sketches of prominent North American authors and artists, promoted the benefits of educational exchanges with the United States, and explained US foreign policy to Cuban audiences. Staff incorporated text, photographs, and illustrations to engage readers in ways that other communication methods could not. Designers often created simple publications containing photographs of US or Cuban officials along with excerpts of speeches which the office believed to be significant to Cuba. They also drafted multi-paged pamphlets filled with detailed illustrations, featuring one or two primary colors, and dramatic text. These illustrations often portrayed subtle and not-so-subtle symbolic representations, particularly on their cover pages to grab readers' attention.

Such versatility allowed the post to target specific segments of Cuban society with their pamphlet program and to tailor the contents to fit their specific message. While mass communications, such as television, motion pictures, and radio generally reached a broad viewing public, USIS personnel often edited pamphlet content to attract certain groups and crafted informational materials especially for their consumption. Information

[60] "USIA Daily Summary," No. 228, November 26, 1954, Daily Summaries, box 6, RG 306, NACP.

[61] Ibid.

slips accompanying the field office pamphlets preserved in the National Archives and Records Administration's USIA records contain a wealth of information regarding audience, circulation methods, production numbers, and staffs' intended message. This information provides insight into whom the post hoped to reach and how they intended to spread their messages.

Station personnel often delivered publications to prominent Cuban figures and government officials. Staff sent pamphlets to doctor's offices, grade schools and universities, student and civic organizations, and other locations with high levels of pedestrian traffic, hoping to reach larger audiences. USIS staff regularly listed radio and newspaper offices as part of all of their pamphlet distribution lists, presumably to mold editorial opinion or to provide factual background information for journalists and broadcasters. Station staff sent their pamphlets to social organizations, such as Masons, labor groups, and sports clubs. Personnel also often wrote pamphlets to distribute to individual Cuban professional classes. These particularly included authors, government officials, news commentators, publishers, intellectuals, and educators. Such influential actors potentially reached a much larger Cuban audience in a more effective manner than the USIS field post could by simply distributing publications in bulk.

Perhaps the pamphlet program's most versatile feature was the fact that USIS personnel could easily distribute these publications without attribution.[62] The advantage in not acknowledging the USIA as the source of the work was that staff could reach their

[62] Unattributable content was a key component in USIA messaging policy, stemming from the Jackson Committee's recommendations. For the relevant section on attribution in the Jackson Committee Report, see "Report to the President by the President's Committee on International Information Activities," June 30, 1953, *FRUS*, 1952-1954, II, part II, National Security Affairs, doc. 368; See also Cull, 95 and Osgood, 95-96.

audience without prejudicing the reader against the message. Occasionally, USIS-personnel deliberately credited a third party as the publication's author. An example of this is a pamphlet the field post created to highlight the Cuban ambassador to the United Nations' address criticizing the Soviet Union's hostile suppression of the 1956 Hungarian Revolt. Station personnel allotted 2,000 of the publications for distribution among university students on the island under the authorship of the "Anti-Soviet Students' League."[63] This distribution method further distanced the USIS, and therefore the United States, from the message. Instead of originating from the United States, the message now appeared to emerge from within Cuban society, lending it additional credibility among the local population.

Reading Rooms, Binational Centers, and Educational Exchanges

Throughout the eight year period, USIA operations in Cuba supported a variety of less overt programs to promote the United States and closely align Cubans with their northern neighbors. Though they were never a large component of the USIS staffs' programming, the field office maintained small reading rooms in Camagüey and Santiago de Cuba. These sub-offices offered local residents the opportunity to watch USIA films, read North American literature, and acquire USIS pamphlets. The Santiago branch office also offered English lessons to local patrons.[64]

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[63] *Cuba Condema este Crimen*, December 20, 1956, Habana, Cuba Condemns this Crime (Cuba Condema Este Crimen), Spanish, Master File Copies of Field Publications, 1951-1979 (hereafter cited as Field Publications), box 145, Press and Publications Service/Operations Branch (hereafter cited as Press and Publications), RG 306, NACP. See information card attached to pamphlet.

[64] "Inspection Report of USIS Cuba, June 15 – July 2, 1954," September 30, 1954, Inspection Reports, RG 306 NACP; "Inspection Report of USIS Cuba, June 14, 1958," June 24, 1958, Inspection Reports, RG 306,

USIS-Havana personnel also worked in partnership with the Instituto Cultural Cubano-Norteamericano (Cuban-American Cultural Institute), a binational center located in Havana. Founded and supported through both private Cuban and North American funding, the Institute first opened in 1943 to "promote cultural understanding and closer ties between [Cubans and North Americans]." Cuban employees staffed the Institute, teaching English to Cuban students, offering courses in US history, and loaning books from its Martí – Lincoln Public Library.[65]

The Institute grew in size and attendance throughout the 1950s, eventually expanding to two four-story buildings that housed offices, classrooms, the library, and an auditorium. These new additions provided class space for up to six thousand potential students.[66] The binational center operated independently of USIS-Havana, with only minimal assistance in the form of receiving financial support for increasing library holdings and for the facility's expansion.[67] Though not under USIS control, local field office staff did work with the Institute to screen films, provide USIS pamphlets, display exhibits, and hold lectures.

The station's staff also coordinated the US State Department's educational and

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NACP; Louis Pérez writes "it was universally understood [learning English] as one of the principal means of access to livelihood and property." See Pérez, *On Becoming Cuban*, 386-387.

[65] Waldo Fernández Cuenca, "El Instituto Cultural Cubano-Norteamericano," *Palabra Nueva*, December 2014, http://www.palabranueva.net/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=1095:el-instituto-cultural-cubano-norteamericano&catid=321:sociedad&Itemid=385 (accessed February 26, 2015).

[66] Fernandez Cuenca, "El Instituto Cultural Cubano-Norteamericano."

[67] "Inspection Report of USIS Cuba, June 15 – July 2, 1954," September 30, 1954; "Inspection Report of USIS Cuba, June 14, 1958," June 24, 1958, Inspection Reports, RG 306, NACP.

cultural exchange program in Cuba.[68] Acting as a facilitator, station personnel promoted the program on the island and maintained contact with Cuban students who participated in the exchange upon their return home. USIS staff often incorporated these returnees into their informational planning strategies, maintaining mailing lists of program members and regularly forwarded publications and other informational materials to the former participants. USIS-Havana staff also encouraged returning Cubans to publicize their experiences in the United States through articles, lectures, and interviews throughout the island.[69]

The availability of North American literature and periodicals, guest lectures, concerts, exhibits, and USIS materials exposed Cubans to North American culture and served as an additional avenue to promote the United States among the Cuban public. Teaching English and offering Cubans the opportunity to further their education in the United States demonstrated US benevolence. However, providing English lessons and educational opportunities in the US also served as a way to inculcate Cubans further into the sphere of US influence. Additionally, while not explicitly advocating US Cold War foreign policies, USIS staff did use these cultural initiatives as a way to tout US cultural achievements among the Cuban people and persuaded them to maintain their close relationship with the US; a vitally important component of US Cold War planning.

Along with their Embassy brethren on the island, USIS-Havana personnel also maintained an active reporting program to keep the USIA and the US State Department

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[68] Educational exchanges and English instruction had long been a part of Latin American-North American cultural exchange initiatives. See J. Manuel Espinosa, *Inter-American Beginnings of US Cultural Diplomacy, 1936-1948* (Washington, DC: US Government Printing Office, 1976).

[69] "Inspection Report of USIS Cuba, June 14, 1958," June 24, 1958, Inspection Reports, RG 306, NACP.

updated on local Cuban sentiment towards both the Batista government and the Eisenhower administration. As part of their information gathering duties, the Embassy monitored communist and anti-American propaganda in Cuba, sending examples of the materials back to the agency in Washington, DC. Personnel combed through local media, routinely analyzing Cuban editorial commentary on local and global affairs. US Embassy officials included USIS summaries along with similar material from other agencies comprising the US mission in Cuba as part of its weekly Joint Weeka Report to the US State Department. Staff also mined their close contacts with local news editors, publishers, and radio and television owners to keep abreast of current events in the news and in the communications industry on the island.

USIS-Havana and Propaganda

Similar to the US Information Agency's field offices elsewhere, USIS-Havana staff followed the agency's tactics of incorporating white and gray propaganda into their programming.[70] As scholars Garth Jowett and Victoria O'Donnell explain, there are three forms of propaganda. White propaganda consists of factual and credible information from an identified source. Here, the originators attempt to portray themselves as "the 'good guy' with the best ideas and political ideology."[71] Black

[70] This study uses Jowett and O'Donnell's definition of propaganda when employing the term. The two authors place propaganda as a subcategory of persuasion, which they define as the attempt to convince an individual to accept or consider another point of view, voluntarily. The authors define propaganda as "the deliberate, systematic attempt to shape perceptions, manipulate cognitions, and direct behavior to achieve a response that furthers the desired intent of the propagandist." Whether that message is factual or deceitful, and accepted or rejected, depends on the message source, how the creator frames the message content, and the audience's reaction to the message. See Garth S. Jowett and Victoria O'Donnell, *Propaganda and Persuasion* (Thousand Oaks: SAGE Publications, 1999), 5-6, 27-28.

[71] Jowett and O'Donnell, 12-13. The VOA typically practiced white propaganda, as agency officials attempted to maintain the integrity of the radio station's news broadcasts worldwide.

propaganda, meanwhile, is the form of messaging that the public negatively associates with the field. Using lies and distortions, the senders, obscuring themselves as the source, provides a false message to the audience. Finally, gray propaganda floats between the factual white and deceptive black points on the propaganda messaging spectrum. Gray messaging can be truthful or merely contain elements of truth. Additionally, the senders can accurately identify themselves as the message creator, or can mask themselves as the source by using another entity to disseminate the propaganda.[72] Though USIS-Havana personnel often shaped their messaging to fit specific narratives, they considered their information to be factual and accurate. However, USIA personnel and their USIS representatives in the field were more than willing to obscure themselves as the source of such factual messaging. As with their field office counterparts elsewhere, USIS personnel in Cuba relied upon their connections to local Cuban reporters, publishers, media ownership, private groups, and the Cuban government to spread their messaging without attribution. Only in cases where doing so would not detract from their message would USIS staff identify their agency as the message source.

Eisenhower's Latin American Foreign Policy

USIS-Havana staff relied upon these communication mediums and messaging tactics to disseminate programming that promoted US foreign policy, both regional and global in scope to Cuban audiences. The Caribbean island nation, like so many Latin American countries, long lay within the US's sphere of influence, thanks in large

[72] Ibid., 13-18.

measure to North American economic and political power. US business interests operated throughout the region, particularly in Central America and the Caribbean, working with local and national governments and often dominating the economic and political environment. President Franklin Roosevelt's Good Neighbor Policy and two world wars served to enhance US influence and bind the region tightly to North American economic and political interests. With the United States now poised to assert influence globally in the post-war landscape, two factors contributed to influence US-Latin American relations.[73]

First was the onset of the Cold War between the US and the Soviet Union, which altered the more traditional diplomatic isolation of the US into a policy of global interaction with the entire world. Some Latin American observers argue that though the United States depended upon Latin American resources and political support, the superpower neglected its Latin American neighbors, instead focusing attention and resources elsewhere in the world.[74] The second factor included growing concern over the Communist gains throughout the world. Following World War II, communism spread through Europe and Asia, placing the United States on the defensive against those

[73] For overviews of US interactions with Latin American nations in the twentieth century, see; Lester D. Langley, *America and the Americas: The United States in the Western Hemisphere* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2010); Lars Schoultz, *Beneath the United States: A History of US Policy Toward Latin America* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1998) and Peter H. Smith, *Talons of the Eagle: Latin America, the United States, and the World* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013). Authors exploring the US relationship with Latin America after World War II include Walter LaFeber, *Inevitable Revolutions: The United States in Central America* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1984) and Allen L. McPherson, *Intimate Ties, Bitter Struggle: The United States and Latin America since 1945* (Washington, DC: Potomac Books, 2006).

[74] See Alan McPherson, *Intimate Ties, Bitter Struggles*, 18-25.

promoting the ideology, including its minute presence among Latin American nations.[75] Both of these concerns prompted the US to champion regional security over socio-economic development in the region; a policy that remained constant for years.

Under first Truman, and then Eisenhower, Latin America was an important component of both administrations' Cold War strategy, but regional issues beyond national security typically remained of secondary concern. Eisenhower's strategists outlined US policy in Latin American policy in spring of 1953 with the National Security Council document NSC 144/1. Though the policy paper acknowledged many of the factors contributing to strained relations between the United States and its southern neighbors, key for Eisenhower's strategists were maintaining the Cold War consensus in Latin America and in keeping the region alert to subversive communist threats. The administration focused on military aid to assist governments in quelling any such disruptions as the optimum means of communist containment.[76]

Few countries in the region experienced US foreign policy in action during the twentieth century as directly and frequently as did Cuba. US military intervention in Cuba in 1898 to finalize the end of Spanish rule laid the groundwork for decades of the powerful northern nation's influence on the island's economic development and interference in Cuban political affairs. Under the 1903 Platt Amendment, the US

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[75] J. Lloyd Mecham, *A Survey of United States-Latin American Relations* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1965), 208-211.

[76] Stephen G. Rabe, *Eisenhower and Latin America: The Foreign Policy of Anticommunism* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1988), 31-36. Scholars of Eisenhower's presidency and his Cold War policy include: Robert A. Devine, *Eisenhower and the Cold War* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1981); and Robert R. Bowie and Richard H. Immerman, *Waging Peace: How Eisenhower Shaped an Enduring Cold War Strategy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000).

frequently intervened in Cuban political affairs as a legal recourse to ensure stability on the island and to protect US economic interests in Cuba. Though President Franklin Roosevelt rescinded the amendment in 1934, Cubans did not quickly forget the despised Platt amendment and the license it provided the United States government to dictate Cuban fortunes.[77]

The combination of geographic proximity and interventionist episodes created sense of intimacy between Cubans and North Americans; a sense which proved decidedly different depending upon which side of the Florida Straits one lived. From the US perspective, such factors had forged a special bond between Cubans and North Americans. The United States, from the American perspective, had liberated the Cuban people from Spanish rule, created the framework for democratic governance on the island, helped to expand the Cuban economy, and served as an example for Cuba's continued political, social, and economic advancement. These assumptions underlined US-Cuban diplomacy and its associated public diplomacy efforts, lasting until the United States government severed diplomatic ties with the Cuban government in January 1961.[78]

Steadfast US hegemonic influence shaped not only Cuban perceptions of the US, but also the Cuban audience's receptivity and response to USIA programming by the 1950s. Cubans were well aware of the themes in US promotional materials that stressed anticommunism and inter-American solidarity and espoused the special relationship

[77] Pérez examines the Platt Amendment, US hegemony, and Cuban response in his work, *Cuba Under the Platt Amendment, 1902-1934* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1986).

[78] Pérez offers an in-depth examination of the metaphors and assumptions that colored the US view on Cuba in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, and also the Cuban response to the North American perspective as part of US hegemonic influence on the island. See Louis A. Pérez, *Cuba in the American Imagination: Metaphor and the Imperial Ethos* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2008).

between US and Cuban people. They were perhaps even more accustomed to propaganda championing US political, economic, and cultural superiority, surrounded as they had been not only by such messages, but also with tangible reminders for decades. Continued US influence on the island, however, did not mean that the local population necessarily shared the same outlook on the US-Cuban relationship as their northern neighbors.[79]

North American hegemony, coupled with the US government's seemingly irresistible urge to intervene in the region, fostered anti-American sentiment among many Latin Americans. Though it ebbed and flowed in the twentieth century, "anti-yankeeism" remained part of the undercurrent among many Latin Americans, coloring their perceptions of US culture, society, economics, and politics.[80] Cuban resentment typically coursed in the undercurrents of public opinion, located within Cuban intelligentsia and student organizations, surfacing occasionally throughout the first half of the twentieth century. By the 1950s, a renewed wave of Cuban nationalism and anti-US sentiment coincided with the insurgency taking place on the island against President Fulgencio Batista.[81]

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[79] The foremost works on the subject of US influence and the subsequent Cuban reaction are Louis A. Pérez, *Cuba and the United States: Ties of Singular Intimacy* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1990) and his expanded analysis in *On Becoming Cuban: Identity, Nationality, and Culture* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1999). Other notable works on US hegemony in Cuba and its effects include Ramón Eduardo Ruiz, *Cuba: The Making of a Revolution* (New York: WW Norton, 1970); Jules Benjamin, *The United States and the Origins of the Cuban Revolution: An Empire of Liberty in an Age of National Liberation* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990); and Jorge I. Domínguez, *Cuba: Order and Revolution* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1978).

[80] For examination of anti-US sentiment in Latin America, see McPherson, *Yankee No!: Anti-Americanism in US – Latin American Relations* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2003).

[81] For a summary of anti-Americanism in Cuba before 1959, see McPherson, *Yankee No!* 39-49.

Latin America, especially, served as an important target for US cultural and informational efforts before the Cold War era. Private individuals and organizations in the United States and in Latin American nations had performed much of the early work to build a network of educational and cultural exchanges between the US and nations in the region in the first decades of the twentieth century. Occasionally, the US government assumed control of these cultural diplomacy efforts, particularly during the First World War when German propaganda took root in several Latin American nations, but US officials preferred to let the activities fall to private entities.[82] In these cases, the information and cultural goals were to better facilitate understanding between Latin Americans and the United States and to prevent "outside" influences from penetrating the region that might upset the status quo.

Public diplomacy with Latin American audiences remained a private endeavor until war in Europe threatened stability in the Western Hemisphere in the late 1930s. Forming the Office of the Coordinator of Inter-American Affairs (CIAA) in 1940, the Roosevelt administration reached out to Latin America with cultural and informational activities in conjunction with the president's region-wide Good Neighbor Policy. The CIAA program served both US and Latin American audiences to promote hemispheric solidarity and reject Axis penetration in the region. Through film, radio, publications, cultural programming, CIAA officials also offered messaging that explained the nebulous concept of the American "way of life" to Latin American audiences. As Darlene Sadler

[82] For an overview of US public-private efforts at cultural diplomacy in Latin America, and the series of inter-American meetings that shaped the exchange programs, see the first chapter of J. Manuel Espinosa, *Inter-American Beginnings of US Cultural Diplomacy, 1936-1948*, 7-28, 42-49. For a summary of CPI activity in Latin America during the First World War, see James R. Mock, "The Creel Committee in Latin America," *The Hispanic American Historical Review*, 22, no. 2 (May 1942): 262-279.

notes, CIAA strategists struggled to define this nebulous term and promote it to a heterogeneous population in Latin America. Office officials settled on themes advocating modernity, prosperity, and "emphasizing growth of an industrial economy and proffering utopia visions of a rising middle class."[83] Such themes remained in place after the war to bolster local public opinion against communism, which replaced fascism as the external force that could potentially disrupt inter-American solidarity.

US foreign policy strategists urged the Eisenhower administration to employ propaganda as a tool in keeping Latin America free from communism and aligned with the United States in the campaign against the Soviet Union. NSC 144/1 authors included in their outline an informational component to help the administration achieve its regional goals and promote US interests among Latin American audiences, writing:

> The U.S. Information and Cultural Programs for Latin American states should be specifically directed to the problems and psychology of specific states in the area, with the objective of alerting them to the dangers of Soviet imperialism and communist and other anti-U.S. subversion, and convincing them that their own self-interest requires an orientation of Latin American policies to our objectives.[84]

President Eisenhower's Committee on Informational Activity also examined the propaganda issues in Latin America as the new leader entered the White House. Recognizing the US's existing dominant position within the Western Hemisphere, the report noted the increasingly poor political relations between Latin American countries and the US, and the anti-US sentiment prevalent among Latin Americans. The

[83] Darlene Sadler, *Americans All: Good Neighbor Cultural Diplomacy in World War II* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2012), 4.

[84] Statement of Policy by the National Security Council, "United States Objectives and Courses of Action with Respect to Latin America," March 18, 1953, *FRUS*, 1952-1954, IV, The American Republics, eds. N. Stephen Kane, William F. Stanford, Jr. (Washington: USGPO, 1983), doc. 3; Rabe, *Eisenhower and Latin America*, 31-34.

committee noted specifically that the ongoing propaganda effort in Latin America focused on maintaining "recognition of the mutual interdependence on this area [Latin America] and the United States."[85]

Further influencing both US Latin American policy and the USIA's early messaging programs in the region was Milton Eisenhower's report to the president upon ending his month-long visit to South America. Eisenhower's report emphasized the economic despair and nationalistic sentiment among many Latin Americans and the deep "misunderstanding" among Latin Americans, particularly regarding economic issues, which contributed to their hostility to US policies.[86] The President's younger brother included informational activities as a component of US efforts smooth over misunderstandings in the region. This was particularly true when it came to economic factors in Latin America, which the Eisenhower report noted created much of the Latin American criticism of the US. "Overcoming the present lack of information and understanding...with respect to economic problems" Eisenhower claimed, "constitutes...the greatest single opportunity to strengthen relationships between the United States and the republics of Latin America."[87]

The new administration's foreign policy strategy for Latin America and the documents addressing informational activities in the region provided the early guidance

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[85] "Report to the President by the President's Committee on International Information Activities," June 30, 1953, *FRUS*, 1952-1954 II, part II, National Security Affairs, doc. 368.

[86] "United States-Latin American Relations: Report to the President, November 18, 1953," *The Department of State Bulletin*, XXIX, no.752, publication 5282, November 23, 1953 (Washington, USGPO), 701-704, HathiTrust, https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=uiuo.ark:/13960/t00z8r805;view=1up;seq=275 (accessed February 25, 2016). Nicholas Cull notes that the USIA owed much of its early approach in Latin America to Milton Eisenhower's report. Cull, *The Cold War and the United States Information Agency*, 173.

[87] "United States-Latin American Relations: Report to the President, November 18, 1953."

for USIA activities in Latin America as the agency opened as an independent government organization in August 1953. The overriding concerns for the USIA's Latin American division were to assist the government by stressing the dangers communism posed to Latin America and promoting US leadership in both the region and in the Cold War. The Eisenhower administration required a stable, communist-free Western Hemisphere that was amenable to US interests, while the United States attempted to contain communism elsewhere in the world. Through its various field offices in the region, the United States Information Agency had the task of ensuring that stability through its programming to the Latin American public.

Conclusion

Though the USIA did not consider Cuba to be a high priority for informational programming, this did not leave the local field office bereft of resources. Small by the standards of posts in other regions outside Latin America, USIS-Havana consistently ranked in the upper half of the Latin American offices in terms of the USIA's allotted budget to field posts in the region. Similarly, though the station's combined US and Cuban personnel numbers averaged well below the hundreds of staff that posts in countries such as Brazil and Mexico managed, USIS-Havana employed more staff than the majority of other Latin American stations.

Additionally, USIS-Havana operated in a nation with a well-established mass communications network. Newspapers, radio, film, and television were all very popular on the island. Post staff also benefitted from Cuba's close geographical position to the United States and the exchange of culture and ideas that had occurred over the decades

between the two nations. Cubans, US observers presumed, were well accustomed to receiving news and influential messaging from the United States. Such ties assured a ready-made, receptive Cuban audience for the USIA's Cold War public diplomacy message in Latin America; an agreeable audience, much like so many in the region, that allowed the agency to devote its resources to greater concerns elsewhere.

CHAPTER TWO

Maintaining the Ties:
USIS-Havana in Batista's Cuba, 1953-1956

> "Traditionally Cubans are friendly toward the United States. Our Assistance in achieving Cuban independence from Spain has not been forgotten."
>
> – *USIA Inspection Report of USIS Cuba*, June 16-July 2, 1954

Between August of 1953 and December of 1956, the nascent United States Information Agency (USIA) planned, created, and disseminated propaganda messaging in Cuba promoting President Dwight Eisenhower's Latin American foreign policy strategy and to maintain Cuban goodwill for their northern neighbor. On the island, the Agency's United States Information Service (USIS) field office staff relied upon print, radio, and film materials to persuade Cuban citizens to support both the United States and their own government's policies to contain communist expansion internationally, prevent communist subversion locally, and to maintain US-led inter-American solidarity in the region free of any Soviet influence. USIS staff also disseminated messages stressing the new presidential administration's interest in regional cooperation and assistance to advance Latin American economic and social interests based upon US models.

USIA personnel worked under the assumption that the majority of Cubans had long been aligned with the US in matters of foreign policy, and that the Cuban people shared similar political and economic perspectives as their northern neighbor. Strategists in Washington, DC, and on the island reasoned that USIS-Havana had only to maintain

Cuban public support for US leadership in the Cold War and Latin America, foster an environment that stressed political and economic stability based upon US models, and stress to the public the dangers communist subversives could wreak on Cuban society without their constant vigilance. Station staff targeted their campaign to a Cuban audience growing increasingly hostile to Cuban President Fulgencio Batista y Zaldívar's government, amid a period of increasing Cuban nationalism and anti-US sentiment.

US-Cuban Relationship, 1953 – 1956

Maintaining the status quo defined US foreign policy for Cuba in the Batista era. Though the Cuban leader had seized control of the nation's political system illegally in 1952, his policies ensured that Cuban political and economic interests remained tied to those of the United States. The new leader assured both US officials and the Cuban people that he would hold open elections for the Cuban presidency in the near future, placating US concerns over supporting yet another dictator in Latin America. In the interim, the new government provided incentives for US businesses to invest in Cuba. Most importantly, the dictator proved to be staunch ally for the Eisenhower administration against global communism by supporting the US in the United Nations and outlawing the Communist Party in Cuba.[1]

The domestic political situation on the island, however, shared scant resemblance to the tranquil diplomatic relationship between the two nations in the late summer of

[1] Morris H. Morley, *Imperial State and Revolution: The United States and Cuba, 1952-1986* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 46-53. Lars Schoultz, *That Infernal Little Cuban Republic: The United States and the Cuban Revolution* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2009), 56-57; and Jorge I. Domínguez, *Cuba: Order and Revolution* (Cambridge: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1978), 66-70.

1953. Batista's governance alienated Cubans from political decision making on the island, fomenting political agitation among the two main political parties in Cuba and especially among younger Cubans and the intellectual class on the island.[2] Fidel Castro Ruz and his movement exemplified this youth and their displeasure with Batista's government when they attacked the Cuban Army's Moncada barracks in 1953.[3] The failed assault prompted Batista to tighten his dictatorial authority and eliminate any would-be threats to his government. These new policies to suppress dissent and strengthen the regime led to government violations of both civil and human rights in Cuba. With no access to political change through legal means, disenchanted Cubans adopted violence as their response to the oppressive, corrupt government.[4]

Cuban frustrations extended beyond Havana to include Washington, DC, as well. The same bonds that the Eisenhower administration's Cuban observers believed kept the island nation well within US influence also served to sour Cuban public opinion of their northern neighbor. The political bonds highlighted discrepancies between the democratic process in the US and politics under Batista's rule, while the Eisenhower administration's support for Batista demonstrated that the US democratic message did not always apply to Latin Americans. Similarly, economic and social ties highlighted for many Cubans the continued inequality between the two nations, despite embracing North American

[2] Ramón Eduardo Ruiz, *Cuba: The Making of a Revolution* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1968), 153-163, 164-169; For a summary of Cuban university student unrest, see Steve Cushion, *A Hidden History of the Cuban Revolution: How the Working Class Shaped the Guerilla Victory* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 2016), 77-80.

[3] Hugh Thomas, *Cuba, Or, the Pursuit of Freedom* (New York, Da Capo Press, 1998), 835-838.

[4] Philip W. Bonsal, *Cuba, Castro and the United States* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1972), 14-16.

methods and culture.[5] Thus, while the Eisenhower administration had few complaints about the state-to-state relationship between the two countries, Cubans themselves grew less enamored with their North American neighbor in this period, as US rhetoric did not match Cuban reality.

USIS-Havana Objectives and Strategies

The US Information Agency assumed control over the USIS field post in Havana only weeks after Castro's failed assault on the Moncada barracks in July. Despite the attack and other indications of unrest on the island, Cuba was not among the countries the USIA specifically targeted in Latin America during the early period of its information campaign. USIA observers considered Cubans amenable to US interests, linked as they were to their North American neighbor through the two nations' shared past and US influence on the island. This, coupled with the Cuban government's strict anticommunist policies, left the agency free to concentrate on more unstable areas in Latin America.[6]

With no immediate concerns in Cuba requiring specific USIA attention, the local USIS contingent on the island carried out informational programming corresponding with the agency's broader directives for all of Latin America. This included promoting global USIA campaigns, such as the "Atoms for Peace" and "People's Capitalism" projects, and

[5] Louis A. Pérez, *On becoming Cuban: Identity Nationality and Culture* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1999), Pérez studies these ties how Cubans responded to their relationship with the United States during the period in chapter seven of his work.

[6] Nicholas J. Cull, *The Cold War and the United States Information Agency: American Propaganda and Public Diplomacy, 1945-1989* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 120; "Progress Report of the Operations Coordinating Board to the National Security Council", January 19, 1955, *FRUS*, 1952-1954, IV, The American Republics, doc. 13. Priority countries in the region included Brazil, Chile, Bolivia, and Guatemala.

also crafting programming in-house which corresponded to local objectives.[7] Staff based such objectives on USIA regional goals and in support of the US diplomatic mission in Cuba, which they formalized into USIS-Havana's Country Plan. Like their counterparts in other less-volatile Latin American countries, field station staff prioritized messages exposing communism, fostering inter-hemispheric cooperation, and advocating US economic, political, and cultural superiority.[8]

Station staff concentrated much of their efforts on anticommunist messaging. Havana personnel emphasized the necessity to remain vigilant against communist infiltration and stressed the importance of supporting US efforts to contain its spread in Latin America and elsewhere. USIS personnel listed their initial objective in Cuba as "to lead the Cuban people away from neutralism in the struggle between communism and the free world."[9] This was an older anticommunist objective, pre-dating the USIA, reflecting the field post's earlier efforts to maintain Cuban support for the ongoing Korean conflict. With the War's end in July 1953, staff considered the message both outdated and unnecessary. The Cuban government had proven that it was anything but neutral in the Cold War, repeatedly supporting US policies against the Soviet Union and communist nations internationally, and instituting their own measures to suppress local communist activities.[10]

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[7] Kenneth Osgood discusses these global programs, and others, in *Total Cold War: Eisenhower's Secret Propaganda Battle at Home and Abroad* (Lawrence: University of Kansas Press, 2006). 153-353.

[8] USIA Latin American objectives remained relatively static until the summer of 1958, emphasizing these three themes to varying degrees each year. The agency's annual reports to US Congress reflect the ongoing strategy, see US Information Agency, Review *of Operations*, Vols. 1-10, HathiTrust.

[9] "USIA Daily Summary," No. 4, January 8, 1954, I/S - Daily 1/5/54 to Jan. & Feb. 1954, Daily Summaries, box 1, OPI, RG 306, NACP.

[10] Ibid.

While US Embassy officials and those in Washington, DC, praised Batista's anticommunist stance and Cuban support for US Cold War policies, communist propaganda in various guises continued circulating among the population. As part of their duties, USIS-Havana personnel reported on such subversive activities in the informational and cultural fields on the island, forwarding examples of communist propaganda materials to USIA and State Department officials in Washington. Even the softest forms of what observers deemed communist propaganda on the island aroused USIS attention. In July 1956, station Public Affairs Officer Richard G. Cushing reported to the agency that a number of Soviet-produced films had appeared on the island, specifically citing a Russian version of *Romeo and Juliet* in his summary. While Cushing labeled the motion picture itself as innocuous, he did note its value as cultural propaganda, writing "most of these films are clearly designed to show the high advancement of, and mass appreciation of, Soviet ballet and music."[11] The influx of Soviet films, Cushing warned, "could possibly indicate the start of a Soviet cultural offensive here."[12]

This was not the first time that the USIA confronted Soviet-produced film screenings in Cuba. Two years earlier, a Cuban film distribution company attempted to show a feature entitled *The Fall of Berlin* in several Cuban theaters. Demonstrating USIS-Havana's local influence, Cuban government authorities solicited the station's opinion on whether to allow theaters to show the motion picture. USIS staff determined

[11] Foreign Service Despatch, USIS-Habana to USIA-Washington, "New Rash of Soviet Films in Havana," July 30, 1956, Action Copies-July Thru December 1956 [Despatches - OM's and Telegrams] [Folder 2/2], Latin American Program Files, Office of Research and Analysis, Area Analysis Division/Latin American Branch (hereafter cited IRI/LA), box 2, RG 306, NACP.

[12] Ibid.

the film possessed little propaganda value due to its inaccuracies and poor plot, labeling it "so obviously slanted and laugh-provoking that it could well work against the Soviets – or at least be harmless."[13] USIS staff noted that the Cuban film distributor was sympathetic to US Cold War interests, declining to make edits to the film which the Soviets had requested, while offering to incorporate any changes USIS staff recommended, even willing to include an announcement to audiences beforehand that the film they were to view was a Soviet propaganda piece.

The field office relayed the Cuban government's request for USIS opinion to their Washington, DC, headquarters. There, agency officials recommended to USIS-Havana that they encourage the Cuban government to deny the film from appearing in theaters. Agency staff worried that while more sophisticated urban Cuban audiences could discern the movie's propaganda message, "a less informed rural audience might not."[14] To avoid local accusations of US interference, the Agency advised field office personnel to subtly exercise its influence and unofficially recommend that the Cuban government deny the distributor permission to show the film. Station staff proved unsuccessful in their appeal, suggesting in this same scenario the limits to their influence in Cuba, as the Cuban film board permitted the distributor to screen the motion picture in December.[15]

Cushing's warning in 1956 that the Soviet films appearing on the island signaled an increased communist propaganda effort in Cuba echoed USIA concerns for all of

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[13] USIA "Daily Summary," No. 205, October 22, 1954, I/S – USIA Daily Summary, September & October, 1954, Daily Summaries, box 1, OPI, RG 306, NACP.

[14] USIA "Daily Summary," No. 208, October 27, 1954, I/S – USIA Daily Summary, September & October, 1954, Daily Summaries, box 1, OPI, RG 306, NACP.

[15] USIA "Daily Summary," No. 234, December 6, 1954, I/S - USIA Daily Summary, November & December, 1954, Daily Summaries, box 1, OPI, RG 306, NACP.

Latin America. The Soviet Union launched their own persuasion campaign in the region in the mid-1950s in conjunction with Premier Nikolai Bulganin's offers of improved trade and diplomatic relations with all Latin American nations. The Eisenhower administration considered the Soviet move an attempt to disrupt inter-hemispheric solidarity and weaken US influence in Latin America.[16] The USIA described the informational and cultural materials accompanying these new Soviet overtures as strategy to persuade Latin Americans that the United States dominated the region and was "therefore responsible for all the continent's difficulties."[17]

USIA strategists, in response, continued emphasizing the familiar agency themes in Latin America promoting inter-hemispheric solidarity and cooperation as the path to improving regional economic and social conditions. Maintaining these close bonds rested, in part, on Latin American commitment to eradicating communist subversion from within and preventing the Soviets from exerting their own influence in the area. Therefore, the agency's anticommunist programming remained a priority amid the new Soviet effort as the USIA countered with messaging that "exposed the true purpose of the Communist offensive and refuted Communist misrepresentations."[18] In Cuba, the informational campaign during the period to minimize Soviet influence stressed the dangers of communism to the region, the importance of supporting US Cold War foreign

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[16] Stephen G. Rabe, *Eisenhower and Latin America: The Foreign Policy of Anticommunism* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1988), 90-92; See also "Outline Plan of Operations against Communism in Latin America," April 18, 1956, *FRUS*, 1955-1957, VII, American Republics: Multilateral; Mexico; Caribbean, eds. N. Stephen Kane, Joan M. Lee, Delia Pitts, and Sherrill B. Wells (Washington: USGPO, 1987), doc. 10.

[17] US Information Agency, *6th Report to Congress, January 1-June 30, 1956*, 23-25, HathiTrust, https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=mdp.39015028986845;view=1up;seq=225 (accessed March 5, 2016).

[18] US Information Agency, *6th Report to Congress: January 1-June 30, 1956*, 24.

policies globally, and maintaining the Cold War consensus in Latin America. Examining USIS-Havana's active pamphlet and publications program on the island offers examples of the Cold War themes field post staff considered relevant to the Cuban public and which they reasoned would resonate with their audience.

Religion

USIA strategists considered religion fertile ground for the US to press home communism's dangers. As Jonathan P. Herzog argues, in the Cold War battle, US leaders believed "religious faith to be a bulwark [to national interests] and worked to promote it."[19] This included incorporating spiritual messaging into US propaganda abroad. The USIA's previous incarnations advocated shared spiritual values as a theme in the past, and the new iteration was no different.[20] In the 1953 Jackson Committee report that outlined US informational programming for the Eisenhower Administration, analysts concluded that US propaganda activities should emphasize Soviet religious oppression to "discredit the Soviet system in many countries in the free world."[21] The new USIA director Theodore Streibert concurred with the Jackson Report and included religious programming within the new agency, creating a separate Office of Religious Information in 1954.[22]

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[19] Herzog, *The Spiritual Industrial Complex: America's Religious Battle against Communism in the Early Cold War* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 5.

[20] Cull, *The Cold War and the United States Information Agency*, 87. For Eisenhower and USIA use of religious messaging, see Herzog, 129-134.

[21] Ibid., 103.

[22] Ibid., 113.

The USIS-Havana field office staff incorporated religious themes in their own messaging to Cuban audiences. This campaign stressed communism's hostility towards religion by highlighting instances where the ideology's followers had suppressed religious practices in both the Soviet Union and Eastern European satellite nations. Within these examples and warnings, USIS Havana made sure to emphasize religious freedom within the United States and how spiritual beliefs influenced US political ideology, in contrast to the Soviet Union's religious repression and a political system devoid of such influence.

A very early field publication from September 1953 contained many of these themes. Entitled *14 Preguntas Sobre el Comunismo y la Religión* (*14 Questions about Communism and Religion*), the four page pamphlet explained to the Cuban public how communists had "crushed" religion in the Soviet Union.[23] Through a series of fourteen questions and subsequent answers, USIS personnel warned readers that communist followers had taken possession of churches and synagogues and made such customs as marriage and funerals within churches illegal upon seizing power in the Soviet Union. The publication explained that even the traditional Eastern Orthodox Church in Russia was simply a puppet of the communist government.[24] USIS writers included an unsubtle cover illustration depicting the message within of the Soviet response to religious institutions. Here, an artist drew an image of the leg of a black-booted Soviet soldier, complete with a hammer and sickle emblem on their pants leg, just as it was about to step

[23] *14 Preguntas Sobre el Comunismo y la Religión.* September 4, 1953, Field Publications, box 145, Press and Publications, RG 306, NACP; see information card attached to pamphlet.

[24] Ibid.

upon a cross lying on the ground. This illustration left little doubt for a potential reader as to the communist stance on religion.

Havana-based USIS staff created a similar religious-themed pamphlet for Cuban consumption the following year. *Campagña contra Dios* (*Campaign against God*) again examined the communist assault against religion by recounting the 1949 trial of Hungarian Roman Catholic Cardinal József Mindszenty. Featuring a large black and white photograph on its cover showing Cardinal Mindszenty seated in a courtroom, flanked on either side by two uniformed men, field office personnel intended for the four page pamphlet to provide a summary of "Communism's relentless war on religion."[25] The subsequent narrative alerted readers that communists were intent on destroying organized religion and persecuting those who practiced their faith, as Christianity represented the "most vigorous force currently operating against communism."[26] Contrasting communism's violent repression and destruction of religion in order to force people to worship the State, the narrative championed a United States political system founded on deeply held religious beliefs, where the nation's Founding Fathers "sought to reflect these [religious] truths in their political institutions, so trying to do God's will on earth."[27]

The common themes present in these works were that communism was intolerant of religion; if they were to gain power, communists would abolish traditional religious

[25] *Campagña Contra Dios*, USIS Publication, November 17, 1954, Habana: Campaign Against God, Caracas, Field Publications, box144, Press and Publications, RG 306, NACP. Details located on Information card attached to publication.

[26] Ibid.

[27] Ibid.

rites and ceremonies, co-opt religion for state use, and replace God with the State as the deity for people to worship. These materials contained no subtle messaging. Instead, within the folded pages of these thousands of pamphlets, USIS staff framed the "free world" battle against communism as two ideologies in polar opposition to one another on the issue. According to the propaganda, one side, the US, practiced religious freedom and promoted political and social ideals based upon entrenched religious beliefs. The other side held an ideology incompatible with religion, whose followers actively suppressed religious practices upon gaining political control or used faith as a coercive tool.

Unrest and Terror in Satellite Countries

Just as the USIA highlighted Soviet religious suppression in satellite states, the agency also emphasized acts of political and social oppression taking place behind the Iron Curtain and the unrest among those living in Soviet-dominated Eastern European nations. The USIA made particular propaganda use of the large number of refugees fleeing from their Communist-controlled homelands to find refuge in nations free from Soviet influence during this period. USIS-Havana materials relaying this theme contained dramatic accounts of such actions, incorporating vivid images and refugee stories to augment their claims.

The publication *Grietas en la Cortina de la Hierro* (*Cracks in the Iron Curtain*) presented Cuban readers with an account of the refugee exodus from East Germany and Eastern Europe to the West. USIS writers dramatically described the Iron Curtain as a "strip of wasteland...fortified with barbed wire, watchtowers, land mines, electric traps and dogs," constantly under guard by communist police with orders to kill anyone trying

to escape.[28] Field post writers included statistical data on those escaping from behind the Iron Curtain, noting the numbers of people fleeing from communism and also their occupations, particularly emphasizing those in the professional and political fields. The pamphlet also contained numerous photographs of refugees as they made their way, many of them of women and children. The cover photograph was particularly stunning as it depicted a large column of Hungarian refugees trudging through snow, surrounded by mountainous terrain, with the caption: "A group of refugees marching through snow fleeing Hungary to escape communist oppression."[29]

Along with their dramatic accounts of refugees escaping communist control in Eastern Europe, USIS-Havana staff also developed materials emphasizing the importance of the Cuban government and the Cuban people's role in assisting US efforts to contain communism globally. Capitalizing on the violent Soviet suppression of the October 1956 Hungarian revolt, station information officers quickly crafted a pamphlet entitled *Cuba Condema Este Crimin* (*Cuba Condemns this Crime*), releasing it that December. Highlighting Cuba's role in the international struggle against communism in the political arena, the four-page publication contained excerpts from a speech presented by the head of the Cuban delegation to the United Nations, Dr. Emilio Núñez Portuondo, who spoke against the atrocities taking place in the Eastern European nation. USIS staff noted that

[28] *Grietas En La Cortina De Hierro*, November 8, 1954, Habana: Cracks in the Iron Curtain, Spanish, Field Publications, box 145, Press and Publications, RG 306, NACP.

[29] *Grietas En La Cortina De Hierro*, November 8, 1954, Field Publications, RG 306, NACP.

they selected "the most dramatic parts of the resolution introduced by Cuba's delegate to the United Nations…condemning Soviet brutality toward the Hungarians."[30]

Before a potential reader could examine the excerpts of Portuondo's remarks within the pamphlet, the imagery on the cover of the publication set the tone for the message inside. Above the blood-red title, two visceral images confronted the viewer on the cover. The larger of the two was a black and white photograph of a man, dressed in a coat and tie, lying dead in the street amid rubble and debris, his face covered in blood. The second image was an illustration of a Soviet military officer, facing the viewer and smiling, while cleaning a large bloody knife. In the background behind the officer, a dead Hungarian lies face down, with a tattered flag reading "Hungria Libre" lying just beyond his outstretched hand.

While warning the Cuban public of the dangers of communist subversion and championing their government's role in containing the ideology, station staff also attempted to persuade Cuban audiences of the need to support US efforts in the ongoing Cold War. USIS staff contended they required such messaging to "[fill] a dire need for an easily understood explanation of the basic reasons for the ideological struggle between East and West."[31] Among these efforts was a pamphlet, entitled *¿Qué es eso de la Guerra Fria?* (*What's all this about the Cold War?*). Staff writers designed the publication to appeal to a mass audience, explaining US actions to contain the Soviet

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[30] *Cuba Condema Este Crimen*, December 20, 1956, Habana: Cuba Condemns this Crime (Cuba Condema este Crimen) Spanish, Field Publications, box 145, Press and Publications, RG 306, NACP. See card attached to pamphlet.

[31] *¿Qué es eso de la Guerra Friá?* December 9, 1955, Habana: What's all this about the Cold War? 1955, Spanish, Field Publications, Box 145, Press and Publications, RG 306, NACP. See card attached to pamphlet.

Union and its communist allies, and the necessity of Cubans to support US efforts and remain vigilant against communism.

In their narrative, the authors depicted an "everyday" Cuban man, Manuel, who seeks an explanation about the Cold War after repeatedly hearing the term on his radio. Manuel visits Dr. Ramos, a retired university professor, for answers. The remainder of the pamphlet is a series of questions Manuel poses to Dr. Ramos about the Cold War and the professor's responses. Each question Manuel asks relates to the history of communism, communist beliefs, and the danger the ideology poses to his own family's economic and social values. Manuel learns that the best weapon to defend Cuban freedoms against communist lies and false promises was for Cubans to arm themselves with the truth about the ideology.

By the end, Dr. Ramos has educated Manuel, and the reader, not only on the importance of the US-led global struggle against communism, but also on the necessity to remain alert at home against the communist threat against a free Cuban society. The most effective way to resist communism, the professor counsels Manuel, was with factual information countering communist lies. At the end of the narrative, lettered in red ink and underlined to stand out from the rest of the pamphlet, Dr. Ramos implores to both Manuel and the reader that Cubans must play an active role in fighting the communist menace at home. "We should be well prepared," the professor asserts, "to expose those communists [in Cuba] as a serious threat to our most basic rights and at the same time to reaffirm our determination to keep this country democratic and free."[32]

[32] *¿Qué es eso de la Guerra Friá?* December 9, 1955, Field Publications, RG 306, NACP.

Inter-Hemispheric solidarity in the Cold War

USIS accounts of communist followers' oppressive tactics, the plight of millions living in Eastern Europe, and warnings that the same could happen in Latin America were only one aspect of USIS-Havana staff's informational effort to promote US Cold War policies in the region. US strategy to prevent communism from gaining a foothold in the Western Hemisphere also depended on maintaining hemispheric solidarity against any communist advances locally. USIS programming promoting this unified front against communist subversion emphasized the importance of remaining firmly committed to the inter-American system through existing treaties and regional cooperation between all nations in the hemisphere.

The USIA promoted the March 1954 Declaration of Caracas as proof of such unity, and the agency touted the agreement and incorporated it into its messaging. USIA staff stressed US and Latin American cooperation in creating and enforcing the declaration, which called for collective action to prevent communism from making inroads into Latin America.[33] USIS-Havana personnel followed up the March conference with their own programming to publicize the agreement. A month after the Caracas meeting, staff produced a pamphlet entitled *Una Declaración de Solidaridad* (*A Declaration of Solidarity*). The publication featured snippets of US Secretary of State John Foster Dulles' speech during the conference, but also made sure to stress the importance of other Latin American leaders in attendance. USIS-Havana staff relayed that Colombian Foreign Minister Evaristo Sourdis took the floor during the conference to

[33] US Information Agency, *2nd Report to Congress: January 1-June 30, 1954*. 25. For further examination of the Caracas Resolution, see Rabe, *Eisenhower and Latin America*, 49-54.

announce it was the "the duty of the peoples of the Americas to adopt collective measures to prevent and uproot 'international credos that threaten free nations of the world.'"[34] USIS writers wrote boldly to their Cuban audience of the solid front in Latin America, boasting "Communist infiltration in the Western Hemisphere suffered a severe setback" thanks to the Caracas agreement, and that the declaration warned communists to "keep your hands off this hemisphere."[35]

Station personnel released a publication outlining the cooperative inter-American system in September 1954. The six page pamphlet, *Seguridad Colectiva en las Américas* (*Collective Security in the Americas*) promoted both the US Mutual Defense Assistance Program and Declaration of Caracas. Station staff explained that the military assistance program was not an attempt to interfere with Cuban domestic politics, but part of a regional effort to keep Latin America secure from external or internal communist aggression. Staff writers made this abundantly clear on the opening page, assuring their audience that the US was "not engaged in strengthening any American republic in particular against any other republic of the hemisphere," but rather intended "to defend the community of American republics against communist aggression."[36] USIS staff included in their publication a concise history of the previous policies and treaties in the region to promote understanding for collective security measures in Latin America,

[34] *Una Declaración de Solidaridad*, April 2, 1954, Habana: Declaration of Solidarity, Field Publications, box 145, Press and Publications, RG 306, NACP.

[35] *Una Declaración de Solidaridad*, April 2, 1954, Field Publications, RG 306, NACP.

[36] *Seguridad Colectiva en las Américas*, April 2, 1954, Habana: Collective Security in the Americas, Spanish, Field Publications, box 145, Press and Publications RG 306, NACP.

including the newest Caracas resolution as an extension of those previous measures, now updated to prevent communist penetration.

The subject of US intervention in the affairs of other Latin American nations appeared frequently in the USIS station's inter-hemispheric cooperation messaging. US interference in the internal politics of other countries had long been a contentious issue among Cubans and powered much of the anti-US sentiment on both the island and throughout the region. Eisenhower policymakers were well aware of this fact, and USIA planners attempted to assuage Cuban concerns and reiterate that the US no longer adhered to such policies. For instance, in highlighting Assistant Secretary of State John Moore Cabot's speech promoting US anticommunist policies in the region in their *Una Nube Roja sobre la America Latina* (*Red Cloud over Latin America*) publication, station writers emphasized that while the US opposed any communist penetration in Latin America, it was "not their intention to intervene in the internal affairs of any country in this hemisphere."[37]

Field post staff also strongly emphasized the Eisenhower administration's non-interventionist position in *Seguridad Colectiva en las Américas.* Stressing the importance of hemispheric defense from external and internal communist threats, the post's writers noted that the US remained committed to a non-interventionist policy and with working cooperatively with other Latin American nations in regional security matters, declaring "the days of US intervention have already passed." Still, staff took pains to justify past US intervention efforts in the region by claiming presidents had done so out of a need to

[37] *Una Nube Roja sobre la America Latina*, November 12, 1953, Habana: A Red Cloud over Latin America, Field Publications, box 145, Press and Publications, RG 306, NACP.

protect US lives and restore order in those nations. "These measures were taken," the pamphlet informed its readers, "in full recognition of the fact that international law recognized intervention as a justifiable resource when ordered systems of law had proved inadequate."[38]

Guatemala

Relying predominantly on distant events for examples in their anticommunist informational programming, US Information Agency officials capitalized on regional tensions involving the United States and Guatemala in 1954 to alert Latin Americans to the immediate dangers communism posed within the hemisphere. Alleging that under President Jacobo Árbenz Guzmán communists controlled the Guatemalan government, the Eisenhower administration lobbied Latin American nations to take action against communist penetration in the region. The end result was a covert US-directed coup against the Central American nation in June 1954. As the crisis played out, the events provided a ready-made opportunity for Eisenhower to tout the Latin American Cold War solidarity and the US non-interventionist policy, to demonstrate regional resolve in keeping the region free of communist influence, and to highlight the dangers of communism to the Latin American people.[39]

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[38] *Seguridad Colectiva en las Américas*, September 10, 1954, Field Publications, RG 306, NACP.

[39] For additional information on Guatemala and the United States in 1954, see Stephen G. Rabe, *Eisenhower and Latin America: The Foreign Policy of Anticommunism* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1988), 42-63; For a detailed examination, see Stephen C. Schlesinger and Stephen Kinsler, *Bitter Fruit: The Story of the American Coup in Guatemala* (Cambridge: Harvard University, David Rockefeller Center for Latin American Studies, 2005).

The US orchestration to overthrow the Árbenz government in Guatemala depended on the work not only of the US Central Intelligence Agency, but also the assistance of the USIA.[40] The propaganda campaign against the Guatemalan government took place within the Central American nation and also in the other countries of the Hemisphere. Before moving to topple the legally elected Árbenz, the Eisenhower administration roused Latin American nations in an effort to work within the inter-Hemispheric system, gaining both support and legitimacy for the actions that followed. Concurrently, the administration used the USIA to gain public backing in the region for the offensive against Árbenz under the guise of ensuring Latin America remained free of Communist interference and to "[arouse] Latin America to the methods and dangers of communist penetration."[41]

USIS-Havana fully participated in the parent-agency's regional Guatemalan propaganda campaign and field office staff mined the affair for any possible resources that they could incorporate into their own anticommunist programming. These events proved to be a boon for the local staff's attempts at "jarring the Cuban population out of their apathy to the [communist] menace."[42] Launching their program amid the buildup to the June 17 coup, USIS-Havana staff reported that the Cuban press regularly printed the unattributed press releases from the agency's wireless file and those that station

[40] For the USIA's role in the propaganda campaign against Guatemala, see "Report on Actions Taken by the United States Information Agency in the Guatemalan Situation," July 27, 1954, *FRUS*, 1952-1954, Guatemala, ed. Susan Holly (Washington: USGPO, 2003), doc. 280.

[41] "Report on Actions Taken by the United States Information Agency in the Guatemalan Situation," July 27.

[42] "USIA Daily Summary," August 17, 1954, I/S - USIA Daily Summary, July & August, 1954, Daily Summaries, box 1, RG 306, NACP.

information that station information officers themselves crafted. Local personnel also noted that the Cuban radio network *CMQ* had agreed to use "all hard-hitting Guatemalan commentaries at peak times" providing the field office with a widely popular media outlet on the island for their materials.[43]

Field staff warned their audience that events in Guatemala could just as easily happen in their own country if Cubans did not remain alert to the danger. The USIS field office's pamphlet, *¿Cuál es el Comunista?* (*Which one is the Communist?*), featured passages bordering on paranoia, alerting Cubans that "The communists are closer than we think." As in Guatemala, wrote USIS staff, communists secretly walked among Cubans in their country. Anyone could be a communist, the pamphlet warned; they could be "friends or business partners, men who call themselves patriots," only to become overnight "brutal enemies who owe allegiance to a foreign power and ideology that we do not share."[44] USIS authors reinforced this uncertainty with a cover dotted with the illustrated faces of seven Cuban men of various occupations and race, including a doctor, student, businessman, farmer, and soldier, all surrounding the work's prominent questioning title displayed in the publication's center. For the reader, this imagery emphasized the authors' unsettling claim that identifying a communist was not a simple task.

Fresh propaganda resources arrived soon after the June coup and USIS-Havana staff made productive use of the new information, photographs, and eyewitness accounts

[43] "USIA Daily Summary," June 8, 1954, I/S - Daily Summary, 1/5/54 to Jan. & Feb. 1954, Daily Summaries, box 1, RG 306, NACP.

[44] *¿Cuál es el Comunista?* November 19, 1954, Habana: Which One is the Communist? Spanish, Field Publications, box 145, Press and Publications, RG 306, NACP.

the USIA continued to accumulate in Guatemala. In early July, the office distributed 80,000 copies of a pamphlet entitled, *El Caso de Guatemala* (*The Case of Guatemala*). The eight page pamphlet featured a chronology of events in Guatemala. Targeting a broad Cuban audience, the publication featured a bright red cover with a cartoon illustration of a vulture perched in a dead tree, overlooking a small strip of land with a sign protruding that read "Guatemala." For an added element of symbolism, USIS staff drew the vulture's head and neck as a hammer and sickle.

Another eight page pamphlet, *La Cruz vs. La Hoz* (*The Cross vs. the Sickle*), also incorporated new evidence of the dangerous communist presence that infested Guatemala. Staff writers included a photograph on the pamphlet cover of a crowd of Guatemalan youths inside a church, standing over a wooden casket in mourning. Behind the children and the casket, as if watching over the scene, the church's large crucifix hung in the background. "No words are needed to tell the story of this photo," the pamphlet's authors wrote to their audience, as the "expressions on the faces of the family and friends [of the lifeless body in the casket]...speak more eloquently than words."[45] This was life under communism in Latin America, the photo inferred: death and sorrow.

For their pamphlet's narrative, station authors borrowed from a US State Department document that summarized the communist infiltration of Guatemala and the danger Jacobo Árbenz's government had posed to regional solidarity and the Cold War struggle by aligning with the Soviet Union as the text for the pamphlet. After running through the list of evidence and praising Latin Americans for banding together to oppose

[45] *La Cruz vs. La Hoz*, September 28, 1954, Habana: Cross vs Sickle; Field Publications, box 145, Press and Publications, RG 306, NACP.

communist aggression and Guatemalans for rejecting the oppressive government, the authors reminded their audience that the struggle was not over. The pamphlet warned that the Soviet Union would still attempt to intervene in the region, adding in conclusion, "it is expected that American republics will join forces in the defense against intervention in the Western Hemisphere."[46]

Another USIS publication featured similar graphic imagery of the devastation and brutality Guatemalans endured under communist rule. Titled *Tribute de Sangre* (*Tribute of Blood*), the authors touted their work as "a no-holds barred pamphlet on the Guatemalan crisis," containing "shocking evidence of Communist massacres and penetration of all avenues of thought." [47] Relying on the photographs and writing of Cuban journalist Rosendo Canto Hernandez, USIS staff presented their audience with photographic evidence of torture and executions in Guatemala, and provided examples of communist propaganda materials that the liberating forces uncovered upon deposing Árbenz . As with many of their products, station staff provided no indication that this was a USIS publication. Instead, the authors went a step further and attributed the work to Rosendo Canto, giving the propaganda material the added legitimacy of Cuban origin.[48]

The Guatemalan crisis allowed USIS staff to incorporate all of their Cold War themes and make them regionally relevant to their audience. No longer did they have to rely on accounts from distant European nations to provide evidence of the dangers of

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[46] *La Cruz vs. La Hoz*, September 28, 1954, Field Publications, RG 306, NACP.

[47] *Tribute de Sangre*, November 26, 1954, Habana: Tribute of Blood, Field Publications, box 145, Press and Publications, RG 306, NACP.

[48] Ibid.

communism. Field post staff could now illustrate the ways in which communists altered a Latin American nation's political and social structure, point to how communist infiltration disrupted inter-hemispheric solidarity and endangered US Cold War policy internationally, and advocate that regional cooperation had worked perfectly to eliminate the danger, using a fellow member of the Western Hemisphere community as their example.

Promoting US Achievements and Regional Partnership

Amid the Guatemalan situation's urgency and the Cold War's primacy in USIA Latin American programming, station personnel did not neglect other, less ominous themes during this period. By the summer of 1956, in addition to the regular news and entertainment offerings they dispersed to Cuban media, USIS-Havana staff adhered to five additional objectives in Cuba that augmented its anticommunist messaging. Possessing a friendlier tone, these themes emphasized US economic ideology and private investment, stressed the US goal of cooperation among Latin American nations without intervention, and trumpeted US technology and culture.[49] Though possessing the added psychological advantage of demonstrating US superiority over the Soviet Union, these were warmer messages promoting the United States' value as a partner and advocated building strong relationships between Cubans and their northern neighbor. Examining the content USIS information officers regularly distributed through the island's media

[49] USIS-Habana to USIA-Washington, "Annual USIS Assessment Report, October 1, 1957-September 30, 1958," October 29, 1958, Correspondence (Multi-Country), Program Files, box 2, IRI/LA, RG 306, NACP.

network illustrates what themes local staff considered effective in promoting the United States and retaining Cuban goodwill during the period.

Additionally, the USIS field office supplied Cuban media outlets with both factual news items and entertainment. In addition to the standard radio packets the Voice of America distributed to all Latin American offices, USIS-Havana staff also regularly placed their own pre-recorded broadcasts or pre-written scripts on Cuban radio. This local output included two regular fifteen-minute news and information programs by 1954. The first was a daily segment known as *Ventado de Mundo* (*Window on the World*) which staff created for a "leading radio station" in Cuba. Another was *North American Panorama,* which station staff crafted three times per week and dist the Cuban Ministerio de Educación. Both programs incorporated information from the Agency's wireless file reports and other background materials.[50] The station also included recorded music among the informational materials it distributed to local radio stations, though USIA inspectors questioned this practice due to the wide availability of US music already on the island.[51]

Like radio, the television products USIS-Havana personnel distributed included a mixture of information and entertainment. With no capability to produce such programs locally, post staff relied upon USIA products to fill their needs. In the months before August of 1953, the Agency distributed thirty eight episodes of *Industry on Parade*, a

[50] "Inspection Report of USIS Cuba, June 15 – July 2, 1954," September 30, 1954, Cuba, June 14, 1958; Nov. 8, 1955; Sept. 30, 1954, Inspection Reports, box 2, Inspection Staff, RG 306, NACP.

[51] Inspection Report of USIS Cuba, June 15 – July 2, 1954," September 30, 1954, Inspection Reports, RG 306, NACP.

fifteen minute broadcast showcasing US industry, to a Cuban television station.[52] Other programs that the USIA arranged for Cuban television stations to air early in the decade included news reel strips, the *Firestone* music series, and President Eisenhower's address on atomic power.[53] The 1954 USIA inspection findings of USIS-Havana operations reported that Cuban television stations preferred programs like the *Firestone* series to lengthier programming performed entirely in English, stating such broadcasts could not hold viewer interest.[54]

USIS-Havana's large library of motion pictures contained many of these same friendly and informative messages, which agency staff circulated throughout the island. Popular themes included a series of health-related motion pictures and instructional films for audiences in rural parts of the island. Though much of the Havana post's initial stock of films dated back well before the new agency's existence, with some originating during the 1930s, the subject matter still had local appeal.[55] The 1954 USIS-Havana inspection report recommended sending more films and updating the station's aging collection, especially of sports-themed films like baseball, which inspectors noted Cuban audiences greatly enjoyed.[56]

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[52] Cull, *The Cold War and the United States Information Agency,* 111.

[53] "Inspection Report of USIS Cuba, June 15 – July 2, 1954," September 30, 1954, Inspection Reports, RG 306, NACP.

[54] Ibid. In the follow-up to the 1954 inspection report, the USIA inspection staff noted that the Voice of America would begin recording foreign language tracks for their television programs. "Summary of Actions Taken on USIS Cuba," November 8, 1955, Cuba, June 14, 1958; Nov. 8, 1955; Sept. 30, 1954, Inspection Reports, RG 306, NACP.

[55] "Inspection Report of USIS Cuba, June 15 – July 2, 1954," September 30, 1954, Inspection Reports, RG 306, NACP.

[56] Ibid.

Pamphlets and publications were also mediums for themes other than US Cold War policies. USIS personnel circulated publications containing information on personal health and hygiene, publicized local US Embassy activities in Cuba, and promoted North American culture. In the summer of 1955, staffers combined a series of child-care health pamphlets into one large book, with a Cuban publishing company offering to print 10,000 copies for the public.[57] Staff incorporated US Ambassador to Cuba Arthur Gardner's speech to the US Chamber of Commerce in Cuba on the "role of the modern day businessman" into a pamphlet for local media and social organizations.[58] Station personnel also released a number of short biographies of prominent North American cultural figures, including Mark Twain, Emily Dickinson, Robert Frost, and Carl Sandburg between 1955 and 1956 to offer Cubans examples of North American contributions to the arts.[59]

USIS-Havana information officers also relied on their pamphlet program to promote the current and historical ties between the United States, Cuba, and Latin America in general. Similar to their programming on inter-hemispheric cooperation against communism, field post staff stressed the cooperative, bipartisan nature of the relationship. In the fall of 1953, USIS personnel capitalized on a joint US-Mexico dam building project along the border between the two nations to provide evidence of US cooperation with its southern neighbors. In *Política de Acercamiento* (*Politics of*

[57] "USIA Daily Summary," June 3, 1955, 1/5 - USIA - Daily Summary, May & June, 1955, Daily Summaries, box 2, RG 306, NACP.

[58] *El Nuevo Hombre de Negocios,* May 21, 1954, Habana: New Businessman, Spanish, Field Publications, box 145; Press and Publications, RG 306; NACP; see information card attached to pamphlet.

[59] See USIA Master File of Field Publications in RG 306, NACP for examples of these pamphlets.

Friendship) the authors hailed the project as a "symbol of cooperation and friendship" between the two nations and representative of how the new Eisenhower administration intended to work with Latin American nations to improve local conditions.[60]

When promoting this cooperative relationship, station staff often assigned specific roles to each nation. The United States served as the mentor, or model to emulate, whereas Cuba served the role of student, aspiring to achieve similar success through North American guidance. Station personnel stressed both cooperation and the value of US experience while promoting the Point IV technical assistance program in Cuba. Their 1954 pamphlet *El Punto IV en Cuba (Point IV in Cuba*) explained how both Cuba and the United States benefitted from the ongoing projects on the island. The pamphlet emphasized the program's cooperative nature; declaring it only the most recent in a series of such programs in Latin America since Nelson Rockefeller's efforts decades earlier. Here, staff writers emphasized that both nations shared in the effort, with the US providing the knowledge and technology, and Cuba supplying the materials and local technicians eager to learn new skills. "It is a program which shares the technical knowledge of the United States with the people of developing countries," the pamphlet stressed, "and is, at the same time, a way to learn from them [the US]."[61] Additionally, the pamphlet promoted the program as a way for Cubans to model their own progress after the US example, claiming "For two hundred years, the US attracted professionals

[60] *Política de Acercamiento,* November 18, 1953, Habana: Policy of Friendship, Field Publications, box 145, Press and Publications, RG 306, NACP.

[61] *El Punto IV en Cuba,* July 29, 1954, Habana, Point IV in Cuba, Field Publications, box 145, Press and Publications, RG 306, NACP.

from all over the world to build a developing nation and a continent, and still today are welcoming technicians and scientists."[62]

Staff relied upon similar themes in a later publication addressing foreign economic investment. Their October 1954 pamphlet, *La Inversión Extranjera en al Progresso de EE.UU.* (*Foreign Investment in the Progress of the United States*), again offered a similar message of emulation and cooperation. Likely validating continued US business investments in Cuba, the pamphlet demonstrated how the United States had capitalized on foreign investment to expand its economy and infrastructure since the Colonial era. Advocating the US experience, staff authors clearly inferred to Cubans that they, too, could achieve such benefits by emulating the US example. Writing that despite concerns many in the US held over foreign involvement in the US economy throughout the nation's history, USIS authors concluded that such investment "contributed greatly to hasten the arrival of the day when the United States could produce not only the materials its population needed, but also for its friends and allies of the free world."[63]

Through informational materials on technical assistance programs in Cuba and explanations of how foreign investment spurred the powerful North American economy, USIS personnel worked to persuade their audience that the United States was a partner in Cuban progress, mentor to Cuban development, and a success story that Cubans could emulate. Along with materials promoting US culture and offering improvements in health and education, USIS-Havana staff attempted to strengthen the ties between the

[62] Ibid.

[63] *La Inversión Extranjera en el Progreso de EE.UU*, October 25, 1954, Foreign Investment in the Progress of the US, Spanish, Field Publications, box 145, Press and Publications, RG 306, NACP.

Cuban people and the United States and demonstrate US superiority over the Soviet Union through their informational programming.

USIS staff made a concerted effort to capitalize on a major public relations event on the island during the period to demonstrate the friendly ties between the two nations when Vice-President Richard Nixon visited Cuba as part of his Latin American tour in February 1955. The post worked fervently for the Vice President's arrival to ensure that local media promoted the upcoming visit and covered the occasion. Staff reported spending the days before Nixon's arrival working with local press to slowly build excitement for the visit by releasing photographs and stories on the Vice President daily. The USIS station reported that Nixon's time in Cuba was an unqualified success for their informational programming efforts, with Cuban media making extensive use of USIS materials in all mediums. Post staff estimated that USIS photographs accounted for at least fifty percent of all photographs Cuban newspapers published during that period and noted that they were placing materials in terms "of column feet instead of column inches" in the local press.[64] USIS-Havana declared the Vice President's trip was the most successful by a US dignitary since President Calvin Coolidge in 1928 and had "scored solidly in warming relations between the two countries."[65]

Challenges for USIS-Havana in Cuba

The warm relationship USIS personnel described, however, was not necessarily the reality in Cuba. Though the Batista government remained a steadfast ally in Cold

[64] "USIA Daily Summary," February 28, 1955, 1/9 - USIA - Daily Summary, January & February, 1955, Daily Summaries, box 1, RG 306, NACP.

[65] Ibid.

War and inter-hemispheric objectives, and the Cuban public continued to appear amenable to US culture and political and economic ideology, there remained elements within the local population dissatisfied with the relationship between the two nations. Batista's coup, and President Eisenhower's willingness to work closely with his unpopular administration, only served to aggravate these long-standing fissures in how Cubans perceived their relationship with North America. Like many in the US diplomatic mission to Cuba, USIS personnel on the island recognized these concerns, but failed to adequately address them from the outset. As it did with other nations in Latin America during the period, the Eisenhower administration relied upon US economic, cultural, and political hegemony in Cuba rather than USIA informational programming to ensure continued allegiance with the United States.

Anti-Americanism and the Changing Cuban-US Dynamic

Along with their effort to extinguish the lingering communist embers in Cuba, local USIS personnel also attempted to curb the growing anti-US sentiment on the island. Cuban disdain for US Latin American foreign policy, already strong after Eisenhower had recognized the Batista government in 1952, only intensified among many Cubans after the Guatemalan coup in the summer of 1954. Though the Eisenhower administration covertly assisted anti-Árbenz rebels in their successful attempt to overthrow the Guatemalan leader, many Latin Americans believed that the US influenced the events of that summer in Central America. Along with diplomatic posts throughout the region, the US Embassy in Havana noted increased anti-US rhetoric in the coup's aftermath, reporting pro-Guatemalan protests and numerous acts of minor vandalism

against US government or North American interests on the island.[66] As was typically the case, Embassy officials blamed communist elements in Cuba for the increased anti-US sentiment.[67]

USIS-Havana employees were not immune to anti-US protests. This was particularly true in the volatile Oriente Province in southeastern Cuba, which USIA staff characterized as a "hotbed of communist activities."[68] The limited USIS presence in the area featured only a Cuban Cultural Affairs Assistant, projectionist, and mobile film unit vehicle all stationed in Santiago de Cuba to carry out informational programming.[69] USIS staff operating in the Oriente reported a series of relatively minor protests to their ongoing activities. In one instance, a mobile film unit crew found an anti-US sign atop their vehicle reading "Foreigners Get Out of Cuba." US authorities also accused local communists of detonating a small bomb outside of a Santiago de Cuba school building as personnel screened motion pictures for 350 students inside. US Consulate officials in Santiago de Cuba attributed these acts to the field office's increased programming activities in the Province at the time.[70]

Such acts were not the only indication of Cuban restlessness with the relationship between the two nations. Reporting on an article in the popular Cuban magazine

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[66] Amembassy Havana, "Joint Weeka no. 25," June 23, 1954. DOSCDF, 737.00(w)/6-2354, RG 59, NACP, *Cuba, 1950-1954*, mf, Reel 5.

[67] Ibid.

[68] "Briefing Notes-Latin American Branch," December 30, 1955, Briefing Notes, Program Files, box 1, IRI/LA, RG 306, NACP.

[69] "Inspection Report of USIS Cuba, June 15 – July 2, 1954," September 30, 1954, RG 306, NACP.

[70] "Briefing Notes-Latin American Branch," December 30, 1955. Briefing Notes, Program Files, box 1, IRI/LA, RG 306, NACP.

Bohemia in late 1955 criticizing the motion picture *Guys and Dolls* for its portrayal of Cuba, US Embassy observers in Havana noted increasingly negative Cuban reaction to North American characterizations of Cuban culture. "Cuba is becoming increasingly sensitive to portrayals of Habana as a hotbed of vice," commented Embassy staff, "and recent articles in US publications characterizing Habana as a lascivious city of sin have aroused considerable anti-US comment in the local press."[71] The Warner Brothers production *Santiago* engendered similar hostility on the island months later, as local media and commentators criticized the film, set during the Cuban Revolution, for its historical inaccuracies for almost a month before it actually appeared in Cuban theaters.[72] Only a week before the *Santiago* uproar began, a North American game show *The $64,000 Question* drew the ire of the *Diario de La Marina* editors over one of the questions asked during the game. The US Embassy reported that the Cuban newspaper sharply criticized the popular program for crediting US doctor Walter Reed for discovering the Cure to Yellow Fever in one of its questions, rather than Cuban doctor Carlos Finlay.[73]

Reporting on such flare ups, both the US Embassy and USIS-Havana personnel recognized the increased sensitivity to US North American portrayals of Cuba, but were

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[71] USIA Latin American Branch, "Briefing Notes," "US film Portrayal of Cuba Infuriates Cuban Magazine," November 4, 1955, Briefing Notes, Program Files, box 1, IRI/LA, RG 306, NACP.

[72] Amembassy Havana, "Joint Weeka No. 33," August 15, 1956. DOSCDF, 737.00(w)/8-1556, RG 59, NACP, *Cuba, 1955-1959*, mf, Reel 7; Amembassy Havana, "Joint Weeka No. 37," September 12, 1956. DOSCDF, 737.00(w)/p-1256, RG 59, NACP, *Cuba, 1955-1959, Internal*, mf, Reel 7. Louis A. Pérez examines the increasing resentment among Cubans of the US portrayal of the nation as corrupt and immoral, stating that Cubans knew "these were not conditions of their making. The Cuba that North Americans condemned was of their [US] creation…." Pérez, *On becoming Cuban*, 469-473.

[73] Amembassy, "Joint Weeka, no. 32," August 8, 1956. DOSCDF, 737.00/8-856, RG 59, NACP, *Cuba, 1955-1959, Internal*, mf, Reel 7.

slow to account for these changes in their informational planning. From their perspective, local uproar over US depictions of Cuba, and the US-Cuban relationship, was the result of leftist intellectuals, extremists, and communists who did not represent true local sentiment. Just before the USIA assumed control of the US information program in August, then-US Ambassador to Cuba Richard T. Gardner took exception with a US State Department report critical of Cuban-US relations. Responding to the report through the Embassy's First Secretary Earl T. Crain, the Ambassador considered State Department analysts too critical in claiming many Cubans resented the US presence. Instead, the Ambassador countered that long-held local criticisms over sensitive issues such as the 1903 Platt Amendment, which he attributed to "excessive national pride," were dying out on the island except among communist circles.[74] Echoing the US Ambassador's sentiment, USIS personnel continued operating under their assumptions that the Cuban public overwhelmingly retained a positive attitude for their northern neighbor, receptive to messages that expressed friendship, cooperation, and mutual security against communist encroachment.

Though US observers in Cuba remained convinced that the ties between the Cuban people and the United States remained strong, incidents such as these demonstrated that Cubans were actually reevaluating their relationship with their northern neighbor. As scholar Louis A. Pérez argues, "Social formations, political structures, economic systems, cultural forms, and, in the end, the very character of the state in Cuba

[74] Earl T. Crain to John L. Topping, April 20, 1953. FSU_DOS_1_1950-1954_Foreign_R39. DOSCDF, 611.37/4-2353, RG 59, NACP, *Cuba, 1950-1953*, mf, Reel 39.

were affected decisively by the North American presence."[75] For years, Cubans linked themselves with the US market and patterned their local environment to resemble that of their northern neighbor. So many on the island embraced US political, economic, and cultural ideals as they endeavored to attain similar economic and social status, and also to gain equal standing in their relationship with the United States.

By the mid 1950s, Cubans had little to show for their efforts to embrace US ideas, living as they did under dictatorial rule, failing to achieve the levels of economic success as their northern counterparts, and unable to alter Cuba's negative image among North Americans. For many Cubans processing the current developments on the island, their examination meant, in part, that they questioned US methods that they had previously accepted and reconsidered their relationship with their North American neighbor.[76] USIS-Havana programming depended greatly on these shared values and messages of cooperation and equality, but decades of cultural exchange between the US and Cuba reached their breaking point during the same period even as USIS-Havana staff attempted to promote the United States on the island. Anticommunist messaging and themes promoting US friendship and cooperation that USIS-Havana personnel emphasized had little influence, as many in their audience began reconsidering their relationship with North America in this period.

[75] Louis A. Pérez, *Cuba and the United States: Ties of Singular Intimacy* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2003), xvii-xviii.

[76] Pérez, *On becoming Cuban,* 465; 469-477.

CHAPTER THREE

Nonintervention and Myopia: USIS-Havana during the Cuban Insurgency, 1957-1958

> "USIS [Cuba] made solid contribution toward advancing and protecting the considerable U.S. interest in Cuba. Short of intervening, we worked closely with other elements of the Embassy in encouraging trends toward a peaceful solution to Cuba's political problems so that a stable, democratic government might emerge, free from Communist penetration."
>
> – *Annual USIS Assessment Report*, October 1, 1957-September 30, 1958; October 29, 1958

Despite the United States government's increasing unpopularity in Cuba during the Cuban Revolution's insurgency which Cuban president Fulgencia Batista's opponents launched in December of 1956, United States Information Service staff (USIS) in Havana did not immediately alter their objectives during the period. Instead, the field post continued distributing messages corresponding with the United States Information Agency's (USIA) public diplomacy efforts to promote the Eisenhower administration's Latin American foreign policies to audiences throughout the region. Though sensitive to shifting Cuban public opinion to the US government's continued support of Batista, US foreign policy officials remained more concerned with maintaining the status quo on the island and ensconcing Cuba within the Latin American Cold War consensus.

Only in the summer of 1958 did the USIA staff in Havana finally reevaluate their objectives to better incorporate the ongoing Cuban crisis in their message strategies. The changes local information personnel made to their programming themes and priorities

reflected their understanding of the damaging repercussions US support for Batista had caused the US image among the Cuban public and also served as a response to the Eisenhower administration's slowly changing Latin American foreign policy strategy. However, events in Cuba after the summer of 1958 unfolded so rapidly that field post staff had little time to implement their new Country Plan before the political landscape, and popular Cuban public opinion with it, radically departed from the status quo between the two nations.

Though anti-US sentiment festered during the insurgency, Cuban dissatisfaction with the Eisenhower administration's continued relationship with Batista did little to jeopardize the USIS information staffers' close connections with local media ownership and employees. Cuban newspapers still carried USIS photographs and press releases, radio and television stations continued to broadcast USIS-provided materials, and Cuban audiences attended USIS film screenings and other cultural events as before, though often in fewer numbers. While the fighting in the Oriente Province, the central battleground of the insurgency, disrupted USIS programs there, field office and US Embassy staff provided little indication that they believed the US was in any real danger of losing Cuban hearts and minds to either any minute communist elements or anti-US sentiment on the island at the end of 1958.

The Cuban Revolution, December 1956 – Summer 1958

Fidel Castro and his 26th of July Movement followers began their insurgency against the Batista administration with a disastrous first step. The initial eighty two fighters narrowly escaped annihilation off the southeastern coast of Cuba near Nicaro

soon after coming ashore on December 2, 1956. The Cuban military, alerted to Castro's landing, pursued the insurgents, with only a handful successfully finding safety in the Sierra Maestra Mountains. These few survivors served as the nucleus of a two year guerrilla campaign to topple Batista.[1]

In the ensuing months, the insurgency grew, especially in the Sierra Maestras and the surrounding Oriente Province. Soon the Batista administration became locked in a guerilla campaign in the region, while revolutionary groups in other areas around the island engaged in their own subversive acts to undermine and remove the Cuban leader from power. In response, Batista unleashed the full power of his position to destroy the insurgency and to silence his critics. These measures included military action against the rebels in the southeastern tip of the island, oppressive police measures against revolutionaries in Havana and other cities and towns, suspension of Cuban civil liberties, and censorship of the Cuban media. Batista's heavy-handed response to Castro's forces in the Sierra Maestras and to other groups critical of his administration fostered blossoming public support for the rebels.[2]

The US Response to the Cuban Situation

[1] For a detailed account of the M-26-7 landing and first days on the island, see Hugh Thomas, *Cuba, or, The Pursuit of Freedom* (New York: Da Capo Press, 1998), 893-900.

[2] Works on the 1956-1959 Cuban insurgency include: Hugh Thomas, *Cuba, or, The Pursuit of Freedom*; Ramón L. Bonachea and Marta San Martin, *The Cuban Insurrection* (New Brunswick: Transaction Books, 1974); Gladys Marel García, *Insurrection & Revolution: Armed Struggle in Cuba, 1952-1959* (Boulder: L. Reinner Publishers, 1998); Luis Martínez-Fernández, *Revolutionary Cuba: A History* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2014); and Julia E. Sweig, *Inside the Cuban Revolution: Fidel Castro and the Urban Underground* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2004).

President Eisenhower and his national security advisors paid very little attention to the Cuban revolution in its first year. During this period, much of the actual fighting remained confined to the Oriente Province on the southeastern tip of the narrow island, hundreds of miles from Havana. The localized fighting did not upset the diplomatic status quo between the two nations: the Cuban government continued to support US Cold War foreign policies regionally and internationally and US strategic and economic interests remained stable on the island.[3] In such an environment, there was little cause for the US to take action that Cubans or other Latin Americans might consider "interventionist." Moreover, events elsewhere in the world preoccupied Eisenhower and his national security strategists, particularly in the Middle East, Asia, and Europe. For the time being, Cuban troubles remained in the domain of the US Department of State's Latin American specialists.

One of the few measures the Eisenhower administration did take during this period was to replace the US Ambassador to Cuba in the summer of 1957. Earl E.T. Smith replaced Arthur Gardner as the US emissary to Cuba in the summer of 1957, after US State Department officials determined that the current ambassador allied himself too closely with Batista. Arriving to his post in July, Smith's instructions as the new Ambassador were to protect US assets and ensure the Cuban government's continued

[3] Thomas G. Paterson, *Contesting Castro: The United States and the Triumph of the Cuban Revolution* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994), 92; see also Morris H. Morley, *Imperial State and Revolution: The United States and Cuba, 1952-1985* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), *56-71*. For other analyses of the United States and the Cuban Revolution, see Richard E. Welsh, Jr., *Response to Revolution: The United States and the Cuban Revolution, 1959-1961* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1985); Jules R. Benjamin, *The United States and the Origins of the Cuban Revolution: An Empire of Liberty in an Age of National Liberation* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990); and Lars Schultz, *That Infernal Little Cuban Republic: The United States and the Cuban Revolution* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2009).

support for US Cold War policies, and, most importantly, "alter the prevailing notion in Cuba that the American Ambassador was intervening on behalf of the government of Cuba to perpetuate the Batista dictatorship."[4] The US State Department did little else to directly interfere with the Cuban insurgency through the year, preferring to continue supporting the Batista government. With Batista's promised elections in Cuba due to take place in the summer of 1958, US diplomatic officials banked upon a strong, moderate political candidate to arise on the island that they could support in lieu of either Batista or Castro.[5]

USIS-Havana Planning, 1957 – Summer 1958

Throughout 1957, US Embassy officials made efforts to retain Cuban government and public support for US foreign policies in line with the US Department of State's updated Latin American goals, which the National Security Council (NSC) developed for the region in September 1956. Formalizing their strategy as NSC 5613/1, the updated guidance did little more than reinforce existing US policies in the region, serving only as a response to growing Soviet efforts to create closer diplomatic, economic, and cultural ties among Latin American nations.[6] In Washington, DC, US foreign policy strategists considered the Soviet initiative to be a sinister attempt to, as the authors of NSC 5613/1

[4] Quoted in Stephen G. Rabe, *Eisenhower and Latin America: The Foreign Policy of Anticommunism* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1988), 120-121. For a summary of Smith's initial appointment as Cuban Ambassador, see Thomas Paterson, *Contesting Castro*, 90-93.

[5] Paterson, *Contesting Castro*, 112.

[6] Stephen G. Rabe, *Eisenhower and Latin America: The Foreign Policy of Anticommunism*, 89-92.

stated, "disrupt our friendly relations with Latin America, to subvert the countries in the area, and to destroy the inter-American system."[7]

US foreign policy planners intended to blunt the Soviet diplomatic offensive in Latin America through a series of their own objectives designed to bolster US-Latin American relations. US officials developed six objectives: retain Latin American friendship, promote stable governments "along democratic lines," encourage economic growth based upon "free enterprise," stymie Soviet influence and communist penetration, ensure open access to essential materials needed for national security, and strengthen Latin American support for potential hemispheric security actions.[8] These, of course, were not new Latin American strategies, but the current situation signaled to US foreign policymakers that they needed to strengthen their efforts to gain Latin American acceptance of these messages to maintain US-led hemispheric solidarity and regional stability.

The USIA worked in conjunction with the US State Department and other US agencies to support these foreign policy objectives through informational programming to Latin American audiences. During their summer budget appropriations hearings before a congressional committee, USIA Assistant Director for Latin America, Frank Oram, outlined the agency's concerns for the region despite the relative stability of the area. Addressing the question of why both the Eisenhower administration and the USIA should make an effort to improve the US relationship with Latin American nations in light of the

[7] For the text of NSC 5613/1, see "Statement of Policy on US Policy Toward Latin America," September 25, 1956, *FRUS*, 1955-1957, VI, American Republics: Multilateral; Mexico; Caribbean, doc. 16.

[8] "Outline Plan of Operations for Latin America Prepared for the Operations Coordinating Board," April 18, 1957, *FRUS*, 1955-1957, VI, American Republics: Multilateral; Mexico; Caribbean, doc. 18.

greater challenges elsewhere in the world, Oram cited several continuing issues where a stronger informational message could be beneficial.

In his opening remarks, Oram noted that as the Eisenhower administration carried out its renewed foreign policy in the area, the great concerns in Latin America going forward were poor public perception of the US role in the region and the outside appeal of other options for Latin Americans to achieve their goals. Continued US hegemony complicated hemispheric security and economic development issues, the Assistant Director cautioned, stressing Latin Americans' "sense of inferiority and at times a sense of fear" over US influence, adding, "We must be conscious and aware of our impact upon them."[9] Latin Americans critical of US power and impatient with US policies, Oram stated, fed local nationalistic sentiment and opened the door for communist overtures to the region, thus threatening the US position in the region.

To temper Latin American perceptions of US influence in the region and to prevent communist appeals from finding a receptive audience, Oram and his associates proposed a series of message themes aligned with the National Security Council's regional policy. Reflecting the Eisenhower administration's revised policy for the region, which called for greater attention to Latin American issues, these themes generally resembled those from earlier USIA strategies to promote US policies in the area. Oram told members of a congressional subcommittee in the spring 1957 that his regional bureau planned to stress that mutual cooperation and interdependence among Latin

[9] *House Appropriations Committee Hearings, Eighty-Fifth Congress, First Session, 1958* (Hemisphere Security), (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1957), 272, Hathitrust, https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=mdp.39015022382629;view=1up;seq=759 (accessed January 25, 2016).

American nations was the way to "best achieve the national aspirations of each partner and insure hemisphere security."[10] Agency messages would expose communism as a threat to Latin Americans' demands for social and economic advancement, in contrast to the free market's power to fulfill those aspirations. Finally USIA staff would promote the benefits of US leadership in Latin America as beneficial "toward the common goals of greater economic strength and improved political stability."[11]

Despite such concerns and revisions in Washington, USIA programming in Cuba at the time did little to reflect the agency's updated strategies. With the insurgency taking place in a remote section of the Oriente Province, little changed for USIS-Havana staff in 1957 and through much of 1958. Though the USIA reduced the number of US field office personnel on the island from four to three between those years, Embassy officials considered USIS-Havana to be adequately budgeted and staffed to carry out informational operations in support of US policies and regional objectives.[12] USIS field office staff in Cuba continued to adhere to the broader USIA messaging for Latin American audiences as they disseminated their programming.

USIS-Havana staff had completed a new Country Plan outlining their objectives and programming projects in the latter half of 1956 and remained committed to their ongoing objective during the first year of the insurgency. As it had before the conflict began, USIS-Havana programming placed priority on continuing its anticommunist

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[10] *House Appropriations Committee Hearings, Eighty-Fifth Congress, First Session, 1958* (Hemisphere Security), 272.

[11] Ibid.

[12] Amembassy, Habana to The Department of State, Washington, DC, "Progress Report on OCB 'Outline Plan for Latin America,'" February 19, 1958, DOSCDF, 611.37/2-1958, RG 59, NACP, *Cuba, 1955-1959*, mf, Reel 25.

message, promoting capitalism, regional security, US cooperation in Latin America, and stressing US superiority in the scientific and cultural fields. Throughout 1957, USIS staff offered Cuban audiences programming resembling that which they had disseminated since the USIA assumed control of overseas informational programming in 1953.

Access to Cuban Media

Despite the insurgency, USIS-Havana information and cultural officers retained open access to Cuba media through 1957 and 1958. Radio and television broadcasts remained popular on the island, the latter of which Cubans found increasingly appealing. Likewise, newspaper companies continued publishing and theaters still screened films for moviegoers. These businesses remained receptive to using USIS materials despite Batista's regularly censoring the Cuban media to prevent editorial criticism of the ruler's counterrevolutionary tactics. Because of the ongoing fighting in the Oriente Province, field station staff ceased operating in the area during the period, but remained active elsewhere. Bombing attacks, sabotage, and government restrictions on freedom of assembly also curbed field post operations. Still, with the bulk of the conflict taking place so far away from the field office's Havana location, a Cuban government ever-anxious to associate itself with the US government, and Cuban media requiring programming, USIS-Havana staff continued to enjoy a beneficial relationship with their local media sources.

Newspapers

The field post continued to successfully place materials in Cuban newspapers. Field office staff did not encounter the rigorous government censorship that silenced the

local press, as USIS messaging did not address the internal Cuban situation. Indeed, USIS-Havana's products often unintentionally supported Batista's efforts to retain power by linking his administration with the United States government and its anticommunist policies.

While the Cuban government's press restrictions rarely applied to USIS articles or editorials, however, Batista's measures did limit the audience for such materials. Field post staff reported that newspaper distribution on the island had declined by thirty to forty percent due to censorship, thus limiting their ability to reach Cuban audiences.[13] Still, the field post reported that a positive side-effect of the censorship was that Cuban newspapers had increased their use of USIS-supplied material to fill their pages. Staff distributed their commentaries, photographs and news articles to fifty daily newspapers in Cuba at the time, including seventeen in Havana alone.[14]

Radio

USIS-Havana staff reported continued success in airing its messaging on Cuban radio stations throughout the island during the insurgency, placing their programming on fifty six Cuban radio stations.[15] In addition to providing broadcasters with USIA-supplied content, field post staff distributed a daily news bulletin to all Cuban stations

[13] Amembassy Habana to The Department of State, Washington, "Revision of Operations Plan for Latin America," October 22, 1958. DOSCDF, 611.37/10-2258, RG 59, *Cuba, 1955-1959*, mf, Reel 25.

[14] Ibid; "Inspection Report, USIS Cuba, June 14, 1958," Cuba, June 14, 1958; Nov. 8, 1955; Sept. 30, 1954, Inspection Staff, Inspection Reports and Related Records, 1954-1962, Inspection Reports, box 2, RG 306, NACP.

[15] "Inspection Report, USIS Cuba, June 14, 1958," June 24, 1958, Inspection Reports, RG 306, NACP.

and continued to mature its own in-house recording efforts to augment their offerings.[16] Station staff in Cuba now produced four weekly radio programs for Cuban audiences from a small recording studio in the US Embassy. These programs were a mixture of news, music, commentary, and informational segments on US society.

USIA inspectors described the field station's *Panorama Norteamericano* (*Panorama USA*) as a "chatty feature on life in the United States."[17] The Cuban Ministry of Broadcasting aired the fifteen minute show over its own radio station twice per week. USIS personnel created two additional thirty minute programs with the intent that they air back-to-back as a one-hour block of radio programming each Sunday night on Radio Minuto Nacional. *Revista Musical de la Semana* (*Musical Review of the Week)* aired first at 8:00 PM. The show presented "features on life in the United States" set to music.[18] The second program, *Panorama Mundial* (*World Panorama*) started at 8:30, immediately after *Panorama Norteamericano*. Also incorporating North American music, this second segment provided news and editorial commentary on international events.[19] The post's final local offering for Cuban radio stations was *Su Musica Favorita* (*Your Favorite Music*). Staff intended for this thirty-minute musical program to accompany the USIA productions the station distributed to local radio broadcasters. USIS personnel considered this segment to be "The door-opener" for the USIA's "harder materials."[20]

[16] Ibid.

[17] Ibid.

[18] Ibid.

[19] Ibid.

[20] Ibid.

Unlike the other programs the office produced for specific radio stations, multiple copies of *Su Musica Favorita* circulated among local radio stations throughout Cuba.[21]

Possessing intimate knowledge of Cuban listening habits and local radio station programming preferences, USIS staff criticized two elements of the content their parent agency supplied to the field post. Cuba-based personnel believed that the USIA needed to change the type of pre-packaged broadcasts the agency sent to the island. Instead of segments that emphasized interviews, such as the program *Crónica de Washington* (*Washington Chronicle*), which the field office reported had lost much of its popularity, USIS staffers recommended instead that future recordings include "More features, music and remote broadcasts."[22] Also noting that Cuban radio stations were on par with US broadcasting standards, the local office suggested that USIA staff in Washington, DC, ensure that their broadcasts did not run long. The USIA-Havana report indicated that "stations complain…when our programs run overtime."[23] These local-level observations indicate the importance of USIS station in guiding larger USIA goals and programs on a country-by-country basis.

Television

Television remained a growing industry in Cuba into 1957 and 1958, with ever-increasing numbers of Cubans purchasing television sets and new television stations appearing on the island. USIS staff continued to rely on the popular medium as part of

[21] Ibid.

[22] Ibid.

[23] Ibid.

their messaging strategy. Opening in spring 1957, *CMEF-TV* raised the number of major networks on the island to three, with three additional local stations in Havana.[24] US Embassy officials noted that the new station planned heavy usage of films in its broadcasting, including those from the USIS station's collection.[25]

USIS Havana had neither the facilities nor budget to create television programming locally, relying instead on the materials the USIA studios produced in-house or those that the agency acquired from private studios to distribute abroad.[26] Desiring their own series for Cuba, the Havana field office and USIA television section planned to collaborate with a commercial sponsor outside the agency who could help create "high quality" programs the island beginning in 1958.[27] With regular, quality television broadcasts prepared for Cuban audiences and formatted for Cuba television networks, the USIA and USIS staff believed that they could harness the growing medium's popularity on the island and reach out to the over one million Cubans who watched television. As with much of the field station's future projects, the sudden change in Batista's political fortunes in the final months of 1958 froze such initiatives.

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[24] Ibid. Havana contained the largest percentage of television sets on the island. With USIS staff estimating 300,000 black and white sets in Cuba, the station reported that Havana residents owned forty five percent of those televisions.

[25] Foreign Service Despatch, "Joint Weeka," April 3, 1957. DOSCDF, 73.7.00(w)/4-357, RG 59, NACP, *Cuba, 1955-1959*, mf, Reel 7.

[26] Examples of television productions that the USIA delivered to USIS-Havana during the mid-1950s included Telenews Productions' *News in Review* and the National Broadcasting Company's *Report from America.* See *Senate Appropriations Committee Hearings, Eighty-Fifth Congress, First Session on HR 6871, 1958* (Fiscal Year 1957 Television Expenditure), (Washington: USGPO, 1957), 941-942, HathiTrust, https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=uc1.b3636708;view=1up;seq=949 (accessed February 25, 2016).

[27] "Inspection Report of USIS Cuba, June 14, 1958," June 24, 1958, Inspection Reports, RG 306, NACP.

Motion Pictures

Film also remained a popular method of engaging with local Cuban audiences, even though the insurgent fighting and government civil restrictions often limited Cuban participation. In response to dwindling audiences and the inability to screen movies as easily as before the fighting, USIS personnel concentrated on showing films to "important target groups" as opportunities presented themselves.[28] The post had thirty three film projectors at its disposal, screening films in Havana, Santa Clara, Camaguey, and Santiago. The station also continued to contract with private interests to show films in Sagua La Grande and Pinar del Río. Additionally, USIS-Havana stationed mobile film units in the capital and in the more distant cities of Santiago, Camagüey, Santa Clara, and Pinar del Río to take their films to Cubans in remote areas of the island.[29]

With a library of 676 films in stock by 1958, the station had an ample selection from which to choose to play for their Cuban audiences and they reported screening over 1,500 showings per month before the conflict between the Cuban government and opposition forces escalated.[30] The popular medium could not escape the revolution's influence, however, as the violence hindered both commercial theater operations and USIS-Havana's own motion picture activity on the island. Cuban military and guerrilla activity limited the post's ability to show films and audience participation throughout the nation. By the summer of 1958, the post reported that they were screening only

[28] Ibid.

[29] Ibid.

[30] Ibid.

approximately 200 films per month.[31] Whether this was the result of threats of violence, government restrictions, or negative public opinion of the United States is unclear, but all likely played a role in the USIS staff's declining film audience.

Pamphlets and Publications

The station continued to engage in a very active pamphlet program, with USIS information personnel able to print publications in-house "more closely tailored to meet its needs" in Cuba.[32] These products remained quite versatile during the insurgency period, serving as publications that could interest individual readers and also as source materials for Cuban radio and television reports, and newspaper and magazine articles that could reach thousands. Outside the scope of Batista's censorship policies, station information officers could pen works directly for Cuban audiences to accurately promote US goals and explain policies without unintentionally endorsing the embattled Cuban leader's government.

Changes after Summer 1958

As the calendar turned from 1957 to 1958, US Embassy staff reported "satisfactory progress" in Cuba in respect to all six of the regional foreign policy objectives that the staff first proposed in the summer of 1956, summarizing that "Cuba continues to support the United States in the latter's world policies and to maintain close

[31] Ibid.

[32] Ibid.

ties of friendship with the United States."[33] Such sentiment did not endure, as both the Embassy and USIS-Havana staff delivered different assessments only months later. With the insurgency on the upswing by mid-1958, and with Batista's increasingly oppressive measures to remain in control of the government, the local field office revised its messaging objectives to better align with the Cuban situation. By fall, though Embassy reports continued to echo earlier reassurances that US interests remained secure in Cuba and that the Batista government supported US Cold War foreign policy, local personnel warned of the damage the internal situation continued to cause to the US image among the Cuban public.

US State Department officials, meanwhile, after months of balancing their posture of restrained support for Batista and public stance of non-intervention in Cuban affairs, revised their Cuban policy to reflect the growing criticisms in the United States over Batista's actions and the US position in Cuba. Spurred in part by North American press coverage of Castro's guerillas and Batista's heavy-handed violent response to threats against his government, US public opinion and congressional criticism of the US association with such a dictator flowed in the United States among the citizenry and within the US Congress. Aware of the discontent, the State Department's Latin American section searched for ways to disassociate the US government from Batista without simultaneously undermining the cooperative Cuban government. Such measures

[33] Amembassy, Habana to The Department of State, Washington, DC, "Progress Report on OCB 'Outline Plan for Latin America,'" February 19, 1958. DOSCDF, 611.37/2-1958, RG 59, NACP, *Cuba, 1955-1959*.

began in the spring of 1958 when the United States government suspended arms shipments to the Cuban government.[34]

While Batista's fortunes soured, regional issues prompted the Eisenhower administration to devote attention back to its Latin American neighbors and reassess US strategy in the area. The resulting changes to US foreign policy in Latin America stemmed not directly from the awkward relationship between the United States and the Batista regime, but more from the events of the summer of 1958 during Vice-President Richard Nixon's tour of Latin America. During a number of his stops throughout the region, Nixon encountered angry mobs of students and youth protesting US interference within Latin American nations. The protests turned life-threatening for the Vice President in Venezuela, when a mob attacked his motorcade. The affair shattered the Eisenhower administration's assumptions of regional stability and demonstrated the animosity and anger swelling among Latin Americans over the political and socio-economic issues in the region. The disastrous trip prompted US foreign policy officials to reconsider the US position in Latin America and Eisenhower's national security advisors called for a reexamination of the administration's Latin American objectives and strategy.[35]

Staff in the US Information Agency's Latin American section (IAL) had already considered the Latin American issues internally well before Nixon's ill-fated adventure. Noting increasing unease in Latin America, USIA Assistant Director for Latin America

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[34] Thomas G. Paterson, *Contesting Castro,* 130-135. Paterson discusses US public opinion on the Eisenhower administration's relationship with Batista and attempts to distance the administration from the Cuban government in *Contesting Castro,* particularly in chapters ten and eleven.
[35] Rabe, *Eisenhower and Latin America,* 100-102. Rabe offers a narrative of Nixon's encounter in Latin America and the subsequent changes in US foreign policy in chapter six of his work.

Frank Oram observed that the agency's ongoing effort in the region required revision in favor of strategies with "more imagination and scope."[36] For Oram and his team, this did not necessarily mean abandoning the major themes or specific issues USIA strategists planned for Latin America, only that they should revise their proposals to improve the agency's future activities.

USIS-Havana staff also prepared new objectives for the unsettled political and public opinion climate in Cuba beginning in the summer of 1958. This included a comprehensive restructuring of the field office's Country Plan, its guiding document for its programming objectives and messaging, which local personnel submitted to the USIA home office that fall for official approval. The new plan reflected USIS-Havana's attempts to promote US regional objectives while conforming to local attitudes and conditions. Similarly, the field post's revised objectives also corresponded to varying degrees with the USIA Latin American section's proposals for retooling regional programming from earlier in the spring.

The Country Plan reveals that although USIS-Havana staff recognized that ongoing US linkages with Batista harmed the US image in Cuba, concerns over appearing to intervene in an internal matter prevented USIS programming from directly addressing the issue. Instead, field office staff continued to disseminate messaging related to broader objectives, all but ignoring the insurgency and skirting the US role in the turmoil on the island. Still, though USIS-Havana personnel may have refrained from

[36] Frank Oram Memorandum, "Policy Problems in Latin America and Program Possibilities" March 18, 1958. Latin American Area Contributions; Action Copies – July thru December 1956 [Despatches - OM's and Telegrams [Folder 2/2] THRU Action Copies [Despatches – OM's –Telegrams] January – June 1957, Program Files, box 2, IRI/LA, RG 306, NACP.

directly commenting on events in Cuba, the insurgency did force them to alter their programming to align their information activities with the extant Cuban situation. It is important to note, however, that USIS-Havana staff retained the same objectives for well over a year and a half as the fighting and government oppression continued and Cuban public opinion grew ever more resentful of Batista's relationship with the United States.

USIS-Havana Objectives, 1957 – 1958

Anticommunist messaging, the US Information Agency's cornerstone objective in Latin America, and staple of USIS-Havana programming, remained the priority in Cuba for much of the insurgency period. USIS-Havana personnel prioritized keeping the Cuban public attuned to the communist threat internationally and dispelling any "toleration of communists in positions of influence in government, education, and communications" locally as their utmost goal during much of the conflict.[37] Yet amid almost two years of violence in Cuba, this longstanding message developed into contentious subject matter among Cuban audiences. By the summer of 1958, field office staff reported that while the Cuban government remained firmly committed to keeping the ideology from gaining a foothold on the island, USIS personnel encountered difficulty promoting the message among the Cuban people. Batista's attempts to link revolutionary members, anti-government demonstrations, and press criticisms of government actions with the specter of communism damaged the USIS message's credibility with Cuban audiences.

[37] Foreign Service Despatch, USIS Habana to USIA Washington, "Annual USIS Assessment Report, October 1, 1957-September 30, 1958," October 29, 1958, Correspondence (Multi-Country), Program Files, box 2, IRI/LA, RG 306, NACP.

Additionally, beyond poisoning the well for USIS anticommunist programming on the island, Batista's plummeting prestige also limited USIS staff from effectively publicizing the political support that the Cuban government provided to the United States against the Soviet Union and other communist nations in international forums, such as the United Nations. The Cuban leader, field office staff reported, used these instances at every opportunity in the Cuban press as "evidence of [US] support for the present regime."[38] By employing the communist label against his critics on the island for his own benefit, the Cuban leader managed to both neutralize the main USIS objective and to taint any messages offering evidence of US-Cuban cooperation against communism as examples of US-Cuban friendship.

Hungarian Uprising 1956

The Hungarian uprising against the nation's ruling communist government augmented USIA anticommunist programming in 1957. The events that took place in the Eastern European country in October and November 1956 proved to be ample fodder for US efforts at highlighting communism's dangers well into the new year.[39] The brutal way in which the Soviet military ultimately crushed the revolt in the Eastern European country possessed the dramatic message and imagery that captured public attention and provided the USIA with a number of themes that the agency could incorporate into its

[38] USIS Habana to USIA Washington, "Annual USIS Assessment Report, October 1, 1957-September 30, 1958," October 29, 1958, Program Files, RG 306, NACP.

[39] For a summary of how USIA planners incorporated the Hungarian Revolt into their anticommunist messaging throughout Latin America, see Report Prepared by the National Security Council, "NSC 5720, Status of United States Programs for National Security as of June 30, 1957, Part 6 – The USIA Program," September 11, 1957, *FRUS*, 1955-1957, IX, Foreign Economic Policy, Foreign Information Program, doc. 17.

anticommunist programming.

USIS-Havana staff used the Hungarian uprising to full effect in its anticommunist programming. Information officers published a series of pamphlets based upon dramatic accounts of the conflict, where the oppressed Hungarians bravely resisted the communist government and Soviet military to achieve their freedom. This included a June 1957 pamphlet, which USIS staff compiled from cartoon strips the USIA distributed to its field posts. Entitled *La Tragedia de Hungria* (*The Hungarian Tragedy*), the pamphlet's cover featured a black and white sketch of a weary-looking Hungarian man sitting on his luggage, hunched over with his hat in one hand while his other completely covers his face. Behind him, as if ghosts or memories, was a collage of penciled drawings depicting images of tired, abused Hungarians with armed Soviet soldiers standing over them. Barbed wire, chains, the Soviet flag, and the Kremlin's spire topped with the Soviet star in the distance reinforced the communist brutality against the Hungarian people.

Inside the publication, black and white illustrated panels featured action-packed scenes of a cross-section of Hungarian men, women, and children fighting communist soldiers. Summaries accompanied each panel, some opening with a single word, such as "Lucha," "Heroísmo," or "Libertad" to frame the scene in the illustrations for the audience. The text that followed championed the "heroic action of the freedom fighters" who had participated in the Hungarian revolt with stories vividly detailing their encounters with oppressive communist rule and brutal Soviet response to the uprising.[40]

Acting in their capacity within Cuban newspapers to provide support to important

[40] *La Tragedia de Hungria*, June 10, 1957, Master File Copy of Field Publications (hereafter cited as Field Publications), box 145, Press and Publications, RG 306, NACP. Quote taken from attached note card.

events and keep issues in front of audiences after the more prominent news services moved to other topics, USIS-Havana continued to remind viewers of the Hungarian uprising. *Diario de la Marina* featured USIA photographs and articles on the revolt. Among these was a full page of materials attributed to the USIS field office, which the newspaper published in its January 13 Sunday edition. The layout, headlined "Nuevo Aspectos de la Rebelión Húngara" ("New Aspects of the Hungarian Revolt"), consisted of five photographs of Hungarian revolutionaries with captions accompanying each photograph.[41]

These materials characterize USIS-Havana's anticommunist informational activities in support of US Cold War foreign policy leading up to the station's release of its new country plan in 1958. Local station personnel emphasized the dangers of international communism to the Cuban public, using dramatic, individual, heroic stories of the uprising and incorporating illustrations emphasizing violence, heroism, selflessness, and nationalism. In these accounts, the outnumbered Hungarian people fought valiantly against an oppressive, overpowering Soviet military machine. Many Cubans may have found such messaging ironic given the events taking place in their own country.

By the spring of 1958, staffers in the USIA's Latin American division in Washington, DC, busied themselves with reassessing anticommunist programming in the region. Assistant Director Oram's report to agency executives concluded that while messages stressing communism's dangers remained important, the themes need not

[41] *Diario de la Marina*, "Nuevos Aspectos de la Rebelíon Húngara," January 13, 1957, retrieved from the Digital Library of the Caribbean (hereafter cited as DLOC), http://dloc.com/UF00001565/00322/87j (accessed February 25, 2016).

always be broad-based negative attacks against the ideology. Oram recommended the USIA approach the subject with more focused and subtle messaging, targeting specific Latin American audiences, such as intellectuals, students, and military members. Doing so, he wrote, would "mean the saving of a good deal of effort which currently goes into the pursuit of psychologically unattainable objectives through over-general programming."[42]

In response to the changing Cuban situation, instead of warning Cubans to remain vigilant against the international communist threat, USIS-Havana altered their message and reprioritized the objective. Going forward, USIS staff intended to emphasize how the continued communist presence within Cuba impeded local progress with a plan to "Educate and assist Cuba to reduce and eventually eliminate communist influence in the country."[43] The new anticommunist objective in the summer of 1958 stemmed from both Batista's attempts to use communism as a scare tactic to justify his actions, his tendency to allow "tame" communists in Cuba to continue working without interference, and the insurgent groups' acceptance of assistance from communist sympathizers. Both the government and the opposition, USIS staff stated, could easily rid themselves of communist influence if they were so inclined, but neither demonstrated any urgency to divest themselves fully of such a politically useful tool.[44]

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[42] Frank Oram Memorandum, "Policy Problems in Latin America and Program Possibilities" March 18, 1958. Latin American Area Contributions, Program Files, box 2, IRI/LA, RG 306, NACP.

[43] USIS Habana to USIA Washington, "Annual USIS Assessment Report, October 1, 1957-September 30, 1958." October 29, 1958, Program Files, RG 306, NACP.

[44] Ibid.

Echoing Oram's proposals, USIS staff selected a more intimate and personal approach to disseminating their new anticommunist approach with their Cuban audience. This included sponsoring lectures that allowed Cuban intellectuals and opinion makers to engage with visiting speakers and creating unattributable press materials demonstrating the potential dangers to Cuba of communist influence.[45] Staff coordinated with the USIA to host a lecture tour through the island of anticommunist authors Vladimir and Emma Woytinsky. USIS personnel arranged for local Cuban papers to report on their lectures and for audiences of prominent Cuban intellectuals, organizational leaders, and government officials to meet with the couple. "Cubans were honored," a station report summarized, "to be able to come into contact with such authorities."[46] The popular Cuban magazine *Bohemia* and newspaper *Diario de la Marina* also continued to incorporate USIS articles in an unattributed fashion, post personnel reported. Field station personnel noted that the former publication included a series of USIA-provided excerpts of Milovan Djilas' anticommunist book *The New Class*, while also successfully placing a series of anticommunist articles addressing Soviet penetration in Latin America on the front pages of the latter.[47]

Despite their alarm of continuing communist activity in Cuba, USIS staff shifted anticommunist messaging from its traditional perch as the station's primary objective on the island in the summer of 1958. With the Batista government undermining the field post in this area and much of the Cuban public supporting any effort, including the local

[45] Ibid.

[46] Ibid.

[47] Ibid.

Communist Party, to unseat the unpopular leader, the USIS message could not resonate as strongly as in the past in Cuba. Station personnel also had more pressing objectives to promote to their audience by this time. In their new outlook, field office planners moved anticommunist messaging from the long-held first place perch to the fifth of their six revised objectives.

US foreign policy messaging on the island catapulted to first place on the Havana office's Country Plan as the information post's most pressing concern by the summer of 1958. Promoting US foreign policy to audiences abroad was, of course, part of the USIA's overall mission, but it gained new importance during the insurgency period for much the same reason as USIS staff deemphasized their anticommunist messaging: Batista's ongoing policies. Before the summer of 1958, USIS-Havana staff garnered local understanding of US actions by focusing on two major foreign policy issues they believed particularly relevant to Cuban audiences: "our position on non-intervention in Latin America, and encourage[ing] Cuban confidence in the OAS [Organization for American States]...for guaranteeing hemispheric solidarity."[48]

As with their anticommunist messaging, information officers in Cuba encountered difficulty promoting US foreign policy amid Batista's actions. Batista's control over the island's media outlets, staff argued, had allowed him to manipulate any US-Cuban political engagement as the United States' formal approval of the Batista government and his policies. The Cuban leader did not allow Cuban media to disseminate any reports that ran counter to the United States' full support of his presidency.[49] Such activity

[48] Ibid.

[49] Ibid.

concerned USIS personnel as the field post regularly used US-Cuban cooperation in international politics to promote Cold War policies. However, such partnerships provided plenty of ready-made ammunition for revolutionary forces to incorporate in their own propaganda as evidence of US "support of 'the Dictatorship.'"[50] From the Cuban public's perspective, one evidenced by reading or listening to government-censored press and the revolutionary movement's own propaganda, it was apparent that the US both approved of and supported an unpopular, oppressive Batista.

USIS-Havana personnel attempted to counter local perceptions of US support for the Cuban leader, while still promoting US foreign policy by clarifying the Eisenhower administration's position on Batista and the Cuban situation through unorthodox methods. Since Batista's censorship restrictions prevented local press from reporting that the United States government had ceased shipping military supplies to the Cuban government in the spring of 1958, field office staff bypassed the traditional outlets and resorted to initiating a "word of mouth" campaign to explain the US position to the Cuban public.[51] Additionally, with Cuban-owned news outlets unable to accurately report events on the island, USIS station noted that "the Cuban public turned to US radio and press reports on local developments."[52] Adjusting to the situation, USIS personnel provided information to US-based commercial news services for them to relay to Cuban audiences along with their regular programming. Though perhaps marginal in their effectiveness, these unconventional methods demonstrated that USIS staff were indeed

[50] Ibid.

[51] Ibid.

[52] Ibid.

aware of their inability to project a positive message to their audience and searched for means to counter the limits to their programming on the island.

Batista's ability to link his administration with the United States through Cuban cooperation with US foreign policy forced USIS information officers to revise their themes in the station's activities promoting the objective. Since Cuban audiences could no longer separate US foreign policies from their disgust with Batista, nor from US efforts to meddle in their nation's internal matters, field post personnel proposed a new goal: "To convince Cubans that alignment with the United States policies in the Western Hemisphere and on international issues is in their interests."[53] This was now USIS-Havana's primary objective in Cuba.

Promoting US Achievements and Regional Partnerships

Changes in Cuban public opinion and the Eisenhower administration's alterations to its US goals for Latin America influenced USIS-Havana's other information objectives by the summer of 1958, as well. Field office staff continued to disseminate messages promoting the value of the US economic system, the spirit of US cooperation in the region, and US cultural achievements. Similar to its anticommunist messaging, these themes reflected the USIA's regional emphasis to promote economic-related messaging in support of revised US Latin American foreign policy, as the Eisenhower administration reconsidered its approach to Latin America.[54]

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[53] Ibid.

[54] For analysis of Eisenhower's economic policy between 1955 and 1958, see Rabe, *Eisenhower and Latin America*, 92-96. US economic policy in the region began to change in the summer of 1958 and became official policy with NSC 5902/1 in January 1959. See Rabe, 109-113.

The Point IV technical assistance program on the island remained a popular example of beneficial US assistance and cooperation that USIS-Havana staff could promote to Cuban audiences. Field office staff reported that their color documentary film on the program, which they produced on the island, was very popular, noting "Requests for the film from schools and private organizations as well as motion picture houses and television stations have attested to the value of this effort."[55] Station information officers also created an illustrated booklet on the program, entitled *Punto IV en Cuba* (*Point IV in Cuba*), in April 1957. The local office described the pamphlet as a publication featuring "[eleven] lively cartoons which explain graphically the background and present status of Point IV projects in Cuba."[56]

These simple cartoons depicted two men, a North American and a Cuban, engaging in various activities related to the program's technical, economic, and agricultural focus. The pamphlet's illustrations presented the two figures in stark visual contrast with each other, perhaps representing the authors' preconceived notions of the US-Cuban relationship. The US character dresses in a modern shirt and tie, carrying with him a briefcase and slide-rule. His Cuban companion, meanwhile, wears the traditional Cuban guayabera shirt and guajiro hat, with the five-pointed star of the Cuban flag adorning the hat.

The illustrations reinforced the teacher-student relationship between the two figures, as each scene depicted the two men either working in collaboration, or showing

[55] USIS Habana to USIA Washington, "Annual USIS Assessment Report, October 1, 1957-September 30, 1958," October 29, 1958, Program Files, RG 306, NACP.

[56] *Punto IV en Cuba.* April 10, 1957. Habana, Punto 4 En Cuba, Spanish, Field Publications, box 145, Press and Publications, RG 306, NACP.

the American character supervising his Cuban colleague as he performs the activity. In one scene, demonstrating the program as a way to build better relationships between labor and management, the authors went so far as to adorn the American character with an angelic halo over his head as the smiling Cuban character shakes hands with a third member, the worker's besuited Cuban employer. The final page depicts the American technical expert and his Cuban colleague, linked together with their arms over the other's shoulder, literally admiring the fruit of their efforts: gazing upon a large tree, teeming with heart-shaped fruit.

Assessing the US Information Agency's objectives in Latin America in the spring of 1958, Assistant Director Oram concluded that the agency's actions promoting US economic values throughout the region remained at a high standard, but that the USIA should continue to find new themes to incorporate their economic messaging. Among his suggestions to improve the already well-developed message, Oram noted that the USIA could do more to highlight how US companies contributed to Latin American development and their role in creating better conditions for Latin American workers. "We should not talk exclusively in terms of dollars," Oram argued, "but rather in terms of numbers of jobs, houses built, new industries created, pensions paid, etc."[57]

USIS-Havana's revised country plan reflected Oram's proposals to USIA senior officials, but the staff in Cuba primarily developed their messaging strategy pertaining to the subject to fit their needs, locally. Field station staff noted that any efforts to merely promote the beneficial aspects of US companies would be useless on the island, as Cuban

[57] Frank Oram Memorandum, "Policy Problems in Latin America and Program Possibilities" March 18, 1958, Program Files, RG 306, NACP.

audiences were fully aware of the numerous North American business investments on the island and their influence on local economic development. Instead, station personnel envisioned themselves in a supporting role for US economic interests. Going forward, staff decided that rather than simply promoting the US economic model and economic assistance, they would develop messaging highlighting specific North American-owned business investment projects in Cuba and emphasize the benefits of "Continuing and expanding Cuban-U.S. economic cooperation."[58] Demonstrating their activities in support of their new objective, USIS staff noted their assistance to the US-owned Moa Bay Mining Company on the island to create and promote the company's scholarship program for Cuban students.[59] Though only acting in a complementary capacity as in this example, USIS staff still considered economic messaging an important task for the field office, keeping it as the second objective under the new country plan.

Losing importance in the office's 1958 reassessment was another of USIS-Havana's longstanding objectives: promoting US scientific and technological superiority. USIS-Havana staff reported resounding success in promoting such scientific and technological objectives between 1957 and 1958, labeling it a "quiet, but effective program."[60] Though scientific and technological achievements were essentially another method of demonstrating US superiority over their Soviet counterparts, the subject matter proved less volatile, allowing local USIS personnel to easily disseminate products related to the objective.

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[58] USIS Habana to USIA Washington, "Annual USIS Assessment Report, October 1, 1957-September 30, 1958," October 29, 1958, Program Files, RG 306, NACP.

[59] Ibid.

[60] Ibid.

Information officers in Cuba advocated US leadership in working for the peaceful applications of atomic power and attempted to stimulate Cuban interest in the field in the station's early efforts to tout US science and technological fields. The field office screened films on atomic power's peaceful applications, showing them throughout the island. Additionally, USIS staff provided the Cuban government with an exhibit promoting atomic energy and regularly distributed informational materials to the Cuban press on the subject.[61]

The USIA's Latin American section strategists in Washington, DC, commended local field offices in the region for their coverage of US technological achievements. Assistant Director Oram considered promoting such advances, along with the US's open access to advances and willingness to share in the discoveries as part of a complete propaganda message, writing colorfully that "The scientific meat, thus inserted into a political sandwich of democracy and international cooperation, becomes a tasty dish."[62] Oram also noted that the USIA could take better advantage of the Latin American interest and the goodwill these themes fostered for the United States not by merely releasing factual information on the technological achievements themselves, but by explaining to audiences the larger significance of such scientific and technological advances. "Repetition [of reporting US scientific achievement] without a purpose gets lost in the shuffle of day-to-day news" Oram contended.[63]

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[61] Foreign Service Despatch, Amembassy, Habana to The Department of State, Washington, DC, "Progress Report on OCB 'Outline Plan for Latin America,'" February 19, 1958. DOSCDF, 611.37/2-1958, RG 59, NACP, *Cuba, 1955-1959.*

[62] Frank Oram Memorandum, "Policy Problems in Latin America and Program Possibilities," March 18, 1958, Program Files, RG 306, 1958.

[63] Ibid.

By 1958, USIS-Havana field station staff expanded their subject matter to embrace more than just atomic energy promotion. With the "Space Race" between the United States and the Soviet Union underway, advances in the technological and scientific fields became an even more effective platform for demonstrating US superiority over communism and America's beneficial offerings to the world. USIS staff wrote that their new objective was to "Convince Cubans that US and allied strength, through scientific and technological advances, is the best assurance of world peace and merits Cuban support."[64] As with the previous technology-related message, USIS staff worded their new text in a manner suggesting that Cubans could not only benefit from US advances, but also participate in the process. Ranking fourth in 1956, this updated technologically-themed objective now fell to the sixth, and final, place on their new Country Plan.

That September, USIS staff provided articles on atomic energy to Cuban newspapers that coincided with local coverage of the two week "Atoms for Peace" Conference in Geneva to accomplish their updated objective. *Diario de la Marina,* for instance, devoted a full page of USIS-supplied photographs with captions depicting the achievements that the US conference delegation presented in Geneva.[65] Earlier that same year, in its coverage of the successful US launch of the *Vanguard 1* satellite, *Diario* editors included USIS press releases that complemented larger commercial wire service articles on the event. USIS contributions included information on when *Vanguard* would

[64] USIS Habana to USIA Washington, "Annual USIS Assessment Report, October 1, 1957-September 30, 1958," October 29, 1958, Program Files, RG 306, NACP.

[65] *Diario de la Marina*, September 4, 1958. "Celebran en Ginebra la II Conferencia Internacional de Átomos para la Paz," DLOC, http://dloc.com/UF00001565/00829/42j (accessed March 3, 2016).

pass over Cuba, a brief account of the US minitrack station in San Antonio de Baño, Cuba, part of a chain of stations world-wide monitoring the satellite's orbit, and provided information on the satellite's technological features.[66] Staff also promoted the *USS Nautilus*, the world's first nuclear-powered submarine, and its cruise under the Arctic in the summer of 1958 to full effect. USIS-produced articles on the event appeared in the Cuban newspaper *El Mundo*, and the station arranged for the film *The Nautilus Crosses under the North Pole*, to air on a local Cuban television station and for a seven day run in Havana's *Rex* Cinema.[67]

Promoting US achievements in the cultural field and explaining how North American society encouraged cultural activities and thought also remained an important objective for the USIS station in Cuba during the insurgency's final half year, though their prominence waned as newer messaging objectives gained importance. USIS Havana planners combined the older 1956 Country Plan's final two cultural and social objectives into a single message as they updated their policy guidance. The new objective to "Cultivate in Cuba respect for U.S. cultural, sociological, and intellectual activities" replaced staff's separate efforts to promote African-American progress in United States and to showcase US culture and intellectual activities.[68]

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[66] *Diario de la Marina*, March 18, 1958. "Gira en torno a la Tierra el Satellite Número 2 de los EU," DLOC, http://dloc.com/UF00001565/00685/12 (accessed March 3, 2016).

[67] Foreign Service Despatch, AmEmbassy, Havana to Department of State, Washington, "Revision of Operations Plan for Latin America," October 22, 1958. DOSCDF, 611.37/10-2258, RG 59, NACP, *Cuba, 1955-1959*, mf, Reel 25.

[68] USIS Habana to USIA Washington, "Annual USIS Assessment Report, October 1, 1957-September 30, 1958," October 29, 1958, Program Files, RG 306, 1958.

The Havana station's revision echoed the US Information Agency's Latin American section calls for an expanded cultural programming for the region, particularly among students and intellectual figures who criticized the United States. Assistant Director Oram contended to USIA leadership that cultural messaging was "unusually fruitful...because the typical Latin American leader respects culture and wants to be regarded as a cultivated human being."[69] Oram's rather coarse analysis on Latin American cultural sensibilities continued in his opinion of the proposed target audience: "cultural snobbery plays a prominent role in the group makeup. It is in our interest to turn this snobbery towards US cultural achievement."[70]

USIS-Havana engaged in a variety of cultural activities in 1958. Information Service personnel donated 472 books and presented a lecture on US literature during the February opening of the new Cuban National Library, and promoted North American art exhibition openings throughout Havana.[71] USIS officers were particularly proud of Cuban reception of a pair of booklets that the station's long-employed Cultural Affairs Officer, Francis Donahue, had recently written for local consumption. Donahue's short biography on author Washington Irving, who had spent a number of years living in Spain, received particular acclaim within the pages of *Diario de la Marina*. Writing a column in the newspaper, a Cuban literary critic praised the cultural officer not only for providing the short biography of the American author, but also for Donahue's reputation in bridging

[69] Frank Oram Memorandum, "Policy Problems in Latin America and Program Possibilities" March 18, 1958, Program Files, RG 306, NACP.

[70] Ibid.

[71] USIS Habana to USIA Washington, "Annual USIS Assessment Report, October 1, 1957-September 30, 1958," October 29, 1958, Program Files, RG 306, NACP.

Latin and North American culture. Calling Donahue a "great worker for cultural and intellectual rapprochement between the American English-speaking and Spanish speaking world," the critic commended the USIS cultural officer for his attempt to present readers with a biography of an American writer who, the critic noted, had as great a love for "Hispanic culture" as Donahue.[72] The critic went on to write that Donahue's work demonstrated that "American sensibility is capable of absorbing the Hispanic lifestyle and penetrate their thinking."[73]

Newspapers also continued to use USIS materials promoting culture and education in the United States. *Diario de la Marina,* for example, devoted space in January to a USIA picture story showing Kindergartners in Kansas performing science experiments in school, and published a another set of photographs highlighting the Freer Museum of Art in Washington, DC, and US schoolchildren learning geography.[74] Though photographs occupied the bulk of both articles, the images and accompanying text provided *Diario* readers with snippets of the broad cultural offerings and advanced educational opportunities available in the United States. Such materials, seemingly without ideological content, but which still carried propaganda value for the USIS field office. Specifically, these articles illuminated American life for Cuban audiences, even if only superficially, through unthreatening messaging.

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[72] *Diario de la Marina*, "Una Bella Exégesis de Francis Donahue Sobre el Poeta Irving," August 3, 1958, DLOC, http://dloc.com/UF00001565/00802/67 (accessed March 3, 2016).

[73] Ibid.

[74] *Diario de la Marina*, "En Busca de Aptitudes Cientificas Desde el Kindergarten," March 29, 1958, DLOC, http://dloc.com/UF00001565/00695/44j (accessed March 3, 2016); *Diario de la Marina*, "El Museo de Arte el Oriental Freer," and "Aprendiendo Geográfico Jugando," September 27, 1958, DLOC, http://dloc.com/UF00001565/00849/48 (accessed March 3, 2016).

The cultural field remained excellent ground in which to espouse other US virtues, as well. In their pamphlet, *En torno a la Cultura Norteamericana* (*Concerning American Culture*), USIS staff championed America's economic and educational system as beneficial catalysts that allowed all Americans to enjoy and appreciate the vast cultural offerings available in the United States. The pamphlet included information on North American contributions to literature, theater, music, ballet, and art. USIS-Havana authors argued that the short work week and ample leisure time in the US, coupled with easily accessible cultural educational opportunities, not only promoted artistic endeavors, but also offered all North Americans opportunities to view and appreciate such works. USIS staff touted the ability of television technology in the United States to expand such appreciation through educational broadcasts that turned homes into classrooms for cultural instruction.[75]

USIS-Havana staff also continued to promote educational and vocational exchanges to Cuban audiences as a way for Cubans to learn from the United States, appreciate its cultural offerings, and build greater bonds between the two nations. Though the two years of fighting curbed informational programming, this program remained popular, with thirty nine Cuban teachers, students, and professional participants traveling to the United States between 1958 and 1959.[76] Field office staff developed a publication *Puente de Comprensión* (*Bridge of Understanding*) in November 1958,

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[75] *En torno a la Cultura Norteamericana*, January 15, 1957. Habana, En Torno a la Cultura Norteamericana (Concerns American Culture), Spanish, Field Publications, box 144, Press and Publications, RG 306, NACP.

[76] *House Appropriation Committee Hearings, Eighty-Seventh Congress, First Session, 1962* (Exchange Program with Cuba, 1951-1961), (Washington: USGPO, 1961), 1301. Retrieved from HathiTrust, http://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=mdp.39015022382975;view=1up;seq=1311 (accessed February 25, 2016).

presenting an overview of the exchange program between the two nations and providing a summary of the program's history. The work noted the program's benefits to the nation's professional fields, which allowed Cuban participants "an opportunity to expand their knowledge in their fields of expertise."[77] Appropriate to the booklet's title, the twenty page document underscored the bonds that the educational exchange programs created between North Americans and Cubans. Living, working, and learning within the host nation, USIS authors wrote, exposed participants to the country's people and culture, fostered a fuller understanding of the host nation, and spurred cooperation "between the two brotherly countries."[78]

While USIS-Havana staff merely reframed many of their Country Plan's updated objectives, field post personnel did offer a completely new objective for their messaging strategy; one which directly addressed the ongoing politically divisive issues on the island and the violent disruption of Cuban society. Placing the new objective third in their updated planning, station personnel planned to "Enlist broad popular support and a sense of individual responsibility for the development of a stable, representative government in Cuba, but without intervening in internal political affairs."[79] Station information officers assigned this message as their third new objective, labeling it an important task to spur Cubans to "advance beyond the cycle of revolutionary outbreaks and dictatorial rule…beneficial to Cuban as well as US interests."[80]

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[77] *Puente de Comprensión*, November 3, 1958. Habana, 11-3-58, Bridge of Understanding (Puente de Comprension), Spanish, Field Publications, box 144, Press and Publications, RG 306, NACP.

[78] *Puente de Comprensión*, November 3, 1958, Field Publications, RG 306, NACP.

[79] USIS Habana to USIA Washington, "Annual USIS Assessment Report, October 1, 1957-September 30, 1958," October 29, 1958, Program Files, RG 306, 1958.

[80] Ibid.

As with their US foreign policy promotion objective, USIS staff considered the non-interventionist aspect of their new goal to be particularly important, especially in light of past US measures to ensure political stability on the island, coupled with the current mood of much of the Cuban population. Unfortunately, USIS staff also believed that the need to maintain such a stance hampered any active efforts to promote political stability, as their audience could interpret any overt US programming as the Eisenhower administration's attempt to dictate local politics. Instead, USIS personnel stated that the most effective measure the US could take to foster such belief among the Cuban people was that of "quietly setting examples and providing encouragement to those advancing along the road to the goal [of achieving a stable, representative Cuban government]."[81]

Cautious in applying their new objective within Cuba's contentious political climate at the time, promoting democratic values was not a new concept for USIS-Havana's messaging. Only a year earlier, USIS staff released a pamphlet for the Cuban public that featured quotes from famous historical figures on democratic ideals. The station's information officers created *Pensamientos Sobre La Democracia Puesta en Acción* (*Thoughts on Democracy in Action*), to impress upon their Cuban audience that democracy served as both "a political form of government and as a pattern for everyday human relations."[82] USIS writers included quotes from eighteen popular historical figures, such as Abraham Lincoln, Aristotle, and Alexis de Tocqueville, in the publication. The quotations also included famous Latin Americans Simón Bolívar and

[81] Ibid.

[82] *Pensamientos Sobre La Democracia Puesta en Acción*, September 17, 1957. Habana, Thoughts on Democracy in Action (Pensamientos sobre la Democracia Puesta en Accion), 1957, Spanish, Field Publications, box 144, Press and Publications, RG 306, NACP.

José de San Martín, and, notably, Cuban hero José Martí. Whether the field station staff deliberately placed these popular men in the pamphlet is unknown. However, given their concerns over portraying the United States as a hegemonic influence on the island, it seems reasonable that they would promote their objectives through popular Latin Americans that Cuban audiences would find more relatable and amenable to considering.

USIS staff created the pamphlet several months before submitting their revised country plan to USIA officials in Washington, DC, but the publication contained elements of their new political objective. In their work, the authors stated that democratic values were learned traits that developed through practice and implementation. "In time," USIS staff explained, "[democratic attitudes] develop into habits which, when practiced and strengthened...ultimately come to constitute a way of life."[83] Such a statement corresponded with USIS-Havana's updated efforts for Cubans to continue following democratic ideals, even amid a turbulent period, without an outside actor forcing such practices upon the island nation.

Save for their new message promoting political stability, how much the Cuban Revolution, or at least the issues underscoring the revolt, directly influenced the field office to alter its objectives is unclear. Though USIS-Havana staff explained in their 1958 Annual Report containing the revised objectives that the turmoil on the island "indicated" the need for a new country plan, it was not necessarily in response to the issues fomenting revolutionary activity.[84] Certainly, field office staff recognized that the

[83] *Pensamientos Sobre La Democracia Puesta en Acción*, September 17, 1958, Field Publications, RG 306, NACP.

[84] USIS Habana to USIA Washington, "Annual USIS Assessment Report, October 1, 1957-September 30, 1958," October 29, 1958, Program Files, RG 306, NACP.

ongoing situation limited their mobility and ability to present audiences with programming, but staff did not alter their objectives until well over a year after the revolution began. USIS-Havana personnel focused instead on how the unsettled situation clouded US messaging, particularly in the most important objectives of anticommunism and impressing upon Cubans the importance of supporting US foreign policy. Station personnel may have altered programming themes and reprioritized objectives, but the overall message remained the same for Cubans in 1958 as it had in prior years: reject Communism, embrace the US economic influence on the island, stay solidly supportive of US foreign policies, and marvel at US scientific and technological capability.

As in years past, the Oriente remained a hotbed of anti-US rhetoric. Two years of fighting had, in fact, only served to increase such hostility. Park Wollam, the local US Consular residing in Santiago de Cuba, wrote to the Embassy and the US State Department that the origin of Cuban discontent with the US in the Oriente stemmed from two issues: local perception that the US supported the Batista government in its actions in the province and US inability to disseminate its own messages to counter that opinion. Batista's censorship decrees compounded the problem, as the US version of events, particularly articles from US news wire services that criticized the Cuban leader, did not reach the local audience. Meanwhile, the Cuban government took every opportunity to publicize the links between the two nations. Audiences in Santiago de Cuba, indeed Cubans throughout the island, only received the government-approved viewpoint through the majority of Cuban media; a narrative that linked the Eisenhower administration with

Batista's repressive policies. Communist propaganda in the region, Wollam observed, only served to exacerbate the situation.[85]

Naturally, this would have been an opportune time for USIA messaging to fill the gap and promote the United States in the Oriente, and offset the damage that Batista's association with the US government continued to cause. Yet USIS-Havana staff did little to augment their activities in the volatile area. Violence prevented mobile field units from making their tours through rural areas and field station programming fared little better in cities and towns. Havana staff reported that its reading room in the city of Santiago operated at only fifty percent efficiency by the summer of 1958, with less Cuban student attendance and participation in the room's English language programs, library use, and film screenings.[86] In Camagüey, a city just to the west of the Oriente Province, staff closed their reading center and donated the books to the local lyceum due to poor attendance and as part of the post's effort to reduce staff.[87]

Both USIA and local staff agreed they needed to establish a more robust presence in the Oriente Province, including a bi-national center like that in Havana, which would expose local residents to US culture and provide the field office with a facility to disseminate their messages. Station staff also proposed opening a student center near the volatile university in Santiago de Cuba as part of an effort to increase their messaging among Cuban students, though they could not proceed with such plans until the

[85] Letter from the Consul at Santiago de Cuba (Wollam) to the Officer in Charge of Cuban Affairs (Leonhardy), August 25, 1958, *FRUS*, 1958-1960, VI, Cuba, doc. 126.

[86] USIS Habana to USIA Washington, "Annual USIS Assessment Report, October 1, 1957-September 30, 1958," October 29, 1958, Program Files, RG 306, NACP.

[87] Ibid.

"restoration of normal political conditions."[88] Clearly, both the agency and the USIS station expected to reestablish ties with Cubans and redouble their programming efforts, but only after the conflict subsided.

Demonstrating the relatively isolated nature of the insurgency until the end of the conflict, field office officials noted that Havana's Cultural Institute, in contrast, continued operating well. Hundreds of miles removed from the fighting at the southeastern tip of the island nation, the Cultural Institute in the country's capital city actually enjoyed its highest enrollment level in the spring of 1958, with 5,171 students attending to learn English and, in the process as USIS-staff reported, "receive a sound orientation toward the US."[89] USIS personnel now also directly participated with the Cuban-American Cultural Institute in Havana. Working with the privately owned organization, USIS personnel were in the process of transforming the facility into a fully functioning bi-national center.[90]

Such plans and objectives that USIS field office staff conceived in the summer and fall of 1958 never fully developed before the Cuban Revolution ended decisively and unexpectedly only slightly over two months after USIS-Havana officials submitted their

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[88] Foreign Service Despatch, Amembassy Habana to The Department of State, Washington, "Revision of Operations Plan for Latin America," October 22, 1958, DOSCDF, 611.37/10-2258, RG 59, NACP, *Cuba, 1955-1959,* MF, Reel 25; "Report on Status of Recommendations Contained in Inspection Report on USIS Cuba," October 29, 1958, Cuba, June 14, 1958; Nov. 8, 1955; Sept. 30, 1954, Inspection Reports, box 2, Inspection Staff, RG 306, NACP.

[89] "Report on the Status of Recommendations Contained in Inspection Report on USIS Cuba," October 29, 1958, Inspection Reports, RG 306, NACP.

[90] "Inspection Report, USIS Cuba," June 14, 1958, June 24, 1958, Inspection Reports, RG 306, NACP; A 1957 US embassy report on Cuban operations noted that the US Information Service post had only partial authority over the popular Cultural Institute, providing limited funding to the facility. See Foreign Service Despatch, Amembassy, Habana to The Department of State, Washington, DC, "Progress Report on OCB 'Outline Plan for Latin America,'" February 19, 1958. DOSCDF, 611.37/2-1958, RG 59, NACP, *Cuba, 1955-1959.*

revised Country Plan in October. Batista's political position quickly deteriorated in the second half of 1958, as the Cuban government's failed summer military offensive to route Castro and his guerillas from the Sierra Maestras and pacify the Oriente Province signaled the end of his presidency. By the end of the year, with revolutionaries marching towards Havana, Fulgencio Batista fled the Caribbean island on New Year's Eve, leaving Castro and his allies victorious and the Cuban government open for new leadership.

Conclusion

During the insurgency period of the Cuban Revolution, the United States Information Service in Havana continued promoting larger USIA-planned themes for the Latin American region on the island and adhered to the United States government's official policy of non-interference by avoiding messages that Cubans could potentially deem as taking sides in the conflict. These strategies, coupled with both the physical limitations the conflict placed on its programming activities and the manner in which both belligerent parties linked the United States with the Batista government, limited the station's effectiveness at public diplomacy.

Placing such little importance on programming that specifically targeted Cuban concerns and the station staffs' inability to distance US policy from the Batista regime proved costly for the field post. Batista's control over the Cuban media and the latent anti-US sentiment on the island that surfaced alongside Cuban nationalism as the fighting intensified influenced Cuban public perception of the US as an impediment, instead of partner, to Cuban political, economic, and social change. Only in 1958, as Batista's tactics to destroy the insurgency exposed Cubans to greater violence, seemingly with US allowance, if not outright assistance, did the USIS office make plans to counter negative

local public opinion linking Batista's actions with the United States. However, the relative speed in which Batista fell from power, thereby ushering in a new Cuban government, forced USIS-Havana staff to once again reconsider their objectives and methods.

CHAPTER FOUR

Losing the Audience: USIS-Havana in the New Cuba, 1959

> "The UPI, AP, USIS and other agencies of yankee imperialist propaganda invent every conceivable lie against the revolution. Exploit any fact to denigrate the revolution. Distort events to present a false picture of the Cuban situation. And Marina and other newspapers publish this counterrevolutionary propaganda, magnified and embellished with shameless headings. That, according to them, is 'freedom of the press.'"
>
> – *Noticias De Hoy,* August 28, 1959

Batista's flight from Cuba into exile ended two years of intense guerilla warfare, terrorism, and destruction on the island**.** It also represented the end to seven years of an oppressióve political system that had crippled the democratic, constitutional political system many Cubans had fought decades to develop. Instead of the anger, disappointment, and embarrassment that had gripped so many during Batista's time in office, Cubans found a political hero in Fidel Castro, a popular, electrifying public speaker who offered hope for the country to regain its status among its Latin American neighbors. Castro also offered the promise for Cubans to form a distinctly Cuban social, economic, and political system independent of external interference.

Batista's exit and the new revolutionary leadership's ascendency to power ushered in a surge of changes on the island. The fighting between the insurgents and military forces may have ended in January, but the Cuban Revolution quickly transitioned to a new phase; one which promised political, social, and economic reform.

In the process, these reforms also altered ties similar to the reforms on the island between Cuba and the United States. From the Cuban perspective, these were changes both long in the making and necessary to ensure the success of the revolution.[1] For their northern neighbor, these changes minimized US influence in Cuba, threatened to disrupt North American business interests, and endangered both the regional status quo and Cold War standoff between the US and the Soviet Union.

Batista's fall and the events of the first year also dramatically redefined how the Cuban public approached their nation's relationship with the United States**,** both politically and culturally. Though Cubans had long bristled at US hegemony, there was no denying the North American influence on Cuban politics and society. In the post-insurgency environment, however, as new Cuban leadership championed a revised political relationship with the US, Cubans also swept aside US influences on the island in favor of their own.[2] This included rejecting traditional US narratives of North American goodwill and cooperation between the two nations; narratives which served as the basis for so many of the Havana-based United States Information Service (USIS) informational programming assumptions. As the year progressed, field office staff, like so many other US Cuban analysts, only slowly recognized that Cubans fully rejected these narratives. Nor did they accept the traditional United States Information Agency's (USIA) messages

[1] Some, such as Ramón Eduardo Ruiz and contend that the 1959 victory was the culmination of a revolution begun in 1878 against continued intervention by outside actors. The resulting decades of struggle, first against Spanish rule, then against US hegemony, resulted in a fragmented Cuban society and political-socio-economic systems that were not of Cuban design. See Ramón Eduardo Ruiz, *The Making of the Cuban Revolution* (Amherst: The University of Massachusetts Press, 1968).

[2] Louis A. Pérez, *On Becoming Cuban: Identity, Nationality, and Culture* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1999). Pérez discusses this post-insurgency change in detail in chapter seven of his work, particularly 477-495.

for Latin Americans promoting anticommunism, inter-hemispheric solidarity, or US economic values.

The Eisenhower administration responded to Castro's victory and subsequent control over Cuban politics by quickly recognizing the new Cuban government on January 6. In the following months, predicting that moderate Cuban parties and economic ties would loosen the new regime and its more radical segments' grip on power, the United States government officials took a "watch and wait" approach to political events in Cuba. From the onset, though dubious of new power on the island, US officials hesitated to antagonize the new Cuban leadership or provide any additional opportunities for the revolutionary government to accuse the US of interference in Cuban affairs. Additionally, Washington officials did not want to appear as though they objected to Cuban demands for change.[3]

As the year progressed, US Department of State and US Embassy officials in Havana advocated patience despite Castro's both frequent and fervent anti-US rhetoric, confident that Cuba's ties to the United States would extinguish such sentiment in time. Their optimism gave way to more pessimistic appraisals by the summer of 1959. The revolutionary government's reform measures, ongoing hostility to the US government, and Embassy reports from Cuba of greater communist influence within the government prompted Eisenhower's national security staff to develop a new Cuban policy in the

[3] For a detailed account of the "watch and wait" period see, Schoultz's chapter devoted to 1959 in Lars Schoultz, *That Infernal Little Cuban Republic: The United States and the Cuban Revolution* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2009), 82-108; Other authors have also commented on this early US posture. See Cole Blasier, "The Elimination of United States Influence," in Carmelo Mesa-Lago, ed. *Revolutionary Change in Cuba* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1971), 63-64; and Philip Bonsal, *Cuba, Castro and the United States* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1971), 28-31.

second half of the year; one that would strangle the Revolutionary government without antagonizing the island's population.

Eisenhower's advisors surmised that, among other strategies, fostering a Cuban public opinion climate favorable to US policies was an ideal tactic to limit the revolutionary government's leftward political drift. This was particularly vital after US diplomatic officials concluded, later in the year, that traditional diplomatic efforts would not suffice in keeping the island nation aligned with US foreign policy goals in Latin America. With the USIA, through its USIS-Havana office, leading the public diplomacy effort to the Cuban people, officials in the State Department and the US Embassy envisioned an informational program in Cuba that supported the population's demands for reform, while also reminding the Cuban public of the longstanding friendship between the two nations and of the dangers communism posed to their society. Such a policy corresponded to the United States' traditional reliance on long-held North American notions of Cuban goodwill towards the United States to maintain their status quo relationship.

Though Cuba was in turmoil, more pressing Cold War-related concerns elsewhere in the world occupied upper-level US foreign policy makers during the year. They had initially considered the Caribbean nation a low priority for policy planning. This did not mean that Eisenhower's national security staff neglected Latin American regional policy completely; indeed, the National Security Council (NSC) had deliberated on such policies since Vice President Nixon's unpleasant Latin American tour from the previous summer. By February 1959, the administration released updated strategies to maintain the region's adherence to the United States with NSC 5902/1. This new policy guidance included

advocating for "representative governments" in Latin America and modifying US reliance on free market strategies to improve the regional economy. This now also include direct US financial assistance.[4] Still, as Castro and his revolutionaries marched triumphantly from the Oriente to Havana in January, US officials in the White House, National Security Council, and US Department of State considered the priority in Cuba was to keep the nation aligned with larger Cold War strategies. As one Cuban scholar states, the only question US national security advisors had for the moment was, "Where did it [Cuba] stand on the Cold War?"[5]

US strategists concluded that their southern neighbor would indeed remain allied with the US. Analysts predicted that though Cubans would likely criticize US policies for a time, the island's economic ties and historic relationship between the two countries ensured that Cuba would remain allied to the United States.[6] Many US observers also initially predicted Cuba would remain committed to anticommunism under the Revolutionary government. Though not enamored with Castro, few in the Eisenhower administration linked him or his movement with communism. These thoughts prevailed despite US Embassy reports from Havana that indicated communist influence, particularly within the Cuban media, and outgoing US ambassador Earl T. Smith's repeated claims during his time in Cuba was that the M-26-7 movement was riddled with communists.[7]

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[4] Stephen G. Rabe, *Eisenhower and Latin America: The Foreign Policy of Anticommunism* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1988), 104-106; 112-115.

[5] Schoultz, *That Infernal Little Cuban Republic*, 83.

[6] Ibid., 86-87.

[7] Thomas G. Paterson, *Contesting Castro: The United States and the Triumph of the Cuban Revolution* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994), 183-187.

Regardless of its true political ideology, the new Cuban leadership planned to chart a course different from the traditional US-Cuban political and socio-economic relationship, unafraid to publicly criticize the northern giant in the process. Castro's critiques of US foreign policy in Latin America, overbearing US influence in Cuba, and his reassertion of Cuban nationalism motivated the public to support such alterations. These critiques became a common occurrence as the revolution progressed. Castro's anti-US rhetoric echoed decades of Cuban resentment, particularly among Cuban student and intellectual elements that had been most active in opposing Batista over North American influence on the island.[8]

US action, and inaction, during the insurgency only exacerbated long-standing Cuban accusations of US interference in their affairs as the Eisenhower administration, as the US government seemingly supported Batista's dictatorship.[9] During the struggle, both revolutionary and government propaganda linking the US to Batista's rule blurred the lines between the two, effectively making them one and the same. For many Cubans, the US government, by backing Batista and continuing its Latin American policies, was just as responsible for the current Cuban situation as the dictator had been. The Cuban dissidents now in charge used such sentiment to their advantage over the course of 1959 as they prepared their reform programs. Fidel Castro's criticism of the United States continued as a daily occurrence as he used such rhetoric as part of his efforts to

[8] Ramón Eduardo Ruiz discusses Cuban nationalism and resentment of US interference, particularly under the Platt Amendment, throughout the early twentieth century in *Cuba the Making of a Revolution*, 18-39.

[9] Cole Blasier, "The Elimination of United States Influence," 46-47.

consolidate his control and secure public support in the early days of the new revolutionary government.[10]

Local Cuban media contributed to the government's attempt to consolidate Cuban public opinion in support of reforms and the new leadership. Television and radio stations broadcast Castro's speeches and rallies. Revolutionary leaders appeared on local talk shows and wrote opinion pieces in Cuban newspapers. Cuban media with ties to the revolution continued to serve as public mouthpieces to spread the government's messaging. The new government also retained the traditional leverage that previous Cuban leadership held over the Cuban press by offering financial support to those newspapers friendly to the revolution. Under such influence and direction, the Cuban media worked with the Cuban government to craft a different cultural and historical narrative for themselves after the insurgency; one which, among other themes, altered prevailing Cuban public opinion on the US-Cuban relationship.[11] What emerged after January 1959 in Cuba was a forum from which Castro could reach a mass audience through local media. With little rebuttal, the popular Cuban leader both publicly antagonized and condemned the US, not only for ongoing issues, but for its historic hegemonic relationship with Cuba and other Latin American nations.

Lacking prescience in the early months of 1959, USIS-Havana staff worked to revise their Country Plan, which they had only rewritten in the summer of the previous year in response to the changed conditions in Cuba. Initially, post staff believed the new

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[10] Alan McPherson, *Yankee, No!: Anti-Americanism in US – Latin American* Relations (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2003), 49-68.

[11] For analyses of this process throughout the year, see Pérez, *On Becoming Cuban*, 477-505 and Guerra, *Visions of Power in Cuba*, particularly pages 37-69.

government would offer increased opportunities for informational programming on the island and that the revolution placed new emphasis on USIS-Havana activities. Castro's early rhetoric advocated freedom of the press and speech, something that the previous government had stifled and, during much of the insurgency, banned altogether. Staff reported that they were particularly anxious to increase their anticommunist messaging amidst the Party's increased influence on the island in the wake of the revolutionaries' victory.[12]

USIS Havana Strategy and Objectives in 1959

As US Cuban analysts predicted, the first months under the new revolutionary administration proved volatile. While the government enacted initial reform measures and held public trials leading to imprisonment or executions for those implicated in the Batista administration, Fidel Castro's popularity only increased among the Cuban people. Castro spoke frequently to Cubans, often in mass rallies attracting hundreds of thousands, regularly harshly criticizing the Cuba-US relationship and advocating complete Cuban control over the nation's economic, political, and cultural systems.

Observing these speeches and following Castro's comments to the press, US Embassy officials on the island reported that the popular figure was the catalyst for establishing the prevailing negative Cuban perception of the United States. The fiery rhetoric, targeting US intervention in Cuban affairs and criticizing the historical relationship between the two nations, energized Cuban audiences and strengthened

[12] "USIA Daily Summary," No.5, January 8, 1959, USIA Daily Summary, January & February, 1959, Daily Summaries, OPI, box 3, RG 306, NACP.

Cuban nationalistic sentiment.[13] US government officials in the Eisenhower administration, the US State Department, and the Embassy in Havana urged restraint and patience in response. In time, they predicted, the nationalistic fervor would wear off and the economic ties between the two nations would bring the new government into line.

Having officially altered their country objectives only three months prior to January, USIS-Havana personnel again addressed their information activities in response to Batista's exit and the Cuban public's overwhelming positive reaction as the new leadership assumed control. Mere days after the new year began, local USIS personnel anticipated placing greater importance on anticommunist informational efforts, which they had only recently downgraded from their primary objective.[14] Like so many others in the Eisenhower administration in Washington, DC, and US Embassy officials in Cuba, who in April reported to the US State Department that communist elements had made great strides and operated in the open in Cuba under the "benevolent tolerance" of Castro, USIS-Havana personnel expressed concern over strengthening communist influence on the island in early 1959.[15] Station staff particularly worried about the growing presence of communist-influenced contributors to local media and increased prestige of leftist media on the island. Communist propaganda, too, found traction within Castro's "unfriendly attitude toward the United States and his drastic program of social and economic reform," and also among local media outlets that the Embassy reported now

[13] Much of Castro's initial sharp anti-US rhetoric stemmed from North American media coverage and criticism of the Revolutionary government's trials and executions of Batista government officials and collaborators. See Schoultz, 87-88, Rabe, 123, Guerra, 44-49.

[14] "USIA Daily Summary," No.5, January 8, 1959, Daily Summaries, RG 306, NACP.

[15] AmEmbassy, Habana to the Department of State, Washington, DC, "Growth of Communism in Cuba," April 14, 1959, DOSCDF, 737.001/4-1459, RG 59, NACP, *Cuba, 1955-1959*, MF, Reel 8.

openly carried the resurgent Cuban Communist Party's Partido Socialista Popular (PSP) propaganda messaging.[16]

That US Embassy in Havana staff associated communist influence within the increased anti-US rhetoric in Cuban nationalistic public sentiment, which fit the Eisenhower administration's ongoing narrative that the former used the latter to gain access into internal Latin American affairs. While reevaluating their Latin American foreign policy after the Vice President Nixon's disastrous 1958 regional tour, US Latin American analysts identified heightened "ultra-nationalism" in Latin America as a significant problem. Communist elements, analysts reported, took advantage of such movements "in order to gain support for and to cloak their operations."[17] Though few in Washington, DC, considered Castro or the new government to be communist, the specter loomed in Cuba amid the furor.

USIS-Havana in the New Cuba

The Revolutionary government legalized the PSP soon after assuming control and USIS station staff anticipated communism returning within a more permissive atmosphere.[18] In order to strengthen their capability to counter the PSP's message, which

[16] AmEmbassy, Habana to the Department of State, Washington, DC, April 14, 1959, DOSCDF, RG 59, NACP, *Cuba, 1955-1959.*

[17] Report from the Operations Coordinating Board to the National Security Council, "Report on Latin America (NSC 5613/1)," May 21, 1958, *FRUS*,1958-1960, V, American Republics (Washington: USGPO, 1991), doc. 2; Operations Plan for Latin America Prepared by the Operations Coordinating Board, "Operations Plan for Latin America," May 28, 1958, *FRUS*, 1958-1960, V, doc. 3; and National Security Council Report, "Statement of US Policy Toward Latin America," February 16, 1959, *FRUS*, 1958-1960, V, doc. 11.

[18] "USIA Daily Summary," No. 5, January 8, 1959, Daily Summaries, RG 306, NACP. Castro legalized the Communist Party in Cuba in January 1959.

was especially popular among students and laborers in Havana, Santiago de Cuba, and Santa Clara, USIS-Havana recommended expanding the informational offerings of USIA-operated libraries and bi-national centers by opening additional facilities in those cities.[19]

To reach their audience with new programming, the USIS field post continued to rely on local Cuban media to carry USIS-produced materials. With Batista's censorship no longer preventing Cuban media organizations from making their own decisions to print or broadcast news of their choosing, station staff anticipated that they would once more enjoy the same ability to disseminate their messages stressing anticommunism and promoting democratic forms of government.[20] Instead, USIS-Havana staff quickly discovered that the new government and Cuban public opinion challenged both the USIS message and the field post's ability to deliver that message to the Cuban people.

Commenting on Castro's early criticism of the US and its effect on Cuban public perception of the United States, the US Embassy noted the budding relationship between the Cuban leader and the local press. Though optimistic that Castro's criticism would wane in time, and Cuban public opinion and the media would follow, Embassy observers remarked that both "for the most part followed blindly where Castro has led."[21] Through

[19] "USIA Daily Summary," No. 25, February 11, 1959, Daily Summaries, RG 306, NACP. Targeting these specific audiences, intellectuals and students, aligned with current US Latin American policy at the time. See, Special Report by the Operations Coordinating Board to the National Security Council, "Special Report on Latin America (NSC 5613/1)," November 26, 1958; *FRUS*, 1958-1960, V, American Republics, doc. 7.

[20] "USIA Daily Summary," No. 5, January 8, 1959, Daily Summaries, RG 306, NACP.

[21] Foreign Service Despatch, AmEmbassy Habana to The Department of State, Washington, "Cuban Attitude toward U.S., Outlook and Recommendation," February 18, 1959. DOSCDF, 611.37/2-1859, RG 59, NACP, *Cuba, 1955-1959*, mf, Reel 25.

a combination of governmental influence and local demand for specific types of content, the media's allegiance to Castro and the Revolution only solidified after February.

By April, USIS information officer Paul D. Bethel forebodingly reported of an increasingly government-controlled and manipulated media landscape. Bethel's summary of Cuban media conditions indicated that in the place of Batista's censorship, the Revolutionary government instead played favorites with Cuban media outlets, supporting those that cooperated with the new political power. Conversely, the new leadership impeded media that had held ties with the Batista era, and those who criticized ongoing reforms.[22]

Governmental influence over what the media could and could not print now came not necessarily from official censorship, but from a variety of other coercive measures, as the USIS report relayed to the USIA and Department of State. Castro-instituted policies of increasing minimum wages in the newspaper industry hampered companies already feeling the effects of losing the Batista government's financial assistance. Not content to influence the more established publishers through financial manipulation, the Revolutionary government also limited those elements of the Cuban press outside of their control. Through a combination of direct and indirect accusations, the new political leadership linked a number of the more prominent newspapers to Batista's corrupt administration, thereby tarnishing their reputations among a Cuban public prone to hostility against anything related to the former dictator.[23]

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[22] Foreign Service Despatch, USIS-Habana to USIA-Washington, "Analysis of the Forces at Work in Cuban Mass Media and Implications for the USIS Program," April 22, 1959, 1959, Action Copies, July through December, 4, Program Files, box 4, IRI/LA, RG 306, NACP.

[23] "Analysis of the Forces at Work in Cuban Mass Media and Implications for the USIS Program," April 22, 1959, Program Files, RG 306, NACP.

The power transition and early days of the new Cuban government proved to be a difficult time for Cuban media owners, but many attempted to remain viable by accommodating the new leadership. In her examination of Cuban media's role in creating a new national narrative of the Cuban Revolution and Fidel Castro, Lillian Guerra demonstrates that both the revolutionary government and the Cuban media used each other in their efforts to accomplish their own objectives. Castro and M-26-7, through their control of the purse, effectively decided which newspapers remained solvent, favoring those that promoted the revolutionary platform. In contrast, many Cuban media companies, eager not to lose their subsidies or readership, promoted the popular Cuban government with little or no criticism and distanced themselves from Batista's rule.[24] As in other areas of Cuban society, rejecting Batista also meant rejecting the United States, which so many Cubans deemed complicit with the dictator's actions over the years. The result for USIS field office was that its staff increasingly lost access to media on which they relied to disseminate its messaging.

Such practices favored media, such as newspaper publishers, that catered to the new Cuban government. *Revolución* emerged as the leading pro-government newspaper due to its status as the Revolution's official mouthpiece during the insurgency. With its connections among the new government, *Revolución* thrived while other newspapers in Cuba fought to keep their presses operating as they competed for government subsidies and disassociated themselves from the Batista era. In his April report, Bethel

[24] Lillian Guerra, *Visions of Power in Cuba*, 39-40. *The Havana Post* (an English language newspaper), *Diario de la Marina, Avancé, El Mundo, Prensa Libre ,* and *Zig-Zag* were among the print journals that criticized the revolutionary government. The *CMQ* radio and television network, under the control of the Mestre Brothers also offered criticism until the final months of 1960. See Foreign Service Despatch, USIS/Habana to USIA/Washington, "Analysis of forces at work in Cuban mass media and implications for USIS programs," April 22, 1959, Program Files, RG 306, NACP.

summarized *Revolución* as "the first choice in publishing anxiously-awaited government decrees...It lectures the [other Cuban] papers on the need for clean reporting, and viciously attacks those who follow a line which differs from *Revolución's* interpretation of the line of Dr. Castro."[25]

The new political environment also permitted communist-influenced newspapers to operate more freely on the island. The once underground newspaper *Hoy* began publication almost immediately after Batista's ouster. By August, Bethel, then the station's acting Public Affairs Officer, reported to the USIA that the communist newspaper had expanded its circulation from 6,000 to 10,000 copies per day.[26] "It seems clear," Bethel concluded, "that *Hoy* aspires to a position as a prominent daily newspaper. It appears further that the Cuban Government...is doing nothing to detract from these aspirations."[27]

In their analysis of the communist influence in Cuba in the months after the revolutionaries' victory, US Embassy staff noted that the local press encountered difficulty in attacking the growing communist voice. Embassy personnel attributed this to two factors: first were the similarities between the communist goals and Castro's revolutionary programs. Such connectivity resulted in situations where any Cuban "critics of Communism risk being called counter-revolutionaries and thrown into

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[25] "Analysis of forces at work in Cuban mass media and implications for USIS programs," April 22, 1959, Program Files, RG 306, NACP.

[26] Foreign Service Despatch, USIS-Habana to USIA-Washington, "Increase in Circulation of Communist Newspaper Hoy," August 19, 1959, Action Copies, July through December, 4, Program Files, box 4, IRI/LA, RG 306, NACP. Bethel's report also noted that a more recent report "from the other Agency [perhaps implying the Central Intelligence Agency]," estimated the daily circulation to be closer to 17,000.

[27] Ibid., Program Files.

prison."[28] Second was Castro's attacks on the United States interference, which roused the population and fostered an environment that associated anticommunist beliefs with support for the US.[29]

The Cuban government also harnessed the popular radio and television mediums to export messages to a mass audience, while exerting its influence to keep dissenting voices off the airwaves. Within months of victory, the government quickly seized control of two radio networks on the island: *Radio COCO* and *Radio CNC*, which the new ownership renamed "Radio Rebelde."[30] The government also appropriated TV Channel 12 in mid-March.[31] Leery of the new leadership placing restrictions upon their programming or seizing control outright, the US Embassy reported that local stations changed their programming styles during the period. By April, Embassy staff noted that Cuban radio and TV networks were "shying away from strongly anti-Communist or pro-U.S. programs."[32]

The new government's control over Cuba's communications network and communist encroachment within the island's informational mediums were not the only changes taking place in fields that the USIS field office previously depended upon to influence public opinion; Embassy officials and USIS field office staff also relayed their

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[28] Foreign Service Despatch, AmEmbassy, Habana to the Department of State, Washington, DC, "Growth of Communism in Cuba," April 14, 1959. DOSCDF, 737.001/4-1459, RG 59, NACP, *Cuba, 1955-1959*, mf, Reel 8.

[29] Ibid.

[30] Foreign Service Despatch from USIS-Habana to USIA-Washington, "Analysis of the Forces at Work in Cuban Mass Media and Implications for the USIS Program," April 22, 1959, Program Files, RG 306, NACP.

[31] Ibid.

[32] Foreign Service Despatch, AmEmbassy, Habana to the Department of State, Washington, DC, "Growth of Communism in Cuba," April 14, 1959, DOSCDF, RG 59, NACP, *Cuba, 1955-1959.*

concerns over increased communist activity in cultural programming in Cuba. USIS employees reported on communist-tinged organizations appearing across the island hosting lectures and film reviews.[33] Embassy staff, for instance, reported televised debates between communists and the Catholic Church in Cuba in April, labeling the broadcasts as "additional evidence of the respectability of the Communist doctrine."[34]

These reports also provided accounts of closer interaction between the Cuban government and communism. Embassy messages noted that communist or "fellow travelers" held influential positions in Cuban cultural and educational organizations, such as the head of Cuba's Instituto Nacional de Cultura and representatives among the new government's commission to rewrite Cuban history textbooks.[35] In July, the Cuban Ministry of Education for Agrarian Reform invited a Soviet ballet group to perform two shows in Havana, attracting thousands of Cubans. After attending the concert with his family, Anthony Bernabai, a US citizen residing in Cuba, contacted USIS-Havana's Public Affairs Officer John Z. Williams with his observations. Writing down his experience for Williams, who then passed it on to the USIA in Washington, Bernabai began his account in hyperbolic fashion matching the public tenor in the United States regarding the communist threat in Cuba: "This evening," he wrote, "I had a terrifying

[33] US Ambassador Philip Bonsal noted in a report to the US State Department that the surge in communist activities in the information and cultural fields in Cuba were a "return to [the] situation existing prior [to] Batista." See telegram from the Embassy in Cuba to the Department of State, March 17, 1959 – 1p.m., *FRUS*, 1958-1960, VI, Cuba, ed. John P. Glennon (Washington: USGPO, 1991), doc. 263.

[34] Foreign Service Desptach, AmEmbassy, Habana to the Department of State, Washington, DC, "Growth of Communism in Cuba," April 14, 1959, DOSCDF, RG 59, NACP, *Cuba, 1955-1959.*

[35] Ibid.

experience. This evening, I watched the Russians take over Havana. Culturally speaking, of course."[36]

Bourgeoning communist and anti-US activities in the Oriente Province echoed those taking place throughout Cuba in 1959. Batista's ouster and Castro's rhetoric buoyed Cuban optimism for the future, but anti-US sentiment remained strong in the region. US Consulate reports from Santiago de Cuba identified Oriente media outlets, particularly the provincial newspapers *Sierra Maestra* and *Surco* as being especially critical of US actions, publishing inflammatory articles and opinion pieces throughout the year. The US Consular, Park Wollam, attributed much of the local hostility on the lack of any information from US or Cuban "straight news" newspapers to counter the criticism.[37] This left the public with a one-sided narrative in the Oriente hostile to US policies in Cuba. As the year unfolded, the anti-US propaganda continued, worrying Wollam that the attacks and accusations would "gradually [wear] away at the friendliness toward the United States that has prevailed in the Oriente among the great majority."[38]

Having regained access to Oriente after the hostilities in the region subsided, USIS-Havana staff attempted to mollify local criticism in the area and appeal to the friendliness that the Consulate believed to still be present in the Province. Post staff immediately reintroduced their mobile film units to the area to screen films locally,

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[36] Foreign Service Despatch, USIS-Habana to USIA-Washington, "Soviet Ballet Group performs in Habana," July 6, 1959, 1959, Action Copies, July through December, 4, Program Files, box 4, IRI/LA, RG 306, NACP.

[37] Foreign Service Despatch, AmConsulate Santiago de Cuba to The Department of State, Washington, "Anti-American Propaganda in the Oriente," September 24, 1959, DOSCDF, 611.37/9-2459, RG 59, NACP, *Cuba, 1955-1959*, mf, Reel 25.

[38] Ibid.

responding to what Consular Wollam characterized as a "fair number of requests for [USIS film] services."[39] Local government organizations and, early on, even revolutionary military forces were among those groups requesting USIS films in the province.[40]

In January, during one of these early screenings which the post intended for a group of 300 fighters, the USIS agreed to show a series of sports and travel films. According to Wollam, as the USIS employee prepared to show the films, a revolutionary soldier stood and began to "harangue the crowd on United States oppression of the Cuban people."[41] Soon other soldiers joined with the first, forcing an end to the screening. In his report to the US State Department, Wollam noted that the USIS would likely receive typical treatment in the province in their future efforts.[42]

In addition to film screenings, USIS staff reported that the bi-national center, which the station had earlier proposed for the Oriente region, opened in November in Santiago de Cuba, offering local residents access to a library, English lessons, and other activities. The new center organizers invited over 200 guests representing student, professional, and cultural groups from the area to take part in the opening.[43] Post staff reported a positive public reaction to the opening and the center's initial programs.[44]

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[39] Ibid.

[40] "Anti-American Propaganda in the Oriente," September 24, 1959, DOSCDF, RG 59, NACP, *Cuba, 1955-1959*; Despatch from the Consulate at Santiago de Cuba to the Department of State, "Events in Oriente – Reaction (Jan 6-14, 1959)," *FRUS*, 1958-1960, VI, Cuba, doc. 225.

[41] "Events in Oriente – Reaction (Jan 6-14, 1959),"*FRUS*, 1958-1960, VI, Cuba, doc. 225.

[42] Ibid.

[43] AmEmbassy Habana, "Joint Weeka, No. 51," December 22, 1959. DOSCDF, 737.00(w)/12-2259, *Cuba, 1955-1959*, mf, Reel 25.

[44] Ibid*;* US Information Agency, *13th Report to Congress*, July 1-December 31, 1959, 12.

This now gave the island two such centers, plus the reading room in Santa Clara, where the USIA could expose Cuban audiences to information on the United States and its culture, especially the students, educators, and intellectuals who US foreign policy experts believed susceptible to anti-US rhetoric and communist propaganda.

With such marked increases in communist influence and outward hostility toward the Cuban relationship with the United States in Cuban society in the first months of 1959, the USIS-Havana and Embassy staff developed updated recommendations to the US Department of State that spring to counter Cuban perceptions of an interventionist US government hostile to reform. Foremost in their plans was to mitigate communist propaganda without appearing to criticize the new government, and to erode public apathy to Communist penetration within both the Cuban political system and in other influential elements of Cuban society. As with much of their planning in the year, the Embassy urged that all diplomatic action diligently keep from arousing the Cuban government in the process of achieving their objectives:

> The U.S. government should take a positive, friendly line toward Cuba, Castro, and the objectives of the revolution, but an unyielding attitude toward Communism in Cuba as elsewhere. The Communists are trying to drive a wedge between the revolution and the United States.[45]

Embassy officials included anticommunist informational programming as part of their revised strategy to counter communist activities and anti-US propaganda. USIS-Havana staff planned to target "friendly" members of the Cuban media and Cuban government officials, using both attributable and unattributable content to drive wedges of their own between the PSP and Cuban people. Station staff proposed developing materials

[45] Foreign Service Despatch, AmEmbassy, Habana to the Department of State, Washington, DC, "Growth of Communism in Cuba," April 14, 1959, April 14, 1959, DOSCDF, RG 59, NACP, *Cuba, 1955-1959.*

promoting anticommunist Cuban figures and to launch a press campaign highlighting communists operating within the Cuban government. USIS personnel also planned to strengthen informational and cultural programming in the island's provinces.[46]

Unlike their strategy to counter communist messaging in Cuba, the US Embassy did not advocate the same strong response to the Cuban political leadership's anti-US rhetoric. The newly arrived US Ambassador Philip Bonsal and his Embassy advisors continued advocating a strategy of patience in the face of Cuban activities and official rhetoric, ever mindful of damaging the diplomatic ties between the two governments and strengthening Castro's sway on local public opinion with a harsh response to internal political issues. This strategy did not change, even amid the land reform programs that summer in Cuba, which threatened private US economic interests and cemented the Eisenhower administration's position that the United States could not tolerate the current Cuban government.[47] Pressures stemming from US public opinion, media, and well-connected businessmen placed the State Department and the US Embassy in a precarious position, but US diplomatic mission officials adhered to a public diplomacy message that sympathized with the Cuban desire for improved social and economic conditions, and expressed optimism for a better relationship between the two countries.[48] This, even as

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[46] Ibid.

[47] Lars Schoultz, *That Infernal Little Cuban Republic*, 95-100; Richard Welch, *Response to Revolution: The United States and the Cuban Revolution, 1959-1961*. (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1985), 36-37; Rabe, 126-128.

[48] Welch, *Response to Revolution*, 36-37. For Ambassador Bonsal's Assessment, see Telegram from the Embassy in Cuba to the Department of State, July 16, 1959 – 1p.m., *FRUS*, 1958-1960, VI, Cuba, doc. 336; Airgram from the Embassy in Cuba to the Department of State, August 2, 1959, *FRUS*, 1958-1960, VI, Cuba, doc. 349; and Bonsal, *Cuba, Castro, and the United States* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1971), 72.

Eisenhower ended the "watch and wait" strategy that guided the US policy in Cuba through more than half of the year.

USIS-Havana continued encountering difficulty operating in the tumultuous environment. Castro, as the face of the Cuban revolutionary government, continued to harangue those newspapers not yet bowing to Cuban government pressure or under its influence. Government-backed newspapers such as *Revolución* echoed such sentiment with their own editorials lambasting those critics with negative opinions on government actions during the period.[49]

The Communist newspaper *Noticias de Hoy* chastised *Diario* and other newspapers for carrying US wire services, such as the Associated Press and United Press International, which many Cuban publishers relied upon for their papers' international news.[50] *Hoy* writers also included the USIS-attributable materials, as well, condemning all US-based wire services for publishing anti-communist messaging and "imperialist propaganda" intended to damage the Cuban Revolution. *Hoy* editors linked the USIS with the US commercial operations soon after the revolutionary government assumed power in January and reiterated that connection to its readers in the months ahead. "What they [USIS and other wire services] want to do," Cuban Communist leader Blas Roca

[49] The US Embassy in Havana summarized a particularly heated editorial exchange from September 29 and October 2, after Castro attacked the newspapers *Diario de la Marina* and *Avancé* over their criticisms of the Cuban government during a television broadcast, which the publication *Revolución* augmented. The Embassy noted that even as they argued for the freedom to criticize the Cuban government, the hounded news organizations couched their criticisms with overtures of their support for the Revolution. See Airgram from AmEmbassy Habana to Joint Secretary of State/USIA, "Further Developments in Rift Between Cuban Press and Castro Regime," October 6, 1959. DOSCDF, 937.61/10-559, RG 59, NACP, *Cuba, 1955-1959*, mf, Reel 23.

[50] For a study of the US press' changing views on Fidel Castro and the Cuban Revolution, see chapter nine of Richard E. Welch, Jr., *Response to Revolution: The United States and the Response to the Cuban Revolution, 1959-1961*.

warned *Hoy* readers in a late January editorial, "is to discredit the Cuban revolution, restore [US] dominance in our country and prevent the implementation of economic and social measures that should give us economic independence, without which political sovereignty will always be precarious."[51] Through this association, USIS materials simply became another form of US hegemony in Cuba and a method to control the new government and its policies.

Prominent newspapers, such as *Diario de la Marina* almost completely ceased using USIS-attributed materials in their daily editions during the year. Analysis of the number of articles that *Diario* editors credited the USIS as the source declined drastically from the year before. For the whole of 1959, the beleaguered newspaper published thirty USIS articles or photographs with a USIS designation in the dateline; twenty-four appearing in the months before August. In comparison, *Diario* editors had included sixty three USIS articles in the first three months of 1958, alone.[52] The decline of even the most innocuous of articles that field post personnel provided signified the difficulties USIS-Havana information officers encountered in Cuba soon after the insurgency.

USIS-Havana staff's ongoing problems resulted not only from a lack of outlets that would carry USIS materials, but also reflected the US government's historical presupposition of its relationship with its southern neighbor. Like so many in US politics, USIA staff approached Cuba with pre-conceptualized beliefs of how Cubans viewed the US and the nature of the relationship between the two countries. In his

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[51] *Noticias de Hoy*, "La Respuesta Adecuada a los Imperialistas," January 23, 1959. DLOC, http://dloc.com/AA00022089/05423/1x?search=hoy (accessed April 14, 2016).

[52] Data retrieved from examination of *Diario de la Marina* newspapers from January 1958 to December 1959. DLOC (accessed March 5, 2016).

examination of Cuban identity Louis A. Pérez states "North Americans had operated from the presumption of familiarity, out of which was derived the notion that something 'special' linked Cuba to the United States."[53] Such presumptions were inherent in the US public diplomacy program for Cuba, coloring much of the USIS station's and its parent agency's strategy and outlook over the years on the island. A 1954 USIA inspection report on USIS-Havana labeled Cuba as "our friendly close neighbor to the South," repeating decades-old US narratives of liberating a thankful Cuban people from Spanish domination.[54]

These same presumptions that North Americans "understood" Cubans also left little need for a more robust US public diplomacy program: a relative unimportant activity between two nations already so intimately bound. Indeed, as the USIA's 1958 inspection report of the Havana station noted, the fact that "Cuba traditionally displays a friendly attitude towards the United States and Americans" was a major consideration for USIS operations on the island.[55] Such thinking resulted in a USIS field office unequipped to wage a propaganda battle for Cuban hearts and minds when Cubans began acting in ways the United States did not anticipate, and openly rejected US influence on their island.

Writing to his superior, Assistant Secretary of State for Inter-American Affairs Richard Rubottom, US State Department Special Assistant John C. Hill summarized his

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[53] Pérez, *On Becoming Cuban,* 490; Pérez addresses this in full in *Cuba in the American Imagination* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2008).

[54] "Inspection Report of USIS Cuba, June 15 – July 2, 1954," September 30, 1954, Inspection Reports, RG 306, NACP.

[55] "Inspection Report of USIS Cuba, June 14, 1958," June 24, 1958, Inspection Reports, RG 306, NACP.

March trip to Cuba where he discussed the local situation with US Embassy personnel. After meeting with USIS-Havana staff, Hill reported that the local office personnel were ready to increase their programming efforts, but lacked both the staffing and guidance to carry out any activities beyond their typical programming.[56] The situation had not improved over the summer. New USIA employee William Lenderking, who began his public diplomacy career with an assignment in the Havana office, noted similar difficulties for the understaffed and overwhelmed field station during the period. The new information officer recalled a US Embassy and USIS post operating in an environment where "the daily drumbeat of really vicious attacks and false charges was much greater than anything we could respond to," adding in defense, "But we tried."[57]

Hill's summary and Lenderking's recollections of USIS-Havana's situation are unsurprising. Though the number of field office personnel increased over the period, there were still only seven US staff members by the end of that tumultuous summer, expending $190,418 for the year.[58] The relative suddenness of the Revolution's victory and subsequent political measures overwhelmed the small post and its resources. The Eisenhower administration's "wait and watch" policy and sensitivity to Cuban claims of US intervention in Cuban internal affairs further handicapped USIS staff. These issues, coupled with shrinking access to their Cuban audience amid the Cuban government and

[56] Memorandum from Assistant Secretary of State for Inter-American Affairs' Special Assistant (Hill) to the Assistant Secretary of State (Rubottom), "The Cuban Situation," April 24, 1959; *FRUS*, 1958-1960, VI, Cuba, doc. 295.

[57] William Lenderking, interview, March 5, 2007, ADST (accessed February 25, 2016).

[58] *House Appropriations Committee Hearings, Eighty-Seventh Congress, 1962* (General Statement), (Washington: USGPO, 1961), 240, HathiTrust, https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=mdp.39015022382769;view=1up;seq=254 (accessed April 10, 2016).

other nationalistic forces own anti-US rhetoric, limited the USIS office's public diplomacy efforts.

With his direct control and influence over the most popular methods of mass communication on the island, and an active local press attacking those who criticized the Revolution, Castro increasingly dictated the public message in Cuba throughout 1959. His government's own localized hegemony left scant room for public discourse and certainly little space for any US messaging to make its way to the Cuban public. The broad access to Cuban mass communication mediums USIS-Havana staff once possessed that allowed USIS-Havana information and cultural officers to spread their pro-US messaging increasingly narrowed under the new regime.

Although seemingly losing their audience and the tools to disseminate their messages in the latter half of the year, USIS-Havana staff did prove to yet possess some access to the Cuban media and public, aside from the cultural centers on the island. In September, post staff participated in the two week long "Great Fair for Agrarian Reform" in the Cuban capital city, where USIS employees displayed an exhibit on the US economy, provided pamphlets, and showed films on US life.[59] USIS-Havana reported that their exhibit attracted between 2,000 to 6,000 visitors daily and that audiences particularly enjoyed the film *Martí in the United States*, with spectators describing the movie as a "good exposition on the long history of Cuban-US interdependence and cooperation."[60]

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[59] US Information Agency, *13th Report to Congress, July 1-December 31, 1959*, 12, HathiTrust, https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=mdp.39015028986845;view=1up;seq=456 (accessed March 5, 2016)

[60] Ibid., 12.

Reviewing their post's informational activities on the island in the latter half of 1959, USIA officials explained that despite their best efforts to "counter distortion of both current facts and past events" in Cuba, the Cuban government continued to berate the United States.[61] However, while experiencing only limited success in explaining the US position to the Cuban public in the second half of 1959, both the local USIS office and US Embassy officials still believed that most Cubans possessed goodwill towards the United States despite the current animosity between the two governments. Leading the way, Ambassador Philip Bonsal reported to the US State Department of continued public support on the island, even after he and so many within the Eisenhower administration had resigned themselves to the fact that they could not work with Castro and his government. Bonsal noted in an October telegram to the State Department that he and his staff believed that "anti-American attitude [is] neither deep-seated nor at [an] alarming level among Cuban people as a whole."[62]

Embassy personnel expressed optimism that they could still tap into that vein of goodwill to counter the sentiment so prevalent in government rhetoric and media commentary. Even as the Eisenhower administration altered its tactics and Ambassador Bonsal and his staff ultimately confirmed that the situation in Cuba was bleak by the end of 1959, the top Embassy official was not ready to abandon public diplomacy as a means to strengthen pro-US sentiment or advance US foreign policy goals. The Embassy's

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[61] Ibid.

[62] Telegram from the Embassy in Cuba to the Department of State, October 30, 1959 – noon, *FRUS*, 1958-1960, VI, Cuba, doc. 382. In his examination of the diplomatic relationship between the US and Cuba during this period, Ambassador Bonsal recalls his reasoning behind the US Embassy's maintenance of diplomatic activities in Cuba even as the two governments drifted further apart. Among the reasons included the belief that Cubans could yet grow weary of Castro and the new government. See Philip Bonsal, *Cuba, Castro and the United States*, 110-111.

objective for this revised strategy was to avoid further inflaming anti-US sentiment and Cuban accusations of US intervention on the island through a policy expressing support for change in Cuba, but which also defended US interests on the island.

Bonsal and his staff presented their strategy in a November memorandum to the US State Department containing new, shorter-term goals for the island nation that remained aligned with larger US Latin American policies. These new objectives included appealing to the historical bonds between the two nations, keeping Cuba within the Latin American Cold War consensus, reemphasizing the communist threat to the island, promoting democratic values in line with the United States system of government, and protecting North American interests in Cuba.[63]

Along with the other sections of the US mission to Cuba, USIS-Havana staff had their own role to perform to ensure that the Embassy's new strategy succeeded. Field office staff incorporated these new objectives into their informational planning for the upcoming year as they devised methods and themes to communicate with their Cuban audience and advance US objectives within the unfriendly environment. The tactics PAO John Z. Williams and his staff conceived approaches to support the new strategy which remained similar to previous efforts to influence Cuban public opinion, but with changes reflecting the state of Cuban communications mediums on the island and the change in prevailing Cuban attitude.

USIS staff now envisioned a more intimate approach to informing public opinion. With less access to Cuban media outlets, Williams and his team opted to readjust how

[63] Foreign Service Despatch, AmEmbassy Habana to The Department of State, Washington, "Suggested Operations Plan for Cuba," November 27, 1959. DOSCDF, 611.37/11-2759, RG 59, NACP, *Cuba, 1955-1959*, mf, Reel 25.

they communicated with the local population. These tactics included targeting local labor, student, and professional leadership with their programming so that those individuals would then relay the message to far larger audiences than the USIS post could currently reach. Additionally, though the Embassy remained concerned of the communist influence on the Cuban government, USIS staff proposed becoming more selective with their anticommunist messaging. Station personnel intended, however, to continue demonstrating the danger communism posed to Cuban reform efforts as a way to juxtapose the station's own message of US solidarity and cooperation with Cuban goals.[64]

One ambitious anticommunist project included a television, radio, and pamphlet campaign that field post staff proposed to their parent agency in July. USIS-Havana staff envisioned this as a factual, episodic series of programs addressing communism in Cuba. This was to be programming "based on historical fact and serving to expose the opportunism and destroy the credibility of an anti-dictator, nationalistic image of Cuban Communism."[65] USIA researchers and personnel in the agency's television division would create the scripts while Cuba's *CMQ* television and radio corporation produced the series.

Upon their initial discussion with officials in the USIA's television offices, the post agreed with the agency to create a pilot radio program before launching a television

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[64] AmEmbassy Habana to The Department of State, Washington; "Suggested Operations Plan for Cuba." November 27, 1959, RG 59, NACP, *Cuba, 1955-1959.*

[65] Memorandum from Victor Hague/Hoyt Ware (IBS/IL) to Oram Stephens (IRI), "Research for Radio Program Series," August 17, 1959, 1959, Correspondence, Incoming Local, 17, Program Files, box 4, IRI/LA, RG 306, NACP.

series. After further considerations the two parties again modified the proposal to either revise or replace a series focusing solely on communism with programming that also addressed other Latin American subjects, which the program's creator could link to communist subversion and opportunism, such as Latin American dictatorships that had collaborated with communist groups in the past. Including other examples in Latin American history would broaden the series' appeal to viewers elsewhere in the region.[66] As with most of its other programming, the agency deemed the series would bear no indication that the USIA took part in its production.[67]

The concept moved slowly within USIA offices after these initial discussions. It was not until October that agency staff started production plans in earnest. By this point however, the USIA had scrapped USIS-Havana's plan for a Cuban-themed series completely, believing a program targeted solely at Cuba would harm informational efforts elsewhere. Concerns over attacking Cuban communists specifically also worried USIA officials who feared such unattributed programming "could be construed as intervention in domestic affairs if Cuban government discovered its source."[68] IAL instead requested USIA researchers compile enough background material on communism in the region for thirteen episodes, which they would first air in Cuba, then within other Latin American countries.[69]

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[66] Memorandum from Victor Hague/Hoyt Ware (IBS/IL) to Oram Stephens (IRI), "Research for Radio Program Series," August 17, 1959, Program Files, RG 306, NACP.

[67] Memorandum from Hoyt N. Ware (IBS/RL) to Harry Sylvester (IRI/P), August 27, 1959, 1959, Correspondence, Incoming Local, 17, Program Files, box 4, IRI/LA, RG 306, NACP; "Memorandum to Mr. Stephens from Messrs. Hauge and Ware August 17, 1959," August 27, 1959, 1959, Correspondence, Incoming Local, 17, Program Files, box 4, IRI/LA, RG 306, NACP.

[68] "USIA Daily Summary," No. 51, October 20, 1959, USIA Daily Summary, September – October, Daily Summaries, box 3, IRI/LA, RG 306, NACP.

[69] Memorandum from Paul Rothman (IAL) to Sylvester (IRI), "Planned Television and Radio Program

Though USIS-Havana ultimately did not receive Washington, DC's approval for the Cuban-specific project they initially envisioned, their request did spur the agency to develop new programming for the region that they, too, could incorporate into their own public diplomacy efforts. More importantly, this failed attempt demonstrates that while the Eisenhower administration may have been taking a "watch and wait" approach to Castro's Cuba in 1959, the USIS-Havana staff continued to press for resources to assist them in carrying out their programs to keep Cuban public opinion aligned with US policy objectives.

USIS staff also planned to promote US culture and historical ties with Cuba through a variety of measures. These included printed materials and a proposed television program "dramatizing the benefits to Cuba of cultural and educational exchanges."[70] Other actions USIS-Havana proposed to alter prevailing public opinion included providing grants and scholarships to Cuban students, increasing contact between US residents living on the island and the Cuban people, greater use of Eisenhower's "People to People" program, and to use the President's "Special Fund" that sponsored US artists and exhibits programs abroad. Additionally, staff intended to increase their program offerings currently within the island's bi-national centers and Santa Clara reading room.[71]

Series, October 15 1959, 1959, Correspondence, Incoming Local, 17, Program Files, box 4, IRI/LA, RG 306, NACP.

[70] AmEmbassy Habana to The Department of State, Washington; "Suggested Operations Plan for Cuba." November 27, 1959. DOSCDF, RG 59, NACP, *Cuba, 1955-1959.*

[71] Ibid.

Field post personnel also readjusted their themes to reflect the new objectives to suit the current Cuban disposition towards the United States. Staff planned to emphasize US respect and sympathy for Cuban desires for social, political, and economic change. They would demonstrate to their audience how US programs on the island directly benefitted the Cuban people, not the Cuban government. Interestingly, USIS-Havana planners also proposed to develop programming that offered US support for Cuban reforms; the caveat being that the station would only promote those measures meeting with US approval.[72] Recalling his work in the informational section of the small post, Lenderking summarized USIS-Havana's objectives during the trying period.

> The idea was to emphasize the practical benefits of democracy and a free press, and the hazards of following authoritarian models, which were clearly the direction Castro was taking Cuba in a big hurry. We hit hard on the idea that you could have thorough reform without confiscating all private property and driving away entrepreneurs and people you needed to make the economy productive.

"There were a lot of projects going on," Lenderking remembered, referring to the post's efforts during this time to counter the hostility toward the United States among Cuban government officials, media, and the public.[73] However, despite such vigorous activity and the station's revised strategies for retaining Cuban goodwill, the same glaring obstacles remained for USIS-Havana's informational program at the end of 1959: lack of access to mass communications and an audience who preferred Castro's nationalistic appeals over the US message.

Conclusion, USIA Activities in Cuba 1959

[72] Ibid.

[73] William Lenderking, interview, March 5, 2007, ADST.

With Fidel Castro's victory over Batista, and as the revolutionaries assumed control of Cuban politics, USIS-Havana encountered new challenges to their public diplomacy efforts on the island. Castro's popular anti-US rhetoric greatly appealed to many Cubans. In the conflict's aftermath, the US continued to lose credibility among many on the island as they rejected Batista-related ideology, along with that of their northern neighbor who had supported the dictator, and embraced the surging nationalism and accompanying narrative of a new and independent Cuba that the revolutionary movement promoted. Tethered as it was to US credibility and ideology, USIA messaging in Cuba suffered similarly as the Cuban government severed the hegemonic relationship between their island nation and their powerful neighbor.

Remaining convinced that Cubans did yet retain goodwill for the United States, US Embassy and USIS-Havana staff reassessed their objectives to emphasize the longstanding ties between US and Cuba in the latter half of 1959. Unfortunately, by that time, the avenues and public receptivity for any US programming on the island had diminished considerably. The Revolutionary government dominated the Cuban media and controlled both the messages that Cubans consumed and the mediums through which they received those messages. USIS personnel could not overcome losing access to Cuba's mass media outlets. They did not have the resources to compete against Castro and the Cuban media's unceasing onslaught of anti-US attacks and pro-revolutionary rhetoric. Nor could personnel influence public opinion using themes that Cubans increasingly rejected. Events in the following year only exacerbated these issues.

CHAPTER FIVE

Without a Voice:
USIS-Havana's Final Year, 1960-1961

> "USIS/Habana is finding the walls closing in insofar as informational programs are concerned in view of the steady takeover of newspapers, radio stations and television outlets…. Some Embassy officers foresee the eventual closing down, by degree, of USIS informational programs but heightened cultural activity, particularly in the exchange of persons field."
>
> – Richard G. Cushing, April, 1960

The USIS-Havana staffs' revised Country Plan for 1960 did not even survive through the spring of that year. By the end of February, the standoff between the two nations ceased to be a diplomatic issue, becoming instead a national security threat and domestic political subject in the United States. In addition to Cuba's continued reform measures upsetting US economic and political hegemony on the island, Castro and his government threatened to disrupt Latin American stability and, by the summer of 1960, provide a public relations victory for the Soviet Union. Thus, US-Cuban policy exited the US State Department's purview and entered the world of executive action, military planning, and covert operations. Public diplomacy offered little influence in these matters, and the Central Intelligence Agency's talent for black propaganda replaced the United States Information Agency's white and grey versions in Cuba as the Eisenhower administration readied plans to replace the Cuban government with one more amenable to US foreign policy objectives. Though still performing their tasks within the US embassy to promote US policy to the Cuban people, USIS-Havana staff had very few options

remaining through which they could transmit their informational programming to the public. Castro's popularity and the Cuban government's increasing monopoly over local media limited the field post's audience and its effectiveness. Having no access to Cuban mass media, unable to reach their target audience of student, labor, and intellectual groups, and with no Cuban "opinion makers" able or willing to disseminate United States Information Agency (USIA) messaging paralyzed the Havana-based USIA personnel, limiting their contribution throughout the year.

Without room to maneuver on the island, the USIA in Washington, DC, assumed greater control over crafting and disseminating informational programming to the Cuban public over the course of the year. Though now concerned more with ensuring that other Latin American nations remained within the US Cold War consensus, agency information specialists did attempt to communicate directly to the Cuban public through off-island resources, appealing directly to what USIA officials considered a mutual friendship between the two nations. This included mobilizing the agency's "People-to-People" program and relying on the Voice of America's factual news reporting to explain the US position to Cuban audiences. In the case of VOA broadcasts, the agency constructed their message nominally for all of Latin America, but emphasized Cuban listenership in their planning. In both mediums, USIA staff crafted messages that portrayed the United States government as the voice of reason and Fidel Castro as the belligerent actor who threatened to upset the regional status-quo, left Cuba and Latin America vulnerable to communist penetration, and endangered the long-standing friendship between the two nations.

US Relationship with Cuba, January to March 1960

The new year began much as the old ended for both nations' governments: rhetoric and reform in Cuba, and planning in the United States. Fidel Castro's bold verbal assaults against US foreign policy in Latin America, his reform efforts on the island, and his rhetoric advocating a Cuban culture free of outside influence enthralled audiences across the region. Many Latin Americans, long disillusioned with the socio-economic condition of the region and the US role in Latin America, now had a charismatic figure offering an alternative to the regional status quo, unafraid to challenge US hegemony.

The Eisenhower administration confronted the early months of 1960 armed with a revised Cuban strategy, which they had initially developed in the final half of the previous year. The administration's new position, which planners later solidified in March with "Operation Zapata," would either reform or replace the Cuban leadership and move the island-nation back within the Latin American consensus that US officials considered important to winning the Cold War. This strategy featured a more aggressive posture against the Cuban government and advocated gathering regional support for any future US action. In both cases, US policymakers in the State Department and in the US Embassy in Havana concluded that for their strategy to be effective, the US would have to take great care not to seem overly antagonistic, interventionist, or as though it was acting unilaterally. Any future actions against the Cuban government had to appear as though a coalition of Latin American nations had given their consent to the measures.[1]

[1] Secretary of State Christopher Herter delivered this proposal to President Eisenhower on November 5, 1959. See Memorandum from the Secretary of State to the President, "Current Basic United States Policy Toward Cuba," November 5, 1959. *FRUS*, 1958-1960, VI, Cuba, doc. 387. The details of the strategy are located in Memorandum from the Assistant Secretary of State for Inter-American Affairs (Rubottom) to the Undersecretary of State for Political Affairs (Murphy), "Current Basic United States Policy Towards Cuba," October 23, 1959. *FRUS*, 1958-1960, VI, Cuba, doc. 376.

Following this revised policy, US foreign relations experts went on the diplomatic offensive against Cuba in a measured, non-inflammatory manner. The Eisenhower administration quickly enjoyed a number of opportunities to practice their new stance: The US government recalled US Ambassador Bonsal from Havana after Castro publicly chastised and insulted the US effort to halt Cuban exiles from flying aircraft from Florida to drop propaganda materials, supplies to anti-Castro rebels, and incendiary bombs on Cuban targets in January. Later that same month, the US State Department officially criticized the Cuban government for its continued land expropriation program without adequate compensation to US interests, issuing a diplomatic protest note to the Cuban government.[2]

During this period, perhaps no single event aggravated the situation, at least from a public relations standpoint, more than Soviet foreign minister Anastas Mikoyan's visit to Cuba in February. Before departing the island, the two governments signed a trade agreement. The Mikoyan affair trumpeted great alarm in the United States and, for many, confirmed that while perhaps not directly under communist control, the Cuban nation was edging away from the US Cold War camp and into Soviet orbit.[3] Scholars of US-Cuban diplomacy during this period point to Mikoyan's visit, and the two nations re-establishing diplomatic relations one month later, as the tipping point for President

[2] Schoultz, *That Infernal Little Cuban Republic: The United States and the Cuban Revolution.* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2009), 110-114.

[3] Ibid., 114-115; Rabe, *Eisenhower and Latin America: The Foreign Policy of Anticommunism.* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1988), 128-129. Cole Blasier argues that the Cuban government's agreement with the Soviet Union was an effort to find an extra-hemispheric actor that could counterbalance US hegemony on the island and keep the US from exerting influence on the Cuban Revolution. See Cole Blasier, "The Elimination of the United States Influence," in Carmela Mesa-Lago, ed. *Revolutionary Change in Cuba*. (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1971), 58-60.

Eisenhower's decision in the spring to institute even greater aggressive action against the Cuban government.[4]

While employing their strategy to rebuke Castro's rhetoric and protest Cuban government activities that countered US interests in 1960, US policymakers remained mindful to distinguish between the Cuban government and the Cuban people when responding to Castro's accusations of US interference on the island. As in the year before, the administration did not wish to provide any fuel to stoke anti-US sentiment in either Cuba or Latin America. Eisenhower's Cuban plan, indeed his strategy for the entire region, required at least in part that local public sentiment retain such goodwill if the administration intended to successfully stymie communist influence in Cuba, curb Castro's popularity, and create an alternative Cuban government more receptive to the United States. The USIA and its USIS field posts had the responsibility to carry the US message and maintain that goodwill throughout Latin America, including the agency's beleaguered Cuban station in Havana.

USIA US State Department Strategy in Cuba, January 1960

As the Cuban government moved forward with its reforms and the United States outwardly maintained the appearance of a reasoned response, the US embassy in Havana and local USIS staff continued contributing to the US diplomatic mission in Cuba. In January Embassy Deputy Daniel Braddock, serving at the time as head of mission after the State Department recalled US Ambassador Philip Bonsal in protest of the Cuban

[4] Rabe, *Eisenhower and Latin America* 128-130; Schoultz, *That Infernal Little Cuban Republic,* 114-116, Richard E. Welch, *Response to Revolution: The United States and the Cuban Revolution, 1959-1961.* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1985), 49.

government's sharp criticisms of US policy, cabled to the State Department an extensive list of accusations commonplace in local Cuban propaganda. The overarching theme in the sixteen individual charges that Braddock identified, which were charges both the Cuban government and media had sounded throughout the previous year, was that the United States did not approve of the reform programs in Cuba and was taking steps to destroy the government and the revolution.[5] Braddock advocated launching an information program designed to counter the local propaganda, using both attributable and unattributable materials that the local USIS office could disseminate among the Cuban people and spread through the local media. This response, he advised "should tell [a] truthful straightforward story in a friendly tone, avoiding negative attitude toward Castro regime."[6]

Officials in the USIA, US State Department, and the US Embassy in Havana concurred with Braddock's recommendation for a re-tooled propaganda program to counter anti-American rhetoric in Cuba. After meeting with Ambassador Bonsal in early January, USIA Deputy Director Abbott Washburn wrote to the emissary later that month in agreement that the USIA and US embassy should increase their information efforts on the island "based on the premise that there is a longstanding reservoir of goodwill among the Cuban people toward the U.S."[7] As with so much of the US propaganda planning

[5] Telegram No. 1548 from the US Embassy in Havana to the US Secretary of State, January 4, 1960, 6 p.m., 1960-1965, DOSCDF, 611.37/1-460, RG 59, NACP, *Confidential US State Department Central Files, Cuba, 1960 – January 1963* (hereafter cited as *Cuba, 1960-1963*), mf, Reel 3.

[6] Ibid.

[7] Memorandum from the Deputy Director of the United States Information Agency (Washburn) to the Ambassador to Cuba (Bonsal), "Increased Information Effort in Cuba to Help Counter Castro's Anti-US Campaign," January 29, 1960. *FRUS*, 1958-1960, VI, Cuba, doc. 443.

after the insurgency period of the Cuban Revolution, the USIA and State Department continued their planning on the flawed presumption that Cubans accepted their narrative that presented the US as a friendly neighbor to the island.

Careful to adhere to the State Department's continuing policy of restrained response to the Cuban government and a message that projected the US as allied with the Cuban people, USIA staff proposed an information campaign stressing the economic, cultural, and historical ties between the people of the two countries.[8] Echoing Embassy Deputy Braddock's earlier report, Washburn agreed that the propaganda itself should be friendly and warm, with content that was, "factual, constructive, explanatory, [and] simple."[9] Key would be the USIA's ability to create understanding among the Cuban citizenry that the US was sympathetic with their demands for reform on the island, while counterbalancing such empathy with an explanation stressing the importance of the continued ties between the two countries and the danger communism posed to the Western Hemisphere; all while avoiding any direct challenge to Castro's policies.[10] Such a program, Washburn believed, would help to rebuild the US image in Cuba and was necessary for several reasons:

> (1) to keep as clear a US image as possible before the Cuban people at a time when Castro has increasingly portrayed the US as the source of greatest threat to Cuba; (2) to maintain and increase the friendship Cubans as individuals hold for the US; (3) to avoid leaving a vacuum for Communist and ultra-nationalistic extremism to fill; (4) to provide an increased supply of readily-available materials documenting the dangers of Communism.[11]

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[8] USIA, Director's Staff Meeting, February 1, 1960, Director's Staff Meeting Notes, box 2, Director's Office, RG 306, NACP.

[9] "Increased Information Effort in Cuba to Help Counter Castro's Anti-US Campaign," January 29, 1960. *FRUS*, 1958-1960, VI, Cuba, doc. 443.

[10] Ibid.

[11] Ibid.

These direct appeals would target Cubans in an effort to offset Castro's bold anti-American rhetoric and gain favor among the local public, whom USIA and Embassy officials continued to believe harbored goodwill towards the United States.[12] The USIS office in Havana spent the first six months of 1960 distributing pamphlets stressing to audiences the strong bond between the two nations. The field office also disseminated Ambassador Bonsal's correspondence to President Eisenhower and Secretary of State Herter pertaining to US-Cuban relations to local media in an effort to demonstrate the official position on the current state of affairs between the two countries.[13] These materials contained messages that clearly delineated between the US government's consternation over Castro's activities and rhetoric, and North American friendship for the Cuban people and support for local reform efforts.

USIS-Havana Efforts, January – Spring 1960

Castro and the Cuban media bombarded the island with a flurry of anti-American rhetoric in the first few months of 1960. Cuban accusations of US interference and Castro's warnings that it was only a matter of time before their northern neighbor intervened to stop the reforms taking place in Cuba carried over from the previous year. Responding, the Eisenhower government issued formal protests against the land reform compensation program for US-owned property on the island. The Cuban government

[12] Ibid.

[13] US Information Agency, *14th Review of Operations, January 1-June 30 1960*, 7, HathiTrust, https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=mdp.39015028986845;view=1up;seq=483 (accessed March 5, 2016).

countered with accusations that the United States government allowed exiled Cubans to freely conduct counterrevolutionary activities from within the US.[14]

Such verbal sparring between the two nations continued throughout the year, providing both governments with ammunition to make their cases to the Cuban public. Eisenhower officials' activities and responses supplied the Cuban government with examples of North American intervention in the island's internal political matters. The Eisenhower administration pointed to the Cuban government's accusations as examples of the revolution's unfounded hostility towards the United States and the danger Castro posed to long-standing ties between Cuba and the United States.

To help counter Castro's cries of inevitable US intervention in Cuba during the period, the USIS office in the Havana Embassy planned to publish and distribute a pamphlet promoting the US policy of non-intervention and confirming its "good faith in its relations [with the] revolutionary government."[15] Using factual materials gleaned from official statements and press releases that the Department of State had previously offered on the subject, the field office envisioned a straightforward timeline demonstrating the US reaction to Cuban government complaints against US interference.[16] Such a pamphlet, loaded with public statements, would correspond with the nascent propaganda campaign to counter anti-US rhetoric in Cuba with calm, factual response to Castro and Cuban media accusations.

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[14] Schoultz, *That Infernal Little Cuban Republic*, 110-112.

[15] Telegram from the US Embassy in Havana to the Secretary of State, January 20, 1960, 7 p.m., DOSCDF, 611.37/1-2060, RG 59, NACP, *Cuba, 1960-1963*, mf, Reel 3.

[16] Ibid.

Not all who observed the situation in Cuba were proponents of the agency's understated public diplomacy strategy on the island. The *Chicago Tribune* published an article and a follow-up editorial scathingly critical of the USIS response on the island to the Cuban press' continual inflammatory accusations against the United States early in the year. Describing USIS efforts as a "milk-toast" response to Cuban accusations, the article noted that while Castro and the local press railed against the US, the local field office in response handed out news bulletins on innocuous subjects rather than directly replying to Cuban charges.[17] "What case can be made," the newspaper's editors asked, "for spending taxpayers' money in preparing and distributing the drivel that the USIS is putting out?"[18]

The *Tribune* included a brief account of the soft topics USIS-Havana staff considered newsworthy enough to distribute to local media as Cuban newspapers assaulted the United States' image. The subjects included "the use of balloons to photograph the sun; they [the USIA] provided some statistics about the steel industry; they explained how languages are taught in Chicago; they told about the employment of women in Washington."[19] While certainly not the hard-hitting rebuttals that so many in the United States now wanted to see in response to Cuba's own propaganda assault upon the US, these were exactly the types of stories that the USIA and its field posts routinely distributed across the globe. The only exception was that such materials were typically part of a greater public diplomacy strategy promoting US policies, North American life,

[17] *Chicago Tribune,* "US Publicity Policy in Cuba is 'Hands Off,'" January 7, 1960,

[18] *Chicago Tribune,* "Castro's Slanders go Unanswered," January 9, 1960.

[19] Ibid.

and anticommunist messaging. There was little audience for these themes in Cuba, and certainly few media outlets were willing to publish any materials that others could construe as anti-revolutionary. Innocuous stories such as those the *Tribune* detailed offered value even if they did not defend US actions; they emphasized US superiority to audiences in non-politicized tones and provided Castro and the Cuban media with little fodder for their own propaganda efforts.

Placing even such benign messaging became ever more problematic for USIS-Havana staff in 1960 as Cuban media outlets continued to match Cuban government officials' increasingly hostile anti-US rhetoric in the new year. Writing to US Secretary of State Herter in January, Ambassador Bonsal reported that, along with the Cuban government leadership, "all press and radio spokesmen for GOC [Government of Cuba] have adopted strong and aggressive anti-Americanism as a firm policy."[20] As in 1959, the government-controlled and influenced newspapers led the assault with inflammatory articles and editorials. Bonsal noted that these publishers included rhetoric so extreme that "retreat to a more moderate position appears impossible unless they can manage to make it appear the result of...victory over [the] US."[21]

Such attacks on the United States were unlikely to cease in the near future, as the Cuban government only continued to gain greater control over the island's media network. The US Embassy observers in Havana reported that by February, 1960 the government had taken over eighty-three radio stations and two television stations on the

[20] Telegram from Habana to Secretary of State, January 18, 1960, 8:18 p.m., DOSCDF, 611.37/1-1860, RG 59, NACP, *Cuba, 1960-1963, Foreign*, mf, Reel 3.

[21] Ibid.

island as part of its plan to create its own broadcasting network.[22] Station staff reported that a number of government-influenced Cuban media personalities controlled the organization, branding it the *FIEL* network. This new chain, so intimately linked with Cuban government interests, exacerbated USIS staffs' increasing inability to air their own programming on the island and closed off the field post even more from its Cuban audience. Additionally, the network further enabled the revolutionary government to act as the primary information source and opinion molder on the island, leaving little room for USIS programming.

Though Havana-based media was increasingly unwilling to carry USIA messages, field office staff did report outlets outside of the city remained more accessible, at least during the first half of 1960.[23] With little access to major print or broadcast sources, USIS staff concentrated on other methods of disseminating information to audiences outside of the local media. This included relying on the field post's existing communication methods, such as literature, films, and direct interaction between the Cuban people and representatives of the United States government, relying especially on their mobile field units to carry their programming. However, the Agency noted that even these avenues were slowly disappearing within Cuba.[24]

By spring, USIS-Havana had almost no Cuban-based outlets remaining. Two of the remaining prominent newspapers that offered criticism to the Cuban government,

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[22] "USIA Daily Summary," No. 100, February 24, 1960, USIA Daily Summary, January and February, 1960, Daily Summaries, box 3, OPI, RG 306, NACP. The Cuban government intended to use the *FIEL* network as tool to "consolidate the revolution and orient the people."

[23] USIA, *14th Review of Operations, January 1-June 30, 1960,* 6-7.

[24] Ibid.

Diario de la Marina and *Prensa Libre*, still published daily. The popular radio and television network *CMQ* also continued to broadcast independently. However, government media mouthpieces and local labor organizations placed enormous pressure on these holdouts, prompting the US Embassy to surmise that the media outlets faced a dismal future. This prognosis came true in the summer as both *Diario de la Marina* and *Prensa Libre* closed; *CMQ* followed shortly after when the Cuban government seized the network.

Before his television and radio empire fell under the control of the Cuban government, Abel Mestre, co-owner of *CMQ*, traveled to the United States to meet with leaders from the United States Information Agency and the US State Department. In their meeting, Mestre laid out to the officials in charge of the information campaign the dire situation on the island, expressing his critical assessment of US efforts to tell their side of the story. In his view, the US had failed to "dramatize its case in order to capture the imagination of the Cuban people," nor, he contended, had the government taken advantage of US Ambassador Bonsal's local popularity.[25]

Mestre contended that the agency's inability to sway Cuban public opinion, in conjunction with the present reality that the USIA was unable to find outlets to carry its message, left the agency with few options remaining for its program in the Caribbean nation. Castro's ability to dominate the Cuban airwaves and the pages of local newspapers for over a year with his own narrative of events, without a powerful response from the United States, had created an environment where people were "beginning to

[25] Memorandum of Conversation, "Cuba – Views of Abel Mestre, co-owner of CMQ radio and TV network," April 20, 1960. DOSCDF 937.50/4-2060, RG 59, NACP, *Cuba, 1960-1963*, mf, Reel 37.

take Castro's line as gospel because they hear and read nothing else."[26] Although he was a strong, vocal, opponent to the Cuban government and willing to put his own holdings in jeopardy to get the US message out on the island, even Mestre himself indicated he felt the revolutionary government's pressure in response to his continued criticism and debated whether to abandon his interests on the island. The revolutionary government's subsequent seizure of his broadcast company settled the matter for him shortly after his trip to Washington, DC, settled the matter for him.

Cuban authorities threatened to further interrupt USIS-Havana's remaining ability to distribute informational programming during the spring. Rumors swirled in March that the Ministry of Education would soon ban pamphlet distribution in Cuban schools, thereby closing off one of USIS-Havana's most important remaining communication avenues.[27] One month later, the Havana printing company with which the USIS station had contracted to print its pamphlets ceased doing business with the field office. Without the means to produce large numbers of pamphlets on the island, station personnel would have to either bolster their own in-house printing or depend on USIS-Mexico to produce their publications.[28]

USIA officials received USIS-Havana's report that they had lost access to the city's largest printing company only days after station personnel delivered an assessment of the progress of informational activities in Cuba. Despite the bleak situation, field

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[26] "Cuba – Views of Abel Mestre, co-owner of CMQ radio and TV network," April 20, 1960, DOSCDF, RG 59, NACP, *Cuba, 1960-1963.*

[27] "USIA Daily Summary," No. 105, March 10, 1960, USIA Daily Summary, January and February 1960, Daily Summaries, box 3, OPI, RG 306, NACP.

[28] "USIA Daily Summary," No. 118, April 20, 1960, USIA Daily Summary March and April 1960, Daily Summaries, box 3, OPI, RG 306, NACP.

office staff remained surprisingly optimistic about the future of their programming in their analysis. USIS staff noted that while media access had diminished, other avenues still remained, including US commercial film releases and the station's ongoing use of mobile units to bring information to more remote areas on the island. Staff also reported pamphlet distribution and cultural activities were all higher at present than they had been in 1959. USIS-Havana information officers believed that their success in Cuba depended upon the "continued calm, factual tone of its [US] output, and the large numbers of Cubans who remain anxious to hear the US side of the story."[29]

The field staffs' optimistic appraisal to their agency brethren in Washington, DC, differed from that of former USIS-Havana PAO Richard Cushing, who now served as part of a State Department Task Force on Cuba. After visiting the island earlier that spring, Cushing provided his own assessment on the post's ability to communicate with the Cuban people. Writing to USIA Deputy Director Washburn, Cushing issued a much more dismal report than what the field office provided only weeks later. Though his findings matched USIS-Havana reports that the station's publication and film programs continued to find some level of success, Cushing pessimistically remarked on the "walls closing in" on informational activities outside of those venues.[30]

The former PAO observed that both the Cuban government and the Cuban public contributed to the station's limited operations. Cushing reported that the remaining Cuban media not under government control would likely be so in the very near future,

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[29] "USIA Daily Summary," No. 117, April 15, 1960, USIA Daily Summary March and April 1960, Daily Summaries, box 3, OPI, RG 306, NACP.

[30] Memorandum from Richard G. Cushing of the Office of the Public Affairs Advisor, Bureau of Inter-American Affairs, to the Deputy Director of the United States Information Agency (Washburn), "Reactions on Visit to Habana," April 5, 1960. *FRUS,* 1958-1960, VI, Cuba, doc. 497.

thereby completely closing off those outlets to USIA programming. With such limited access, USIS-Havana staff would have little opportunity to offset local anti-US hostility. Between the constant Cuban propaganda that Cushing and the US embassy noted, and USIS-Havana's inability to effectively counter the barrage with their own message, the Cuban public only had one narrative to choose from; a narrative, Cushing noted, that "had been swallowed in whole or part by a dangerous number of Cubans, even those who should know better."[31] In such an environment, USIS-Havana personnel expressed pessimism in their conversations with Cushing that the field office might have to shut down its informational program in Cuba.[32]

Unable to rely on either local media or USIS-Havana's other means of reaching the Cuban audience en masse, the USIA considered off-island options over the spring and into the summer months. These included a number of unorthodox ideas and even antagonistic methods of communicating with Cuban audiences. Briefing Eisenhower's National Security Council in April, USIA Director George Allen addressed the issue, presenting the group with a range of proposals for communicating with Cuban audiences that agency strategists had developed. The proposals ranged from relatively benign activity to more aggressive action.

At the more innocuous end of the spectrum was the USIA's idea to broadcast professional baseball games in the US to Cuban audiences with USIA programming airing between innings. Though Allen believed that the number of Cuban baseball fans made this proposal appealing, he agreed with NSC members that the strategy was "not

[31] "Reactions on Visit to Habana," April 5, 1960.

[32] Ibid.

sufficiently dignified for a U.S. program."[33] Another of the agency's less overtly aggressive strategies was to buy air-time for Cuban exiles on local South Florida radio stations with signals that could reach the island, but noted that many of the station owners were concerned that Spanish-language broadcasts would cost them their regular listeners.[34]

The USIA had actually considered such medium-wave broadcasting to Cuba from the US mainland well before the NSC meeting. The agency's radio broadcast division officials met with radio station owners in Atlanta and the South Florida area in March to gauge their interest in broadcasting USIA programming. The broadcast division also dispatched staff to Cuba to travel the island to monitor how well US medium-wave broadcasts reached the island. After reviewing the data, IBS staff could only identify one station, located in Key West, powerful enough to broadcast a signal to Cuba during daytime hours.[35] Their report also indicated that station owners would only be willing to air USIA programming in the evenings after their regular commercial hours. Even then, station owners would only agree to carry such transmissions if the State Department and White House made a formal request, and the Federal Communications Commission permitted such broadcasts.[36]

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[33] Memorandum of Discussion at the 441st Meeting of the National Security Council, Washington, April 14, 1960, *FRUS*, 1958-1960, VI, Cuba, doc. 505.

[34] Ibid.

[35] USIA, Director's Staff Meeting, April 4, 1960, Director's Staff Meeting 1960, Director's Staff Meeting Notes, box 2, Director's Office, RG 306, NACP.

[36] USIA, Director's Staff Meeting, March 28, 1960, Director's Staff Meeting 1960, Director's Staff Meeting Notes, box 2, Director's Office, RG 306, NACP.

USIA and State Department officials were also reluctant to use medium-range broadcasts for fear that such action would hinder USIS-Havana's little remaining effectiveness on the island. Both the Cuban government and public could well interpret US-based broadcasts as an overt psychological warfare tactic, which would only inflame Cuban rhetoric and harden anti-US sentiment. State and USIA officials advocated continued reliance on USIS-Havana on-island programming to provide Cubans with the US message, introducing external medium-wave radio only "when all else fails."[37]

Still, Allen offered National Security Council members even more aggressive options than medium-wave broadcasting during their April meeting. These plans included using a Super-Constellation aircraft modified to carry broadcasting equipment to transmit a television signal to Cuba while circling above Key West and constructing a medium-wave transmitter in the same area to broadcast exclusively to the island nation.[38] These were truly belligerent options that violated international agreements. Allen emphasized to the council the potential harm such overt, intrusive activities could cause to the US image in Cuba and also Latin America. Concerned with violating FCC laws at home, international communications treaties abroad, and providing the Fidel Castro with a ready-made example of US aggression, the council members dismissed such proposals.[39] Director Allen agreed with the National Security Council's decision, noting

[37] Department of State Memorandum, Rubottom to Herter, "Senator Allott's Views on Broadcasting to Cuba," March 29, 1960, Press, Radio, Theatre, Cuba, Subject Files, 1960-1963 (hereafter cited as Subject Files), box 8, Bureau of Inter-American Affairs, Office of Coordinator of Cuban Affairs (hereafter cited as ARA/CCA), RG 59, NACP.

[38] Memorandum of Discussion at the 441st Meeting of the National Security Council, Washington, April 14, 1960, *FRUS*, 1958-1960, VI, Cuba, doc. 505.

[39] Ibid.

that the most effective method of communicating with the Cuban population would be through the use of short-wave broadcasts, despite reports that sets capable of receiving such radio broadcasts were rare among the Cuban population.[40]

Still, short-range broadcasts were a legal method that the USIA could employ to reach Cuban audiences. On March 21, the Voice of America introduced a nightly one-hour block of Spanish programming for all of Latin America. Supplementing the current two and a half hours of English language material, the agency's staff promoted the new programs to the entire region, but "tailored [them] principally for Cuba and the Caribbean."[41] The programming featured twenty minutes of VOA news, a fifteen minute "feature" segment, and a musical segment.[42] The broadcasts reflected the VOA's reputation as a "straight" news source, as staff intended not to include any critical or harsh themes in their programs or messages that explicitly expressed any anti-Castro opinion.[43] Rather, the USIA used the segments to address the Cuban public and provide the United States' perspective on the current difficulties in an "official, dignified way."[44]

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[40] Ibid. Allen noted that the total number of short wave radios on the island was around 150,000, prompting a discussion on the feasibility to deliver additional radios to the island.

[41] "USIA Daily Summary," No. 109, March 21, 1960, USIA Daily Summary March and April 1960, Daily Summaries, box 3, OPI, RG 306, NACP.

[42] *Hearings before the Subcommittee on Inter-American Affairs of the Committee on Foreign Affairs House of Representatives, Eighty-Six Congress, Second Session, June 17, 20, 24, 1960, The Communist Threat in Latin America* (Statement of John P. McKnight, Assistant Director for Latin America, United States Information Agency), (Washington: USGPO, 1960), 74, HathiTrust, https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=umn.31951d020917541;view=1up;seq=78 (accessed February 25, 2016).

[43] "USIA Daily Summary," No. 109," March 21, 1960, Daily Summaries, RG 306, NACP.

[44] Department of State Memorandum, Rubottom to Herter, "Senator Allott's Views on Broadcasting to Cuba," March 29, 1960, Subject Files, RG 59, NACP.

Though Cubans and the majority of other Latin Americans did not listen to short-wave radio in large numbers, USIS-Havana staff gave strong support to the plan. The USIA instructed all of its Latin American field offices not to provide the new service with any publicity.[45] The USIA quickly received proof that Cubans were listening to the features: Cuban Foreign Minister Raúl Roa criticized the broadcasts during his appearance on a Cuban television news segment just a few days after the broadcasts started. The US embassy reported that Roa accused the VOA of distorting issues and trying to "soften [the] defenses of [the] Cuban revolution."[46] Cuban reaction to the VOA broadcasts proved mixed. The *New York Times* quoted one Cuban's tepid response, the interviewee noted, "Fidel doesn't have to worry about that kind of program. It was merely a straight newscast and old news at that. We read all that in yesterday's newspaper."[47] USIS-Havana staff, meanwhile, indicated a much greater interest among the local audiences, reporting that Cuban visitors to the US Embassy left with 400 to 500 pamphlets containing the VOA broadcast schedule, daily.[48]

The VOA broadcasts to the region continued into the summer months and the agency relied on their radio station to reach those Cubans with access to short-wave receivers. USIS-Havana staff reported to Washington, DC, that visitors to the Embassy's Visa office took 400 to 500 VOA program schedules every day.[49] But, as the Cuban

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[45] "USIA Daily Summary," No. 109, March 21, 1960, Daily Summaries, RG 306, NACP.

[46] Bonsal to Secretary of State Herter, March 25, 1960, 7:00 p.m. DOSCDF, 611.37/3-2560, RG 59, NACP, *Cuba, 1960*-1963, mf, Reel 3.

[47] *New York Times,* "Heard by Few Cubans," March 22, 1960.

[48] USIA, Director's Staff Meeting, July 18, 1960, Director's Staff Meeting 1960, Staff Meeting Notes, box 2, Director's Office, RG 306, NACP.

[49] Director' Staff Meeting, July 18, 1960, Staff Meeting Notes, RG 306, NACP.

issue intensified over the summer within the United States, the Voice's limited role in Latin American informational programming became fodder for US politicians who were critical of USIA efforts to offset the anti-US rhetoric in Cuba.

The VOA efforts to broadcast to Cuban audiences emerged as a domestic political issue in the US in the spring and summer and served as a topic in the presidential debates between candidates Richard Nixon and John F. Kennedy that fall. Yet, well before Kennedy and Nixon debated the Cuban issue, congressional leadership took interest in how the USIA intended to counter Castro's rhetoric. The congressional budgetary hearings for the USIA in June served as a referendum on the current state of the VOA's effectiveness and the practicability of medium-wave radio transmissions reaching the Cuban public. During the hearings, a frustrated Senator Karl Mundt questioned VOA Director Henry Loomis on his division's progress in broadcasts to the island. Mundt criticized the agency for advocating the need for a global communications program when the USIA could hardly broadcast to a nation only ninety miles off the US coast.[50] As Director Allen had done in previous hearings, Loomis and the head of the USIA's Latin American activities, John P. McKnight, defended the agency's broadcast operations to Cuba, stressing the international agreements and technological limitations that prevented such broadcasts from US-based stations.

For Loomis, the problem was simple: there were no US stations powerful enough to send a medium-wave signal to Cuba during prime listening hours. Cuba's large

[50] *Senate Appropriations Committee Hearings, Eighty-Six Congress, Second Session on HR 11666, 1961* (Cuba a Laboratory Case), (Washington: USGPO, 1960), 696-697, HathiTrust, https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=mdp.39015018402449;view=1up;seq=712 (accessed February 25, 2016).

network of radio stations effectively jammed all outside broadcasts, save for short wave.[51] Senator Mundt found these explanations unacceptable, stating that private radio industry officials had informed him that broadcasts were indeed possible. Loomis, however, remained adamant that this was not the case, stating "Of course, any of these stations [from the US] can be heard somewhere at sometime [in Cuba]. What we were talking about though, is a signal that is an easily listenable signal, particularly in Havana."[52]

Walter Lemmon, President of the Massachusetts-based *WRUL* short wave broadcasting company, provided his own testimony to the subject as part of the hearing proceeding two days later. Unlike Loomis and the VOA, Lemmon believed that opportunities existed to reach Cuba through medium-range radio stations in South Florida and through his own short-wave radio transmissions. Lemmon countered that medium-wave transmissions could, indeed, reach Cuban audiences. The radio company owner also emphasized that short-wave broadcasts remained a viable option for US informational planning, noting that though Cubans did not own short-wave radios in abundance, those that were on the island often attracted large crowds to listen to broadcasts, estimating that listenership could potentially reach an audience of two million.[53]

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[51] *Senate Appropriations Committee Hearings for 1961*, 696-697.

[52] Ibid., 698.

[53] *Senate Appropriations Committee Hearings for 1961* (Statement of Walter S. Lemmon, President of World Wide Broadcasting System, Inc.), 926, HathiTrust, https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=mdp.39015018402449;view=1up;seq=940 (accessed February 25, 2016).

Lemmon's protests and the Appropriations Committee's frustration aside, the USIA seemed little willing to allocate funding to medium-wave broadcasting or underwriting private efforts to do the same by the summer of 1960. Technological limitations, local audience listening preferences, and the political fallout that could potentially occur if the US attempted to use medium-wave domestic radio to transmit messages to another country all complicated the agency's use of radio broadcasting. Though the Eisenhower administration's policy now provided for a more direct US retort to Castro's claims, the USIA and national security strategists did not want to provide the Cuban opposition with further examples of US interference in Cuban affairs and further enflame anti-US sentiment on the island, or in the region.

US Relationship with Cuba after Spring 1960

The diplomatic relationship between the two nations proved even more tenuous in the summer of 1960. In May, US oil companies with refineries in Cuba refused to accept a shipment of Soviet petroleum for the Cuban government. The Cuban government responded by assuming control of the facilities. Two months later, the US Congress authorized President Eisenhower to cut the Cuban sugar quota, the island's main economic driver. Castro again responded by expropriating more US-based businesses on the island.[54] At the same time, Castro edged Cuba closer to the Soviet Union and the communist bloc in an effort to break free of US hegemony, receiving weapons and supplies from Czechoslovakia in July to bolster his military's effectiveness.[55] This

[54] Blasier, "The Elimination of United States Influence," in Carmelo Mesa-Lago, ed., *Revolutionary Change in Cuba*, 64-68; Schoultz, 119-126.

[55] Blasier, 69.

seesawing barrage of escalating action and reaction fostered an environment unfavorable to any diplomatic resolution and set the stage for the Eisenhower administration to employ coercive policies in the summer of 1960 to temper the Cuban Revolution.[56]

While Washington, DC, policymakers implemented plans to hasten Castro's downfall, the US embassy in Havana continued slogging along on the island with their own operations as the tensions between the two governments worsened. Deputy Braddock cabled Secretary of State Herter in early March, reporting on the embassy staffs' predictions on the future relationship. Writing shortly after a Castro and Cuban media-led anti-US rhetoric bombardment accused the Eisenhower administration of the mysterious explosion of the freighter *La Coubre* in Havana's harbor, Braddock's report indicated that none of his embassy staff were optimistic:

> Country Team of unanimous opinion there is no (repeat no) hope that US will ever be able to establish a satisfactory relationship with Cuban government as long as it is dominated by Fidel Castro, Raul Castro, Che Guevara and like-minded associates.[57]

Likely unaware to any great degree of Eisenhower's current covert strategy for the island nation, Braddock and his colleagues in Havana argued that the best diplomatic course of action was continuing the policy the administration had instituted at the beginning of the year: express disdain for Castro and the government, but without doing so in way that others could construe as US interventionism.[58]

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[56] For analysis of Eisenhower's tougher approach starting in the summer, see Welch, *Response to Revolution*, 60-63 and Rabe, *Eisenhower and Latin America*, 164-165.

[57] Telegram, Habana to Secretary of State, March 8, 1960, DOSCDF, 611.37/3-860, RG 59, *Cuba, 1960-1963*, mf, Reel 3. Richard Welch notes that the *La Coubre* incident was the final in a series of events in the early months of 1960 that prompted Eisenhower to approve "Operation Zapata." See Welch, 49.

[58] Ibid.

Though USIS personnel were unable to engage in any significant informational activities on the island by the summer, the USIA still relied upon the Cuban field office to contribute to region-wide programs. Along with other Embassy staff, station personnel provided their parent agency with valuable first-hand intelligence, which USIA staff included in the propaganda materials they prepared for other Latin American nations. Such information proved invaluable to the USIA and its other field offices' efforts to devise an informational campaign explaining to Latin American audiences outside of Cuba the crisis from the US viewpoint, and the potential danger the Cuban government posed to the regional Cold War consensus. Writing to Ambassador Bonsal in June, Assistant Secretary of Inter-American Affairs Richard Rubottom urged the head of the US mission in Cuba to instruct his offices to take full advantage of their presence on the island and observe and report local Cuban activities that could make for interesting source material for regional programming. Rubottom stated that the task force members at the State Department, which included USIA staff, were especially anxious to receive human interest stories and reports that they could use to "illustrate what is actually going on" within Cuba.[59]

USIS-Havana field office personnel continued to express their concerns over increasing communist informational and cultural activity in Cuba. The year started off in a particularly troubling manner when the Soviet Union held a trade fair exhibition in Havana that opened in early February, and other events followed in its wake. Shortly afterwards began a two week showing of Soviet Union-produced films, and field office

[59] Letter from the Assistant Secretary of State for Inter-American Affairs (Rubottom) to the Ambassador in Cuba (Bonsal), June 1, 1960, *FRUS*, 1958-1960, VI, Cuba, doc. 524.

staff noted that another fifty two Soviet films might soon appear in local Cuban theaters.[60] PAO John Z. Williams reported increased communist propaganda activities in the days leading up to the exhibition and other publicized activities, particularly in the government-controlled media. These programs met with little negative reporting of what Williams referred to as a Russian "propaganda invasion."[61] Williams did note, however, that many local musicians had declined an offer to perform in an upcoming symphony concert under the direction of a visiting Soviet conductor.[62]

Staff continued to report on the growing communist informational and cultural presence, not only from external communist sources, but also stemming from a stronger Cuban Communist Party presence on the island. The communist newspaper *Hoy* enjoyed a daily circulation of over 20,000, and it was not the only communist-penned publication in Cuba; The PSP also produced a number of publications that catered to specific interest groups. PSP youths produced *Mella*, a bi-monthly magazine with a circulation of 30,000; intellectuals could read *Fundamentos*, a magazine the PSP produced 17,000 copies of monthly; and laborers enjoyed *Unidad Obrero*, another monthly publication.[63]

The communist propaganda onslaught also included pamphlets, booklets, film, radio, and television. Williams reported that many of these materials emanated from sources outside of Cuba, but that the PSP, too, made inroads with their local efforts.

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[60] Foreign Service Despatch, USIS-Habana to USIS-Washington, "Trade Fair and Other Soviet Cultural Offering in Havana," February 3, 1960, 1960 Action Copies [January through June], Program Files, box 5, IRI/LA, RG 306, NACP. Williams also noted that the Peking Opera would also soon perform in Cuba.

[61] Ibid., Program Files.

[62] Ibid. Williams reported that *Diario de la Marina* had criticized the exhibition amid a two page spread entitled "Is this Truly the 'Soviet Paradise?'"

[63] USIS-Habana to USIA-Washington, "Communist Propaganda Activities in Cuba," March 15, 1960, 1960 Action Copies [January through June], Program Files, box 5, IRI/LA, RG 306, NACP.

These included regular PSP broadcasts on Cuban radio stations throughout the island, along with a weekly television broadcast in Havana, *Problemas de Hoy y Mañana* (*Problems of Today and Tomorrow*).[64] PSP members even created their own film distribution company on the island, "Peli-Cuba."[65]

While USIS-Havana's information program withered, and communist efforts reportedly thrived, the station's cultural programming still attracted an audience in Cuba. By summer, USIA officials noted that cultural offerings were virtually the only remaining outlet that field post staff had for reaching Cuban audiences.[66] USIS-Havana's efforts to keep Cuban audiences tied to the US also succeeded through the field post's reading room in Santa Clara, the small information center station personnel had opened in downtown Havana in February, and with the office's relationship with the two private binational centers on the island.

Even in the latter stages of the year when relations were at their bleakest, the binational centers in Havana and Santiago de Cuba remained popular with Cuban attendees. During his visit to the Oriente Province in May, Ambassador Bonsal toured the new Cuban-American Cultural Center in Santiago. In his conversation with the Center's director, George McCready told Bonsal that student enrollment in English classes at the center had reached 190 and he planned to expand the center when he could find the funding.[67] Despite his optimism for the organization's future, McCready did

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[64] Ibid, Program Files.

[65] Ibid.

[66] USIA, Director's Staff Meeting, May 31, 1960, Director's Staff Meeting Notes, box 2, Director's Office, RG 306, NACP.

[67] Despatch from the Embassy in Cuba to the Department of State, "Visit of Ambassador Bonsal to Oriente Province," May 23, 1960, *FRUS*, 1958-1960, VI, Cuba, doc. 520.

inform Ambassador Bonsal that while the anti-US rhetoric in Cuba had little effect on center activities, there were "continuing rumors that the [Cuban] Government might intervene or seek to restrict the operations of the center."[68]

Careful not to alienate what positive support remained for the United States in Cuba, USIA and State Department policymakers persisted in their strategy to delineate between the Eisenhower administration's dissatisfaction with the Cuban government and its empathy for the Cuban public, as it had done since the administration's decision that the Cuban government posed a threat to US national security. US policymakers continued to operate under the assumption that the bonds that cemented Cuba and its northern neighbor would keep local sentiment aligned with the United States. As Jules Benjamin notes in his work on the subject, these planners based their opinions, in part, on "the twentieth century view that Cuban and U.S. interests naturally coincided."[69] Even during the dismal summer of 1960 and after, US observers on the Cuban situation maintained such an outlook. Cuba needed the United States for its economic vitality and would not completely sever their ties with their neighbor, US officials reasoned, nor would they stray too far from the inter-American system. Once a more moderate government replaced Castro's revolutionary system, the nation would reverse course back into the Latin American Cold War consensus in economic and political cooperation with the United States.

USIA staff held similar views on Cuban public opinion that pro-North American sentiment remained among much of the population. The problem for any future agency

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[68] "Visit of Ambassador Bonsal to Oriente Province," May 23, 1960.

[69] Jules Benjamin, *The United States and the Origins of the Cuban Revolution: An Empire of Liberty in an age of National Liberation.* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990), 197.

informational programming that could potentially tap into that goodwill was that the USIA no longer had adequate access to Cubans to communicate any of their themes. The Cuban government and Cuban media's anti-US message drowned any US response on the island. This did not mean that the USIA abandoned programming in Cuba, only that strategists had to adapt to present conditions and find new methods to reach mass audiences with their messaging. Recognizing that Cubans, even those that still harbored sympathy with the US, would be leery of any government-produced propaganda, the USIA launched a campaign in late summer, hiding the agency as the message source. With this new program, the appeal to the Cuban people would appear to come not from the US government, but directly from the American people.

The agency had first considered direct, friendly appeals to Cubans from non-governmental actors at the beginning of the year as part of their plan to launch a grander informational campaign on the island. USIA Under-Secretary Abbott Washburn initially proposed a letter-writing campaign featuring prominent US citizens with personal connections to the island through articles published in local newspapers. Washburn's initial proposal was for the campaign to appear as having originated outside the federal government through an "American Friends of Cuba" organization. This private attempt to reach out to their southern neighbors allowed the USIA to cloak the message within the guise of what Washburn described as a "credibility and friendliness of approach not available to the U.S. Government."[70]

[70] Memorandum from the Deputy Director of the United States Information Agency (Washburn) to the Ambassador in Cuba (Bonsal), "Increased Information Effort in Cuba to Help Counter Castro's Anti-US Campaign," January 29, 1960, *FRUS*, 1958-1960, VI, Cuba, doc. 443.

The US Information Agency's second in command pursued this plan into the spring as Washburn met with advisors outside the agency to assess its potential. Their feedback indicated that such a proposal would be ineffective; Cubans would likely dismiss the effort as a government ploy, they reasoned, and even the slightest criticism of Castro would diminish its effectiveness.[71] In a separate report, former USIS-Havana PAO and current coordinator for informational activities in the Department of State's Cuban task force Richard G. Cushing, disagreed. Cushing's recent tour of Cuba led him to believe that a friendly-themed letter campaign from North Americans whom Cubans were familiar with could be very successful on the island "since," as he observed, "the official [Cuban] line has been that the Cubans have no argument with the *people* of the US."[72]

The agency set their plan in motion over the summer, opting to carry out the campaign through the private "People-to-People" program, thus eliminating any tinge of government influence. The agency initially launched "People-to-People" in 1955 in an attempt to marry public and private efforts to promote the United States abroad. A number of committees representing diverse interest groups in the US represented the program publicly, tasked with communicating with foreign audiences who shared similar interests. These were ostensibly non-governmental "grassroots" initiatives that private

[71] Memorandum from Washburn to Canter, "American Friends of Cuba – Consultation with Dr. Kirk and Dean Barrett," March 30, 1960, USIA Cuba 1960, Subject Files, box 9, ARA/CCA, RG 59, NACP.

[72] Memorandum from the Assistant Secretary of State for Inter-American Affairs (Rubottom) to the Under-Secretary of State (Dillon), "Action Program on Cuba," December 28, 1959, *FRUS*, 1958-1960, VI, Cuba, doc. 414.

US citizens controlled, supposedly with little US funding and USIA involvement.[73] As with many of the program's other efforts, this was not the case for the Cuban "People-to-People" project. Describing the final product to Secretary of State Christian Herter, USIA Director George Allen noted that the project was the result of the agency's collaboration with private groups, the Latin American Desk at the State Department, and the US embassy in Havana. The USIA also provided payment to the newspaper corporations that carried the letter in their editions.[74]

The campaign featured the members of the "People-to-People" Foreign Relations Committee publishing a letter in newspapers that catered to Latin Americans readers. Containing the signatures of thirteen prominent Americans, such as Leonard Bernstein and Arthur Schlesinger, Jr., the full-page advertisement contained a mixture of appeals to Cuban audiences. The letter promoted the historic ties between the two nations, stressed that North Americans harbored no ill-will for the Cuban people, expressed alarm over the growing communist presence in the Cuban government, and defended the US actions in the face of the Cuban government's continued vitriol.

Entitled "Open Letter to the People of Cuba" the advertisement expressed North American concerns over the Cuban government's hostile attitude towards the United States, with opening lines stating "We believe that you, the Cuban people, can be no more satisfied than are we with the harm being done our traditionally friendly ties. We hope that together the force of our combined public opinion can halt the forces which

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[73] See Cull, *The Cold War and the United States Information Agency,* 118-119 and Kenneth Osgood, *Total Cold War: Eisenhower's Secret Propaganda Battle at Home and Abroad.* (Lawrence: University of Kansas Press, 2006), 232-237.

[74] Memorandum from George Allen to Christian Herter, July 21, 1960, DOSCDF, 611.37/7-2160, RG 59, NACP, *Cuba, 1960-1963*, mf, Reel 4.

seek to divide us."[75] The authors emphasized that the people of the United States supported Cuban reform efforts, but many were concerned with the Cuban government's accusations of US hostility, the increasing communist presence on the island, and that the government continued to link anticommunism as counter to the Cuban Revolution.[76] The signees ended their letter with the popular appeal to the intertwined relationship between the two nations:

> For over 60 years, since the time when Cubans and Americans fought and died together in the cause of Cuban independence, we have lived and worked together in the spirit of friendly neighbors. We must not allow this to be replaced by suspicion and animosity. Let us mobilize the force of public opinion in both our countries and continue on the road of understanding, friendship, and mutual helpfulness.[77]

Staff placed the letter in three leading US-based Latin American newspapers that circulated throughout the region, including the Miami-based *Diario de las Americas*, which typically sold 3,000 copies in Cuba, Director Allen relayed to Secretary of State Herter when presenting him with the final version of the program. USIA personnel arranged for the Frente Revolucionario Democráctico anti-Castro group to distribute 1,000 copies at the University of Havana and sent another 500 copies to students at the University of Santiago. The Miami-based *Diario* also intended to deliver 23,000 additional copies of the letter to the island through other methods. The campaign also took advantage of the last remaining mass media at the USIA's disposal by broadcasting

[75] Memorandum from Allen to Herter, July 21, 1960, DOSCDF, RG 59, NACP, *Cuba, 1960-1963.*

[76] Ibid.

[77] Ibid.

the text of the message over the VOA and *WRUL* short-range radio systems, and through the few medium-wave stations in South Florida that could reach the Cuban mainland.[78]

How effective this propaganda effort actually was in Cuba is unclear. The mere fact that the USIA had to rely on domestic publishers to carry the letter suggests that Cuban consumption may have been minimal. Indeed, both USIA Director Allen and Secretary of State Herter considered that much of the project's appeal was that the USIA was also distributing the letter to other Latin American countries, where it might influence public opinion for the US position.[79] The letter's propaganda benefits may have had greater success outside of its intended primary target, as it demonstrated to audiences elsewhere in the region, through a non-governmental source, that the US was not the belligerent adversary to Cuba that the Cuban government's own propaganda efforts alleged.

Fall and Winter 1960

After the flurry of activity over the summer and into the fall, the diplomatic relationship between the two nations all but ended. US officials ceased their attempts at negotiating for reimbursement on the behalf of American business interests in Cuba, Fidel Castro denounced the United States on the floor of the United Nations General Assembly in September, and President Eisenhower established an embargo on trade with the island-nation the following month.[80] Cuba, in the eyes of many in the Eisenhower

[78] Ibid.

[79] Ibid; Memorandum from Herter to Allen, August 3, 1960, DOSCDF, 611.37/7-2160, RG 59, NACP, *Cuba, 1960-1963, Foreign*, mf, Reel 4.

[80] Schoultz, 134-136.

administration and US public opinion, had essentially become a Soviet satellite in the Caribbean ruled by a totalitarian dictator by the waning months of 1960. Traditional diplomatic efforts, including public diplomacy, had failed to keep the Cuba within the Latin American Cold War consensus or aligned with US foreign policies. Cuba and the Cubans subjected to Castro's control needed liberating. Having gained some support in the Organization of American States (OAS) in August for future action against a Cuban government that threatened to disrupt inter-American solidarity and provide communism an access point in Latin America, the Eisenhower administration waited for its economic measures and covert plans to take effect on the island. These strategies would accomplish what diplomacy in any form could not: halting the radical aspects of the Cuban Revolution and replacing the Castro-led government with one more amenable to US interests.

Largely unaware of these machinations taking place in Washington, DC, the US diplomatic mission in Havana continued to fight a losing battle into the fall and winter. USIS-Havana staff became an example of US "imperialist media' and its overwhelming influence in Cuba. Within the pages of *Hoy*, PSP leader Blas Roca continued to rail against USIS-Havana as part of his assault on foreign companies in Cuba with their own agendas. In the case of USIS materials, Roca labeled the office's news coverage to as merely as a US government advertising ploy that penetrated Cuban society through the island's media. The Communist Party leader accused USIS-Havana staff of exerting their influence and connections to manipulate the Cuban press, turning local media into a "giant gear for the 'cold war' propaganda wheel."[81]

[81] *Noticias de Hoy,* "Publicidad como Formula de Mediatización," August 28, 1960. DLOC, http://dloc.com/AA00022089/05862/9x?search=inform (accessed March 5, 2016).

Such hostility and direct attacks against field office operations severely curtailed USIS-Havana staff's ability to promote US policies and culture. As a result, the field office's capacity to reply to either the Cuban media or Castro's anti-US onslaughts shrank to its lowest point in the fall. While the Eisenhower administration took their case to Latin American leadership at the OAS Conference in San José, Costa Rica, to gain support for intervention in Cuba, and the USIA and its other Latin American USIS posts prepared informational materials to provide the public in the region with the US side of the story in the ongoing dispute, Havana post staff could only observe. With no access to print, television, or radio on the island, little remained for the staff to do but send reports to their parent agency. By early October, the US embassy in Havana recommended to the USIA that the local USIS field station should reduce its local staff to three US officers, representing the prevailing outlook on future local informational programming opportunities within Cuba.[82]

In November, the US Department of State requested a report on the current Cuban attitudes towards the US and how the department could improve its messaging to gain more favor for US foreign policy among the population. USIS-Havana personnel offered a dismal reply. The joint State-USIS assessment described a field office unable to communicate to the Cuban people on any level due to the lack of access to Cuban media who had the power to pick and choose, and edit the articles it ran from the US. Other

[82] USIA, Director's Staff Meeting, October 3, 1960, Director's Staff Meeting 1960, Staff Meeting Notes, box 2, Director's Office, RG 306, NACP.

avenues, such as USIS film and publication distribution, were extremely limited or halted altogether due to the Cuban government's control.[83]

A *New York Times* article from the same period offers further detail on the situation for informational programming in Cuba by the fall of 1960. Citing sources within the US Embassy, the article reported that the post's messaging program on the island neared its end. The article informed readers of the near impossibility for the station staff to get local Cuban media to print even the softest news stories. Confirming the station report that staff were having difficulty screening their films and disseminating publications, the newspaper noted that this was in part due to the fact that Cuban government-sponsored farm cooperatives and local private schools no longer allowed USIS mobile film units on their premises, blocking the post's efforts to communicate with Cuban audiences in a more intimate atmosphere.[84] Pamphlets and publications fared somewhat better, as the article noted that staff distributed writings that stressed the history and economic bonds between the two nations.[85] A trickle of US books also reached Cuban audiences, though these primarily went to, as the *Times* quoted one embassy official, "known friends," meaning Cubans who remained on the station's mailing list, adding "and some of them say they have to read by flashlight now."[86]

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[83] Foreign Service Despatch, Amembassy Habana to The Department of State, Washington, "Request for Information Regarding Local Attitudes Helpful in Improving Imact of US Policy Expositions," November 9, 1960, DOSCDF, 611.37/11-960, RG 59, NACP, *Cuba, 1960-1963*, mf, Reel 4. The embassy noted that the only consistent outlet for materials from the USIS office in Havana were the short and medium-range broadcasts from Radio Swan.

[84] *New York Times*, "U.S – Cuban Cultural Ties Ebb: Field Left Open to Soviet Bloc," November 6, 1960. The *Times* did note that two mobile units in Havana and one in Santa Clara still made some appearances.

[85] Ibid.

[86] Ibid.

The working environment for USIS operations on the island perhaps reached their nadir in the final weeks of the year. With no access to Cuban radio stations, station staff compensated for their inability to broadcast through traditional sources by playing summaries of news broadcasts within the US embassy in Havana, targeting Cuban citizens who entered the facility to obtain visas allowing them to leave the country.[87] Ever hopeful, USIS staff contended that even broadcasting to such a limited audience inside the embassy would prove beneficial, as the Cuban listeners were "outlets to hundreds more who receive a distorted and incomplete view of the world scene from the government press."[88] This report demonstrates the small sphere in which USIS-Havana staff could effectively work by the winter of 1960. Once possessing free access to Cuban mass media throughout the island, with audiences, or at least editors and program schedulers, eager to use the post's materials, USIS-Havana's reach now extended only to the Visa office in its own building.

By this time, US Embassy staff in Havana offered their opinion to the Department of State that communists in Cuba had taken complete control of the Cuban government, labeling it as "an intolerable threat to [US] prestige and its security which has to be eliminated."[89] Any ideas of reconciliation between the two countries would not be

[87] Operations Memorandum; USIS-Habana to USIA-Washington, "Wireless File Radio-Television Newscast," November 16, 1960, USIA Cuba 1960, Subject Files, box 9, ARA/CCA, RG 59, NACP.

[88] USIS-Habana to USIA-Washington, "Wireless File Radio-Television Newscast," November 16, 1960, Subject Files, RG 59, NACP.

[89] Despatch from the Embassy in Cuba to the Department of State, "Communist Infiltration and Influence in Cuba Since April 13, 1960," November 16, 1960. *FRUS*, 1958-1960, VI, Cuba, doc. 611; Despatch From the Embassy in Cuba to the Department of State, "Country Team Recommendation on Policy re Cuba (Subject to approval by Ambassador Bonsal, who is absent on consultation in the United States)," December 5, 1960, *FRUS*, 1958-1960, VI, Cuba, doc. 616.

possible with the current Castro-led government in Cuba. There were few left in the White House and State Department at that time who disagreed with the embassy report.[90]

Embassy analysts on the ground in Cuba believed that there were four actions the US government could take to help solve the problem. Among them was their strategy to increase US propaganda activities on the island to match those emanating from the Cuban government. The measures Castro had earlier taken to nationalize Cuban media outlets had successfully blocked any message other than his own from reaching the island's population en masse. As had been the ongoing problem, local efforts by USIS-Havana personnel to distribute their own information telling the US side of the story were not reaching the audience. What was needed in Cuba, staff argued, was a strong US program to both overpower Castro and PSP messaging, and to "put the Castro regime on the defensive."[91]

Embassy staff encouraged Washington, DC, officials to be more aggressive in trying to communicate with the Cuban public. Staff argued that any new informational campaign should surpass the Cuban effort in quantity and quality. This included adding measures that USIA officials had thus far been hesitant to openly incorporate into their programs, such as using anti-Castro Cubans in their messaging. The embassy's other recommendation was to take advantage of Cuba's close proximity and saturate the island

[90] Schoultz discusses that those in the State Department who had held out hope for improved relations between the two countries had fallen out of favor by this point. See Schoultz, *That Infernal Little Cuban Republic*, 132-134.

[91] "Country Team Recommendation on Policy re Cuba (Subject to approval by Ambassador Bonsal, who is absent on consultation in the United States)," December 5, 1960, *FRUS*, 1958-1960, VI, Cuba, doc. 616.

with VOA broadcasts containing factual information, using medium-range stations on the US mainland.[92]

From their vantage point in the Cuban capital, the US embassy staff, of course, were likely unaware of the Central Intelligence Agency's own Cuban radio campaign already underway by this time. The CIA established a short and medium-wave radio transmitter on Swan Island off the Honduran coast over the summer, posing as an independent radio company. The agency had also arranged for anti-Castro Cuban exiles to gain access to local South Florida medium range radio stations that could reach the Caribbean nation. [93] These efforts, combined with similar CIA approaches to newspaper printing and pamphlet publication, replaced USIS-Havana's grey and white factual propaganda program with their own black propaganda operation. The Eisenhower administration had long since abandoned traditional diplomacy, and with it public diplomacy on the island, choosing instead an alternate approach to restore Cuba to the Latin American Cold War consensus.

After another vitriolic Castro speech in early January 1961, in which the Cuban leader accused the US embassy in Havana of being nothing more than a den of spies and demanded the Department of State reduce the number of embassy personnel in Cuba, the Eisenhower administration severed diplomatic relations with the Cuban government. US

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[92] Ibid.

[93] Though he was no longer in Cuba at the time Embassy staff crafted their recommendations, US Ambassador to Cuba Philip Bonsal knew of an ongoing USIA, State Department, and CIA covert propaganda campaign underway for the region, which included Radio Swan. See Letter from Assistant Secretary of State for Inter-American Affairs (Rubottom) to the Ambassador in Cuba (Bonsal), June 1, 1960, *FRUS*, 1958-1960, VI, Cuba doc. 524; For an overview of the CIA's propaganda activities directed at Cuba as part of "Operation Zapata," see Jack B. Pfeiffer, *Official History of the Bay of Pigs Operation, Vol. III, Evolution of CIA's Anti-Castro Policies, 1959-January 1961*. December 1971, 204-233, retrieved from the National Security Archives, http://nsarchive.gwu.edu/NSAEBB/NSAEBB355/bop-vol3.pdf (accessed February 25, 2016).

State Department officials ordered the diplomatic mission in Cuba to return to the United States and closed the US embassy.[94] As part of the exodus, the USIA reassigned the remaining two US agency USIS field office staffers to a new office just opening in Miami, Florida, which began operations in February.[95]

Conclusion

Paralleling the US embassy's diplomatic efforts, USIS-Havana's informational programming complimenting US foreign policy strategy had little chance of success in the last year of official relations between the United States and Cuba. The Eisenhower administration had long decided that Fidel Castro and the Revolutionary government had no intention of continuing the longstanding relationship between the United States and Cuba. The Cuban leader would neither abide the traditional hegemonic structure in the Western Hemisphere that kept the United States at the summit, nor freely support the United States in its Cold War efforts.

Public diplomacy had few opportunities to make any large-scale contributions in Cuba even if Eisenhower and his National Security Council had made a concerted effort to resolve issues diplomatically. What little access USIS-Havana had to Cuban media and influential personalities in 1959 vanished entirely by mid-1960. The only method the USIA could employ to reach Cuban audiences was through radio broadcasts from sites off the island. Unfortunately, diplomatic obstacles prevented the agency from

[94] Schoultz, 140-141.

[95] USIA, "Acting Director's Staff Meeting," January 9, 1961, Director's Staff Meeting Notes 1961, Staff Meeting Notes, box 2, Director's Office, RG 306, NACP. UISA Daily Summary, No. 9, February 20, 1961, USIA Daily Summary January – February 1961, Daily Summaries, box 3, OPI, RG 306, NACP.

transmitting over the preferred medium-wave band. This left only short-wave communications as the only legitimate answer for the USIA. This, too, proved inadequate due to the Cuban public's listening habits and the USIA's undeveloped Latin American short-wave radio program.

Perhaps the most important obstacle on the island to US messaging was the prevailing local attitude towards the United States. Though many Cubans still retained some form of attachment with the United States, as evidenced by the Havana and Santiago de Cuba binational centers' attendance, popular Cuban opinion continued to reject US influence and ideas. Castro and the Cuban press exacerbated the situation locally with hostile anti-US rhetoric. With a Cuban public attuned to disregard even the whitest of US propaganda, USIS-Havana's messages to keep Cubans committed to regional solidarity in the Cold War struggle had little chance of finding a receptive audience.

CHAPTER SIX

The Unhappy Island:
The USIA's Anti-Castro Strategy in Latin America, 1959-1962

> "The driving urge of Latin America's underprivileged masses for better social conditions has been dramatized and given focus by the emergence of a bearded, unkempt Cuban revolutionary as a symbol and rallying point for violence in the area."
>
> – John P. McKnight, USIA Assistant Director for Latin America, *House Appropriations Hearings*, 1961

Fidel Castro's popularity and Cuban-developed propaganda quickly found a receptive audience throughout Latin America, forcing the United States Information Agency (USIA) to expand their own efforts to bolster US prestige in the region. This developed in to a long-term effort for the USIA beginning in 1959, as agency officials placed increasing emphasis on Latin American programming at the end of President Dwight Eisenhower's second term and upon John F. Kennedy's presidential inauguration. Both presidents' strategies involved promoting economic and social development in the region with US assistance through a peaceful, orderly process. The USIA led the public diplomacy campaign promoting the new US foreign policy in Latin America.

Emphasizing US assistance with socio-economic progress was only one segment of the USIA's revised campaign for Latin America. Agency planners also included a new objective in the region: curbing Castro's revolutionary appeal and alerting Latin Americans to the danger that the Cuban government's increasing attachment to external

communist allies posed to hemispheric solidarity. This anti-Castro messaging proved fluid as agency officials confronted the Cuban issue in a way that prevented revolutionary flames from further spreading through the region, or agitated heightened anti-US sentiment among Latin Americans. Initial USIA efforts to influence Latin American public opinion in the final years of the Eisenhower administration rarely included any direct criticism on Castro. However, as the revolutionary government charted a more radical path on the island, and Castro's reforms and rhetoric gained popularity elsewhere, USIA officials revised their policy to include a more aggressive tone against the Cuban government's reform efforts, its anti-US rhetoric, and the Cuban leader, himself. Messaging emphasizing the communist encroachment within the Cuban government as a growing threat to all the Americas emerged as the Eisenhower administration rolled out its program to garner support among the region for action against the Cuban regime through the Organization of American States (OAS) in the late summer of 1960. By the beginning of 1961, as the Kennedy administration inherited the Cuban issue, the theme of a creeping communist influence within the Cuban government blossomed into a USIA depiction of the Caribbean island as a totalitarian system under communist control, with Castro as the Soviet Union's puppet.

Along with their efforts to link the Cuban issue with their long-running anticommunist programming, USIA strategists tied anti-Castro messaging to many of their other traditional Latin American themes. The agency's Latin American specialists devised messages incorporating the Cuban government within their longstanding attempts to promote hemispheric solidarity and the US as an ally in economic and social advancement. In time, newer themes specific to the Cuban issue joined their older

counterparts as part of the agency attempt to undermine Castro's popularity. These included accusing Castro of betraying the principles of the Cuban Revolution, portraying the Cuban leader as a barbarous madman who jeopardized Latin American stability for his own gain, and advocating the US as the voice of reason in the standoff between the two nations.

The USIA, too, did not abandon public diplomacy among the Cuban people, even after the USIS-Havana field office staff joined the US diplomatic mission's departure from Cuba in January 1961. With no physical presence within the Caribbean nation, the agency turned to the Voice of America to carry their message to Cuban audiences. Much of what Cubans heard echoed USIA messaging elsewhere in Latin America, or what USIS-Havana personnel had previously disseminated before departing, such as touting the historic friendship between US and Cuban people and stressing that the US government took issue with the Cuban government, not with Cubans.

USIA messaging to the island increasingly depicted Cubans as trapped prisoners or victims fleeing an oppressive regime bent on spreading communist ideology throughout the Western Hemisphere and bringing the Cold War to Latin America. Now portraying Cubans on the island in a style similar to Europeans living behind the Iron Curtain, agency strategists offered two additional themes for those on the island, and also for the larger Latin American audience: expressions of sympathy for Cubans suffering under Castro's totalitarian rule and reassurance that their situation would improve once Castro was no longer in power. Here, USIA officials were not simply practicing public diplomacy, but participating in a much more aggressive plan to undermine Cuban faith in

Castro and his government as part of the Kennedy administration's psychological warfare strategy to topple the Cuban leader.

Cubans themselves became an integral part of USIA programming, serving both as a powerful subject in agency products and as active members of the USIA's anti-Castro campaign. Their accounts of life under the revolutionary government and stories of adjusting to new lives away from their homes filled USIA programming in all mediums, standing as key evidence of Castro's betrayal and failures, and as examples of what would occur in other Latin American nations if people insisted on following the Cuban model. These examples also provided the USIA with the opportunity to promote the United States as sympathetic to the Cuban plight, assisting victims of an oppressive communist regime. Additionally, Cuban exiles proved to be not simply the passive victims the USIA portrayed in its messaging; they also emerged as important contributors to the USIA's propaganda effort in the region, as exiled writers, producers, actors, and media owners collaborated with the USIA to create programming for the agency.

US Policy in Latin America, 1959-1961

The angry and sometimes violent crowds that greeted Vice President Richard Nixon in Venezuela and elsewhere during his May 1958 Latin American tour spurred President Eisenhower's national security advisors to reexamine US foreign policy assumptions and objectives in the region. Though anti-US sentiment was not a new phenomenon in the region, Castro's challenge to US hegemony buoyed the latest incarnation of negative public opinion among Latin Americans, which Director of the

Central Intelligence Agency Allen Dulles termed "Castro-itis."[1] Subsequent discussions resulted in new US policy guidance in February 1959 as NSC 5902/1. With the revised policy, Eisenhower and his national security advisors recognized that the ongoing social and economic issues in Latin America aggravated regional animosity against the US, and that the United States should make a marked effort to especially address economic needs with direct financial assistance when applicable.[2] One year later, this new foreign policy approach to the region also included Eisenhower's Social Progress Trust Fund program, a $500 million loan program to assist Latin American nations in administering local social projects.[3]

Latin American reaction to the Cuban Revolution and the increased anti-US sentiment it powered in the region, along with the subsequent public response to Fidel Castro's reform measures, also prompted Eisenhower's decision to reassess the administration's traditional regional policies. The Cuban leader's ideology and fiery rhetoric, known as *fidelismo*, encouraged people in other nations to emulate the Cuban experience and launch their own versions of the Cuban revolution. Demands in other countries for social and economic reform soon followed in the wake of Castro's victory, challenging local government leadership, rejecting US involvement in the region, and threatening the hemispheric solidarity that US policy makers believed so vital to US

[1] Dulles' term appears in Alan L. McPherson, *Yankee No!: Anti-Americanism in US – Latin American Relations* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2003), 68.

[2] Stephen G. Rabe, *Eisenhower and Latin America: The Foreign Policy of Anticommunism* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1988), 112-113.

[3] Rabe, *Eisenhower and Latin America,* 141-143.

national security interests.[4] As scholar Thomas C. Wright observes, *fidelismo* forced the US to "[develop] new strategies for dealing with a completely unprecedented situation – a hemisphere that appeared to be on the verge of revolution."[5]

Cuba Initiates a Propaganda Offensive in Latin America

The Cuban government initiated its own propaganda campaign to its Latin American neighbors to spread *fidelismo* beyond Cuban shores in 1959. US embassies throughout the region cabled the State Department in Washington, DC, apprising State officials of both Cuban and Communist propaganda in their respective countries; the latter made headway via an accelerated Soviet propaganda offensive in Latin America in 1960 capitalizing on the warming Cuban-Soviet relationship.[6] Like USIA programming, these message reached audiences through a variety of methods, often with local media assistance.

By spring of 1959, a new, Cuban-based news agency with a Latin American focus emerged to challenge both US commercial media interests and the United States Information Agency activities in the region. Stemming from Fidel Castro's remarks during an early February speech on the need for a Latin American wire service to counter North American private news agencies dominating the region, rumors of such an

[4] Alan L. McPherson summarizes the relationship between Fidel Castro and renewed Latin American anti-Americanism in the early 1960s in *Yankee No!: Anti-Americanism in US – Latin American Relations, 68-*75.

[5] Thomas C. Wright, *Latin America in the Era of the Cuban Revolution* (Westport: Praeger Press, 2001) 39-40, 57.

[6] See Hal Brands, *Latin America's Cold War* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2010) 31-34, 40-43.

organization reached the USIA in March.[7] Through investors in several different Latin American countries, the *Prensa Latina* news service opened in May1959, with its headquarters in Havana. Castro provided $325,000 in government funding to help launch *Prensa Latina* "in [Castro's] irritation," reported the US State Department, "over what he considered the unfair coverage given his revolution by the 'monopolistic' U.S. wire services."[8] The Latin American-staffed Spanish-language news provider quickly opened offices in Havana, South America, Central America, the US, and later, Europe.[9]

The USIA now contended with a regional news service with an editorial viewpoint that regularly challenged US policy interests in Latin America. Though *Prensa Latina* did not contain overt communist rhetoric at first, the State Department warned that the service did employ a number of communist personnel and promoted "a message of social revolution to Latin America and [minimized] the issues of the Cold War and U.S. hemispheric leadership."[10] More importantly, *Prensa Latina* routinely published Castro's anti-US speeches and articles protesting US imperialism and intervention in the region. US observers believed much of *Prensa Latina's* popularity stemmed, in part, from the service's low cost; the company offered local news organizations access to its

[7] Foreign Service Despatch, USIS-Habana to USIA-Washington, "Proposed Cuban News Service," March 24, 1959, Latin America, Action Copies – 1959, Program Files, box 2, RG 306, NACP.

[8] Department of State Instruction to all ARA Diplomatic Posts, "Background Paper on Prensa Latina," May 9, 1960, DOSCDF, 937.62/5-960, General Records of the Department of State, RG 59, NACP, C*uba, 1960-1963*, mf, Reel 37. Other investors in the service included individuals from Venezuela and Mexico. The State Department also had reason to suspect Brazilian investors, as well.

[9] Foreign Service Despatch, USIS-Habana to USIA-Washington, "Further Developments on Prensa Latina," June 10, 1959, Latin America, Action Copies – 1959, Program Files, box 2, IRI/LA, RG 306, NACP.

[10] Department of State Instruction to all ARA Diplomatic Posts, "Background Paper on Prensa Latina," May 9, 1960, DOSCDF, RG 59, NACP, *Cuba, 1960-1963*.

news wire for free or at substantially reduced rates. Department of State analysts criticized *Prensa Latina's* quality and its often blatant anti-US viewpoint.[11]

The Cuban government also initiated their own short-wave radio broadcasts to the region. The Cuban Ministry of Communications purchased powerful broadcasting equipment from European companies in early 1960, as part of their effort to "bring the truth of the Cuban revolution to all the countries of Latin America."[12] Analysts in the US Foreign Broadcast Information Service first noted the new signal in February 1961. The station, calling itself "Radio Habana Cuba, La Voz Libre de América" initially only transmitted one hour of programming per night, but "Radio Havana" quickly augmented their output to feature fourteen hours of broadcasting to Latin American audiences per day by 1962.[13]

Like their North American counterparts, Cuban diplomatic missions abroad served as hubs for informational and cultural programming distribution efforts to local audiences. The US Embassy in Montevideo, Uruguay reported that a local radio station included programming acquired from the local Cuban Embassy in March 1960. The USIS Public Affairs Officer in Montevideo labeled these cultural and news programs, which the US diplomatic mission observed to be a growing threat, as "openly

[11] Ibid.

[12] Foreign Service Despatch, Amembassy, Habana to the Department of State, Washington. "Cuban Government Plans for Establishing Multi-Million Dollar Short-Wave Transmitting Center," April 28, 1960. DOSCDF, 937.40/4-2860 HBS, RG 59, NACP, *Cuba, 1960-1963,* mf, Reel 36; Department of State Instruction, "Cuban Propaganda: Projected Short Wave Radio Station," June 27, 1960, DOSCDF, 937.40/6-2670, RG 59, NACP, *Cuba, 1960-1963,* mf, Reel 36.

[13] Memorandum to The Files from CMA – Mr. Guerra, "Monitoring of New Cuban Station by FBIS," April 4, 1961. DOSCDF, 937.40/4-461, RG 59, NACP, *Cuba, 1960-1963,* mf, Reel 36.

propagandistic and anti-American in tone."[14] Similarly, after visiting the region, Director for USIA Television Service, Romney Wheeler, reported his observations of Cuban-communist propaganda on local television, noting that both Cuba and communist bloc countries offered television programs to local stations.[15]

USIA Response to Changes in US Latin American Policy, 1959 – Summer 1960

With the propaganda battle escalating within Latin American nations from both external and internal sources, US Information Agency officials reviewed their regional propaganda objectives among their southern audiences. Naturally, Fidel Castro and Cuban propaganda figured prominently in their revised plans. As early as July 1959, the USIA officials indicated that their area analysts contemplated specific programming to emphasize to other nations Castro's influence in uprisings within certain Latin American countries.[16]

Later that summer, the US State Department and USIA issued a joint policy memorandum for their diplomatic missions in Latin America. Through the document, USIA planners offered guidance on how to address continued anti-American sentiment and steps local posts could take to foment negative opinion of the Cuban government among Latin American nations and their populace. Since Castro's victory over Batista, USIA and State officials noted, the US government had taken great care to avoid overtly

[14] Foreign Service Despatch, USIS-Montevideo to USIA-Washington, "Cuban Embassy Inaugurates Radio Program," March 31, 1960. DOSCDF, 937.40/3-3160, RG 59, NACP, *Cuba, 1960-1963*, mf, Reel 36.

[15] USIA, Director's Staff Meeting, August 22, 1960, Director's Staff Meetings 1960, Meeting Notes, box 2, Director's Office, RG 306, NACP.

[16] Memorandum from G. Lewis Schmidt to Roy R. Rubottom, "US Policy Toward Cuba," July 6, 1959. DOSCDF, RG 59, NACP, *Cuba, 1955-1959*, mf, Reel 25.

criticizing Castro or his political decisions. This was part of the US government's strategy to give the new Cuban leader the opportunity to demonstrate his willingness to establish amicable relations with the United States, and for moderate forces within the regime to "exercise a tempering influence" on the new government.[17] By avoiding criticism and hostility with Castro, the US would deprive him of using American interference as an excuse to further radicalize his own policies, or to accept further communist influence within his government. "It has been, in short," the policy paper explained, "an important objective of United States policy insofar as public opinion is concerned to establish that any unsatisfactory state of Cuban-United States relations does not derive from the inflexibility and intransigence of the United States, but from policies and attitudes which Castro himself adopts."[18]

The authors concluded that the best outcome for the United States regarding the Cuban problem was a scenario where Latin American opinion of Castro turned from admiration to skepticism. Though instructing its diplomatic posts throughout Latin America not to engage in direct criticism of Castro, the State Department did encourage its staff abroad to intensify and accelerate this skepticism. Their expectation was that such increased public disapproval of Castro would force him to alter his revolutionary activities, or at least his anti-US rhetoric, and align the new leader with US interests. Though the US would not take action that might give Castro a larger, more influential stage from which to fan the flames of the Cuban Revolution elsewhere, it would continue

[17] Instruction From the Department of State to All Diplomatic and Consular Posts in the American Republics, "United States Information Policy Toward the Castro Regime in Cuba," September 15, 1959, *FRUS*, 1958-1960, VI, Cuba, doc. 361.

[18] "United States Information Policy Toward the Castro Regime in Cuba," September 15, 1959.

in its objective of "isolating and eventually eliminating the undesirable aspects of Castro's Revolution."[19] Clearly, the overriding policy guidance was to not give Castro any external cause that he could turn to his own advantage so that, in time, his popularity would wane among the Cuban people and throughout Latin America.

The Cuban government's support for revolution in Latin America and its increasing allegiance with the Soviet Union spurred Eisenhower's national security advisors to reconsider their "watch and wait" position in the new year. Cuba's increasing ties to the Soviet Union galvanized the Eisenhower administration and US public opinion, particularly after Soviet Prime Minister Mikoyan's February 1960 visit to the island and a resulting trade agreement, and Premier Nikita Khrushchev's July warning amid US-Cuban discord that "Soviet artillerymen can support the Cuban people with their rocket fire" if the US were to ever attempt an invasion.[20] The situation progressively turned to outright confrontation between the two nations, and the US government birthed the plans to overthrow Castro.

Now charting a strategy to rid the island nation of the new revolutionary government, the Eisenhower administration turned its attention to gaining support among Latin American nations to allow any future US measures to intervene in Cuba under the guise of inter-American support. Informational programming aided the diplomatic effort in the region; a component which US foreign relations officials considered important to successfully counter Castro's popularity and to fully explain the US position to Latin American audiences. In January, the USIA detached former USIS-Havana PAO Richard

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[19] Ibid.

[20] Quoted from Lars Schoultz, *That Infernal Little Cuban Republic: The United States and the Cuban Revolution* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2009), 126.

G. Cushing to work with US State Department officials who had formed task force to specifically address ongoing issues in Cuba. Cushing's job was to coordinate the public relations aspect of the Cuban task force's strategy, by disseminating unattributable informational programming throughout Latin America and in Cuba. State Department officials justified the propaganda program as a necessary measure to bolster private press coverage of Cuba, which State staff considered ineffective in providing adequate, in-depth coverage of Cuban events.[21]

By the summer of 1960 USIA officials reported concentrating their resources in Latin America to explaining the US position on Cuba and the dangers Castro posed to democracy and freedom in the region.[22] This report echoed USIA Director George Allen's instructions to USIS field offices on the Cuban issue from that same summer. Stressing that the USIS staff should refrain from appearing "over-preoccupied" with Cuba, not neglect other pressing foreign policy issues nor their promotion of US life and culture, Allen directed USIS posts to convince their local audiences "that the nature and objectives of the Castro regime are harmful and a danger to the entire continent."[23] "Our

[21] Letter from Assistant Secretary of State for Inter-American Affairs (Rubottom) to the Ambassador in Cuba (Bonsal), June 1, 1960, *FRUS*, 1958-1960, VI, Cuba, doc. 524. This task force also worked with the Central Intelligence Agency to disseminate propaganda in the region.

[22] US Information Agency, *15th Report to Congress, July1- December 31, 1960*, 17-19, HathiTrust, https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=mdp.39015028986845;view=1up;seq=529 (accessed February 25, 2016).

[23] US Information Agency, Infoguide No. 60-55, "Defines Agency Objectives and Specifies Points of Emphasis for Output on the Cuban Situation in the Context of Hemispheric Relations," May 9, 1960, Correspondence (Multi-Country), Program Files, box 2, IRI/LA, RG 306, NACP.

tone will continue calm and non-polemical" the director instructed, adding "The news we present will be as factual, as objective as we can make it."[24]

Though intent on not letting the Cuban situation dominate US messaging in Latin America, USIA staff in Washington, DC, also offered guidance stressing a more direct anti-Castro message. Instead of relying on anticommunist messaging, which USIA strategists recognized as a weak theme among Latin Americans due to their opinion that the US "exaggerates the danger of communism," agency officials directed that programming should instead concentrate on Castro's dictatorial policies in Cuba; a subject Latin Americans responded to with greater interest.[25] Additionally, USIA officials wrote that while they should not directly attack the Cuban leader, field personnel should not remain silent against all of Castro's allegations against the United States, noting, "we must not fail to counter the major and most harmful of Castro's charges of intervention."[26]

This strategy did not preclude stronger messaging when events warranted. The weeks before and after the August 1960 meeting of the Organization of American States in San José, Costa Rica, where the Eisenhower administration presented to members their case against the Cuban government, demonstrated the USIA's ability to adjust to a more pointed message. USIA Director Allen issued instructions to all USIS posts in the region in the weeks leading to the conference to "assign high priority [to] building

[24] "Defines Agency Objectives and Specifies Points of Emphasis for Output on the Cuban Situation in the Context of Hemispheric Relations," May 9, 1960, Program Files, RG 306, NACP.

[25] Ibid.

[26] Ibid.

understanding and favorable climate [of] local opinion [for] US position re Cuba."[27] Reflecting the Eisenhower administration's goal of garnering Latin American support USIA Assistant Director for Latin America McKnight and his staff instructed information officers in the field to stress the dangers Cuba posed to the region without directly attacking Fidel Castro in the process, advising that "Emphasis should not be on Cuban-US conflict, but rather on threat to all Americas by Communist beachhead in Cuba."[28]

While the Eisenhower administration prepared to present its case to other Latin American republics in late August, the Voice America released a four-part series on the current state of affairs in Cuba from the US perspective. VOA script writer Hal Courlander penned the series, with each segment addressing a different subject that responded to Cuban criticisms of the United States or defended US actions against the Cuban government. The series addressed the Cuban government's accusations of US imperialism and economic warfare, the loss of "freedom" in Cuba, the Cuban government's increasing totalitarianism and its association with communist countries, and the government's expropriation of private business and industry in Cuba.

While each episode focused on a different subject matter, they all shared similar themes prevalent in US messaging since the diplomatic relationship started deteriorating between Cuba and the United States: Shared history, values, and friendship between the two nation's citizenry. In refuting the Cuban claims from both the government and the press of US imperialism and economic warfare, for example, the VOA continued to

[27] US Information Agency Circular 39, Infoguide No. 61-11, August 2, 1960, Correspondence (Multi-Country), Program Files, box 2, IRI/LA, RG 306, NACP.

[28] US Information Agency Circular 39, Infoguide No. 61-11, August 2, 1960, Program Files, RG 306, NACP.

emphasize the close relationship between the people of the two nations in these broadcasts. "Americans have traditionally thought of Cubans as friends and good neighbors," the news analysis explained.[29] The broadcast repeated earlier agency messaging that Castro was only blaming Cuba's continued economic struggles on the US as an alternative to accepting the reality that the Cuban government had been unable to cope with the severity of Cuba's economic concerns. Instead, the radio announcer charged, Castro chose the antiquated, but still popular, notion of "resurrecting the idea of an interfering colossus of the North."[30]

Later VOA broadcasts in this series focused on the Cuban government's infringement on Cuban rights and the increasing totalitarianism on the island. The San Jose conference fast approaching, the Voice now attacked Fidel Castro directly, accusing him of abandoning the ideals which had "stoked the flames" of the Cuban Revolution.[31] The segment Listed the ways in which Castro veered from the revolution, blaming the turn on the new government's rush to create economic and social change on the island. In the process, the VOA scriptwriter argued, the Cuban people had lost their freedom to criticize government policy. Castro's decision not to hold elections and the Cuban

[29] Hal Courlander, "Cuba and 'Economic Aggression,'" August 4, 1960, News Analysis #1309, Voice of America Central Programs Services Division, Talks and Features Branch (hereafter cited as VOA), *Voice of America [Scripts]* (Washington, DC: Library of Congress Photoduplication Service, 1974-1982) (hereafter cited as *Scripts)*, mf, 1960, Reel 19.

[30] Hal Courlander, "Cuba and 'Economic Aggression,'" August 4, 1960, VOA, *Scripts*.

[31] Hal Courlander, "Cuba and 'Economic Aggression,'" August 8, 1960, News Analysis #1316, VOA, *Scripts*, MF, Reel 19.

government's increasing control over the local press exemplified his unwillingness to allow other Cubans to express themselves.[32]

USIA Messaging after August 1960

USIA strategists continued in their attack against the Cuban government, continuing to disseminate a harsher anti-Castro message to the region after the San José Conference. Throughout Latin America, USIS field offices incorporated the Cuban issue into their Country Plans, tailoring the topic to the local political and social attitudes. Latin American USIS Country Plans and assessment reports from the period indicate that field staff tended to embed Cuba and Castro within their objectives that stressed anticommunism, or promoted inter-American solidarity.

USIS-San Salvador planners in El Salvador, for example, couched anti-Castro messaging within their ongoing anticommunist objective. Station staff wrote that they intended to convince El Salvadorans to "take steps to thwart active Castro-Communist penetration and subversion."[33] USIS-San Salvador staff developed a pamphlet on Cuba emphasizing the links between the Cuban Revolution and communism. Entitled *Los Comunistas Cubanos se Preparan Para Apoderarse de la Revolución de Castro* (*Cuban Communists are Prepared to Seize the Castro Revolution*), the publication offered evidence of communist infiltration within the Cuban government and their ability to gain

[32] Hal Courlander, "Cuba and 'Economic Aggression,'" August 10, 1960, News Analysis #1320, VOA, *Scripts*, MF, Reel 19; Hal Courlander, "Cuba and 'Economic Aggression,'" August 11, 1960, News Analysis #1323, VOA, *Scripts*, mf, Reel 19.

[33] USIS-San Salvador to USIA-Washington, "Annual USIS Assessment Report," February 9, 1961, USIS Assessment Report, 1959-1961, USIS Classified Subject Files, 1956-1962, box 1, San Salvador, San Salvador Embassy (hereafter cited as USIS-San Salvador Files), Records of the Foreign Service Posts of the Department of State, Records Group 84 (hereafter cited as RG 84), NACP.

control of the revolution, even among a population where only a small percentage of people supported communism. Likening the communist takeover of the revolution as a "thief who has conspired with the butler" to leave the door open for their entry, USIS personnel presented a clear message to El Salvadorans: Communists had stealthily infiltrated the revolution and now influenced all aspects of the Cuban government's policies.[34]

In Costa Rica, USIS-San José personnel operated in a nation with a government amenable to US interests. Yet station staff reported Castro's popularity among segments of the population who expressed "reluctant admiration for Castro as being the only Latin American who 'stands up to' the USA," making it difficult for the Costa Rican government to publicly follow an anti-Castro line.[35] San José field office personnel responded with messages stressing Castro's connection with the Soviet Union as evidence of communism's danger to Costa Ricans, boasting that "Fidel Castro's antics and increasingly dictatorial acts" provided the necessary specific examples for their programming.[36] Local newspapers published hundreds of the station's articles, many of which, USIS-San José staff relayed, were anticommunist in theme and "specifically anti-

[34] *Los Comunistas Cubanos se Preparan Para Apoderarse de la Revolución de Rastro,* December 1960, San Salvador, Los Comunistas Cubanos se Preparan para Apoderarse de la Revolucion de Castro, Spanish, FY61, Field Publications, box 181, Press and Publications, RG 306, NACP.

[35] USIS-San Jose to USIA-Washington, "Country Plan for Costa Rica for FY 1961," June 30, 1960, A – General Program – 1960, Confidential, Classified USIS Subject Files, 1655-1968, box 2, Costa Rica, US Embassy, San Jose (USIS) (hereafter cited as USIS-San Jose Files), RG 84, NACP.

[36] USIS-San Jose to USIA Washington, "Country Assessment Report, January 1 – December 31, 1960," February 10, 1961, A – General – 1961 Confidential, USIS-San Jose Files, box 2, RG 84, NACP. See also USIS-San Jose to USIA-Washington, "Country Assessment Report – Costa Rica, January 1 – December 31, 1959," February 15, 1960, USIS-San Jose Files, RG 84, NACP.

Castro in nature."[37] USIS personnel in Costa Rica also noted their success in placing anti-Castro messaging among Costa Rican labor groups, a population segment with an affinity for the Cuban leader, using *El Más Obrero*, the field office's own monthly magazine catering to local workers.[38]

Other USIS field posts followed the USIA's more aggressive strategy in their own local programming, which conflated the Cuban situation with the agency's region-wide efforts to maintain the anticommunist consensus among Latin American audiences. The USIS post in Montevideo, Uruguay published two pamphlets shortly after the OAS meeting. The sixteen page *La Infiltración Comunista En La Revolución Cubana* (*The Communist Infiltration of the Cuban Revolution*) contained a Spanish language transcript of US Secretary of State Christopher Herter's remarks in San Jose.[39] Two months later, the Montevideo post created another pamphlet in the field entitled *Tres Documentos Sobre Cuba* (*Three Papers on Cuba*). Here, field post staff combined a series of memorandums exchanged between the Department of State and the Inter-American Peace Committee between July and August of the previous summer into one publication.[40]

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[37] USIS-San Jose to USIA-Washington, "Country Plan for Costa Rica for FY 1961," June 30, 1960, USIS-San Jose Subject Files, box 2, RG 84, NACP; USIS-San Jose to USIA-Washington, DC, "Annual Assessment Report – Costa Rica, Jan. 1 – Dec. 31, 1960," February 10, 1961, USIS-San Jose Files, RG 84, NACP.

[38] USIS-San Jose to USIA-Washington, DC, "Annual Assessment Report – Costa Rica, Jan. 1-Dec. 31, 1960," February 10, 1961, USIS-San Jose Files, RG 84, NACP.

[39] *La Infiltración Comunista En la Revolución Cubana: Discurso del Sr. Christian Herter, Secretario de Estado de los Estados Unidos, 26 de Agosto de 1960,* September 7, 1960, Montevideo, La Infiltration Comunista En La Revolucion Cubana, FY 61, Spanish, Field Publications, box 180, Press and Publications, RG 306, NACP.

[40] *Tres Documentos Sobre Cuba: Memorandums Presentados por el Departmento de Estado con fechas 27 de Junio, 2 de Agosto, 22 de Agosto a la Comisión Interamericana de Paz,* November 23, 1960, Montevideo, Tres Documentos Sobre Cuba, FY 61, Spanish, Field Publications, box 181, Press and Publications, RG 306, NACP.

Both of these publications, each bearing USIS attribution, relied upon official government documents and statements to present their position on the Cuban issue to local audiences. USIA products such as these emphasized the issue's importance to Uruguayans without relying upon harsh rhetoric against the Cuban government, while conveying the message that Castro and the Cuban government threatened regional stability.

Back in Washington, DC, the VOA writers continued to churn out analyses and special reports to accompany the straight news on the ongoing standoff between Cuba and the United States. These editorials reflected the standing policy within the agency to refute Castro's impassioned rhetoric with a calmer, fact-based response, yet these reports were also devoid of some of the earlier period's more cautious rhetoric. Unlike prior broadcasts, these new segments often included a more aggressive tone. Moving forward, themes emphasizing US impatience, increased Communist control, and Cuban regional aggression dominated the USIA's Cuban messaging.

Only days after the OAS Conference, the Voice broadcast a news analysis on the Cuban situation that continued emphasizing the necessity for all Latin American nations to join with the US to confront the "growing communist control of the revolution" and its potential to spread throughout the region. Referencing a US State Department document that US delegates circulated at the conference on communist activity in Cuba, the analysis accused Castro of "attacking the three basic foundations of Latin American

society, the Church, the freely elected governments, and the regional organization of American republics."[41]

Another Voice analysis, broadcast shortly after the Eisenhower administration announced a partial embargo on US goods to Cuba on October 19, provided even stronger rhetoric against the Cuban government. The script stressed three themes consistent with USIA anti-Castro programming during the period: communist control over the Cuban government leading to the betrayal of the revolution's original intent, the issue as a regional problem concerning all Latin American nations, and US patience even as the Cuban government besmirched the US throughout the region. This latest editorial, however, offered a more resolute message, where Castro had "obviously had gone beyond the point of no return into the Communist camp," forcing the United States, defending the hemisphere from communism, to "draw a line between patience and weakness."[42] These broadcasts left listeners with little doubt that the US was prepared to take action against Castro, but the message also continued stressing the importance of inter-American solidarity on the matter, even if the US acted independently.

As the programming demonstrates, USIA staff had no hesitation to publicly link the Cuban government with communism after the summer and fall of 1960. Broadcasting a segment entitled "The Communist Beachhead in Cuba" in December, VOA commentators offered the Cuban government's recent trade agreement with China as evidence of Castro's ever tightening relationship with communism. The program warned

[41] Raymond Swing, "More on the Changed Cuban Revolution," August 24, 1960, Swing News Analysis #1339, VOA, *Scripts,* MF, Reel 19.

[42] Raymond Swing, "The Partial Embargo on Cuba," October 21, 1960, Swing News Analysis #1423, VOA, *Scripts,* mf, Reel 19.

of the dangers of the communist presence to Central and South America, as both regions were now easy targets for Communist elements on the strategically located Caribbean island, and also to the US who now encountered "its cold war opponents at the back door."[43]

The diplomatic break between Cuba and the United States on January 6, 1961 dominated media coverage within the US and throughout Latin America. Though having no advanced warning of the split, USIA staff immediately set to work to explain the US position. Two days after Eisenhower severed relations with Cuba, the Voice of America broadcast a summary of events that had led the administration to take the drastic measure. Unsurprisingly, the broadcast placed the blame for the diplomatic crisis at the feet of a belligerent Cuban leader who had spent the past two years attacking the United States through a combination of economic and political action on the island, and through a propaganda campaign designed to discredit the United States both in Cuba and throughout Latin America.[44]

As before, USIA writers framed the Eisenhower administration's policy toward Cuba as "one of patience and restraint in the face of Cuban action against American interests, and in the face of Cuban insults."[45] Now, however, unfettered from previous information guidelines, the script contained more aggressive language in its characterization of the Cuban issue and its leader, labeling Castro a "dictator" and listing

[43] Raymond Swing, "The Communist Beachhead in Cuba," December 5, 1960, Swing News Analysis #1475, VOA, *Scripts*, mf, Reel 19.

[44] Liston M. Oak, "US Breaks Diplomatic Relations with Cuba: A Backgrounder," January 5, 1961, VOA, *Scripts*, mf, Reel 22.

[45] Ibid.

the Cuban government's hostile activities against the United States and other Latin American nations. Segment writers fully placed the blame for the diplomatic break at the feet of the Cuban government, but they concluded the piece with a positive message to the audience; one familiar to Cubans through USIA messaging on the island. VOA writers stressed the longstanding friendship between the two nations and sympathy for the Cuban people, incorporating President Eisenhower's recent public statement on the issue: "it is my hope that in the not too distant future it will be possible for the historic friendship between us once again to find its reflection in normal relations of every sort. Meantime our sympathy goes out to the people of Cuba now suffering under the yoke of a dictator."[46] This particular Voice segment featured all of the anti-Castro themes present in USIA messaging at the end of 1960. It incorporated factual information; it delineated between US disapproval of the Cuban government and sympathy for the Cuban people; it portrayed the United States as the patient victim in the face of a reckless, dangerous, communist-inspired Fidel Castro; and it framed the Cuban issue as a regional problem requiring a coordinated response from all Latin American nations.

Enter the Kennedy Administration

The Cuban issue continued unabated into the administration of the new US president, John F. Kennedy, threatening to further destabilize regional stability and the US-dominated Cold War consensus in Latin America. Castro's and Che Guevara's calls for revolution throughout the hemisphere concerned US officials even before 1961, but the threat resonated more strongly by the beginning of the new year as Cuban-supported

[46] Ibid.

local subversive activity peppered the regional Latin American landscape.[47] Additionally, the Soviet Union's renewed interest in Latin America and its support for revolutionary activity in developing areas, epitomized in Khrushchev's January remarks on "wars of national liberation," prompted even greater attention on the region.[48]

The covert plans that President Eisenhower and his national security staff had previously set in place to remove Castro continued during the presidential transition in Washington, DC. While reestablishing the narrative in Latin America that the US was a partner in peaceful reform measures, the Kennedy administration continued the Cold War policies and rhetoric on the communist threat in the region. The US response included both military aid and support for regimes that supported US anticommunist strategy. The revised outlook also promoted a more visible and marketable policy: the ambitious Alliance for Progress program. The US intended for this broad-based assistance program to Latin American nations to counter communism's appeal and appease revolutionary sentiment by offering alternative possibilities for political, social, and economic advancement. The USIA spearheaded the region-wide promotion of the initiative to the public in the years following Kennedy's approval of the program in the summer of 1961 and the Alliance quickly dominated USIA operations in Latin America.[49]

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[47] Hal Brands, *Latin America's Cold War,* 40-44; Stephen G. Rabe, *The Most Dangerous Area in the World: John F. Kennedy Confronts Communist Revolution in Latin America*. (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1999), 19-22.

[48] Schoultz, *That Infernal Little Cuban Republic: The United States and the Cuban Revolution,* 144-145. Wright, *Latin America in the Era of the Cuban Revolution*, 39-40; Stephen G. Rabe, *The Most Dangerous Area in the World,* 18-22.

[49] For a comprehensive overview of President Kennedy's Latin American foreign policy and programs, see Stephen G. Rabe, T*he Most Dangerous Area in the World*. For the USIA's role in the Alliance for Progress and the USIA policy in Latin America during the Kennedy Administration, see the third chapter in Gregory Michael Tomlin, "The Fishbowl World: Edward R. Murrow, John F. Kennedy, and the Cold War," (PhD

Despite prominently featuring the Alliance for Progress Program, the Kennedy Administration ensured anti-Castroism did not fall by the wayside. Under the new administration, and new agency leadership, the USIA wasted little time in addressing the Cuban problem with a campaign targeting Latin American public opinion. No longer did the US Information Agency staff warn of the tentative connections between Castro and communism, nor to the dangers the Cuban leader posed to Latin American stability. The ideology was not a scourge threatening to undermine the Cuban government from within as USIS-Havana staff had informed the Cuban public in the past; now, the USIA directly linked the Cuban leader with the communist threat to the Western Hemisphere, emphasizing their combined danger to Latin America's future prosperity. Still directing the agency's Latin American division, Assistant Director John P. McKnight proclaimed to a congressional committee that spring:

> It is now clear, I believe, that an island republic 90 miles off our shores has fallen wholly into the grip of our Communist enemies who, using their familiar techniques of propaganda and subversion, are attempting to revolutionize all of Latin America on the Castro model.[50]

The Assistant Director then warned that many Latin Americans would embrace Castro-Communist overtures unless the US government, through the USIA, "made clear to them, in word and in deed, that our system can provide for them more benefits, material and spiritual."[51]

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diss., George Washington University, 2013), 142-193, ProQuest Dissertations and Theses (accessed February 26, 2015).

[50] *House Appropriations Committee Hearings, Eighty Seventh Congress, First Session, 1962* (General Statement), (Washington: USGPO, 1961), 248-249, HathiTrust, https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=mdp.39015022382769;view=1up;seq=262 (accessed February 25, 2016).

[51] Ibid.

The Alliance for Progress certainly offered an ideal opportunity for the USIA to present such clear messages, and provide concrete evidence of the superiority of the US model and benefits of US assistance. Still, USIA officials determined that the Alliance program, alone, would not be enough to counter the Castro threat, or obviate the administration's need to explain its position on Cuba to a dubious Latin American audience. Their solution to explaining the Cuban issue abroad: informational programming emphasizing Fidel Castro's allegiance with communism and the danger he posed to Latin American stability. The agency would also work with other segments of the United States government to politically isolate the Cuban government, destroy Fidel Castro's credibility among Latin Americans, and persuade their Cuban audience to remove Castro from power.

This last US objective, "Operation Zapata" did not take long to materialize, as a US-backed plot relying on Cuban exiles to depose Cast was well underway and almost ready for launch. Unlike the Guatemalan affair in 1954, however, the USIA played little role in the Kennedy Administration's effort to eliminate the Castro threat by sponsoring an exile-led attack on the island nation. New USIA Director, legendary journalist Edward R. Murrow, gained knowledge of the invasion plan just days before its scheduled April 17 invasion. Caught off-guard as the exiles landed on the beaches of the Bay of Pigs on Cuba's southern coast, with no information policy to guide them, and unaware of the US role in the affair, USIA staff could only respond to Cuban accusations of a US invasion as reports of the exile attack filled the airwaves. Still, the VOA countered Cuban claims immediately, producing a series of news analyses between April 17 and 21

on the events taking place in Cuba, with broadcasts that expressed US support for the exiles, but framed the invasion as a wholly Cuban effort.[52]

Though the invasion failed to oust Castro, and instead aided in strengthening Castro's power in Cuba, the USIA still incorporated the effort into their Latin American programming. Contracting with the Hearst Metrotone News Corporation, the agency's motion pictures division released the film *The Unhappy Island.* The short one-reel movie featured President Kennedy's address before the Society of American Newspaper Editors where he reaffirmed the US commitment to keeping the Western hemisphere free of communism. The Film's narrator prefaced Kennedy's remarks with a statement that the president's comments were in to response both Castro and the Soviet Union's charges that the United States government aided the exile invasion, noting that "The nation's integrity and intentions had been questioned," thus triggering Kennedy's public response.[53]

The film, and USIA publications that followed, such as USIS-Mexico's *Cuba.… Lucha de Patriotas* (*Cuba.… Land of Patriots*), offered the USIA the opportunity to respond to Castro and Soviet criticism, but also to advance its informational goals in Latin America, despite the failed assault.[54] Publicizing the speech allowed USIA information strategists to evoke sympathy for the failed Cuban attempt to oust Castro and

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[52] For an account of the USIA during the Bay of Pigs Invasion, see Nicholas J. Cull, *The Cold War and the United States Information Agency: American Propaganda and Public Diplomacy, 1945-1989* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 190-191 196-199.

[53] *The Unhappy Island*, April 24, 1961, Hearst Metrotone News, Inc., The Unhappy Island English, Movie Scripts, box 47, RG 306, NACP.

[54] *Cuba.… Lucha de Patriotas*, n.d., Mexico Cuba. Lucha de Patriotas (Kennedy Speech April 20, 1961) Spanish, Field Publications, box 181, Press and Publications, RG 306, NACP. The USIA information card attached to the pamphlet translates the title as *Cuba.… Land of Patriots*. However, "Lucha" generally translates into "struggle" or "fight."

championed the US as an advocate for those fighting against political oppression. The programming also reiterated the agency's continued traditional objectives in Latin America, specifically demonstrating the US commitment to non-intervention in the region, stressing collective security against local aggression, and emphasizing the area's importance to larger Cold War issues.

Though shaken after the Bay of Pigs disaster, Kennedy and his national security advisors remained resolute in their desire to remove Fidel Castro from power. Their subsequent solution was to create an elaborate clandestine operation to embarrass, harass, or, if possible, kill Castro in November 1961. Dubbed "Operation Mongoose," a select group of planners from the White House, US military, Central Intelligence Agency, and the United States Information Agency, regularly met to draft plans to oust the Cuban leader through indirect means. Psychological warfare featured prominently in the effort, as the coordinating body planned to employ both black and grey propaganda in their operations.[55]

Unlike the Bay of Pigs planning, the USIA this time did have some say in the operation, with USIA Director Murrow, Assistant Director Donald Wilson, and Agency Assistant Director for Latin American Hewson Ryan each serving at times with the committee.[56] Working with the CIA, select USIA staff developed a program to turn public opinion in Cuba and throughout Latin America against Castro with psychological

[55] Jon Elliston offers several primary documents of the psychological activities during Operation Mongoose, a number of which denote USIA assistance in the ongoing covert operation throughout 1961. See Jon Elliston, *Psywar on Cuba: The Declassified History of US Anti-Castro Propaganda* (Melbourne: Ocean Press, 1999) 65-126. For an overview of Operation Mongoose and US covert activity against Castro, see Schoultz, *That Infernal Little Cuban Republic*, 175-183; 187-200.

[56] Ambassador Hewson Ryan, interview April 27, 1988, transcript, interview by Richard Nethercut, ADST, http://www.adst.org/OH%20TOCs/Ryan,%20Hewson.toc.pdf (accessed February 25, 2016).

warfare activities. The USIA participated in all phases of the propaganda initiatives, producing both attributable and unattributable "grey" programming for "Operation Mongoose."[57] Thus, by the end of 1961, agency officials addressed the Cuban issue to the region through two distinct operations: the USIA's stated regional goals to persuade Latin American audiences to turn away from the popular Castro using its informational programming, and as part of a much more centralized and covert attempt to depose the Cuban leader.

After the April invasion attempt, USIA officials reconsidered how they would direct their anti-Castro messaging to both Cubans and the rest of Latin America moving forward. Voice of America staffer Alexander Klieforth recalled a heated conversation with Director Murrow on how VOA programming to Cuba should proceed in light of the fact that the US would not directly intervene to remove Castro. After Murrow stated that the US would not "give up" on Cuba, Klieforth remembered responding: "Fine, we can't give up on Cuba. But what is it that we want to do with Cuba? Do we want them to revolt? Do we want them to assassinate Castro?" arguing to Murrow that, "If we're supposed to work out programs, we should have an idea of what the United States wants."[58] With no immediate answer from Murrow, Klieforth and his team focused on a long-term broadcasting plan, without concerning himself with future US foreign policy.

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[57] "Memorandum from the United States Information Agency Operations Officer for Operation Mongoose (Wilson) to the Chief of Operations, Operation Mongoose (Lansdale)," July 20, 1962, *FRUS*, X, Cuba, January 1961 – September 1962, ed. Louis J. Smith (Washington: USGPO, 1997), doc. 356.
[58] Alexander A. L. Klieforth, interview, August 15, 1988, transcript, interview by Cliff Groce, ADST, http://www.adst.org/OH%20TOCs/Klieforth,%20Alexander%20A.toc.pdf (accessed February 25, 2016).

Their decision: "to stimulate peaceful change" on the island, which quickly became official agency guidance.[59]

Less than a week after the Cuban exiles surrendered on the shores of Playa Giron, Assistant Director McKnight offered Director Murrow a series of talking points on the USIA's Cuban strategy upcoming National Security Council Meeting. McKnight's team developed several themes that they believed would weaken Castro's popularity, encourage Cubans to find an alternative to the present government, and "restore hope to the hopeless" on the island.[60] In order to accomplish these objectives, the planning committee recommended themes promising Cubans that their lives would improve after Castro's removal, emphasized Soviet dominance of the Cuban government, and stressed that Castro was an oppressive, bloody, lunatic "ready to gamble the destruction of the world to maintain himself in power."[61]

McKnight's April memo also included talking points for the future of USIA programming on the Cuban issue to the larger Latin American audience after the Bay of Pigs. Noting that US prestige had not fallen in the region after the failed invasion, the Assistant Director for Latin America surmised that "responsible" Latin Americans were ready for the US to provide leadership and remove Castro, but that their long-held

[59] Alexander Klieforth, interview, August 15, 1988, ADST.

[60] John P. McKnight to Edward R. Murrow, "Talking Points for NSC Meeting," April 26, 1961, Cuba: General, 1961,: January – April, Countries, box 35, Papers of John F. Kennedy, Presidential Papers, National Security File, John F. Kennedy Presidential Library.

[61] John P. McKnight to Edward R. Murrow, "Talking Points for NSC Meeting," April 26, 1961, National Security File, John F. Kennedy Presidential Library. The Committee also recommended continued expansion of VOA broadcasts to the island, which Cuban exiles reported as very popular among the island population as their only credible news source.

concerns with US intervention and hegemony dampened their support.[62] McKnight's team recommended a strategy going forward with messages that stressed the regional dangers that Cuba posed to traditional hemispheric ideals, highlighting the external communist threat now intertwined with Castro's own attempts to unravel regional solidarity, and the need for inter-American cooperation to confront the problem. Despite advocating such cooperative themes, the Latin American team also recommended a more brazen strategy that cultivated "the widest possible government and public assent to the U.S.'s acting unilaterally, as representative and champion of the inter-American system Castro seeks to destroy."[63]

The agency's Latin American bureau drafted a report on the current state of regional messaging for USIA Director Murrow to present to President Kennedy in May. Though the Alliance for Progress captured Latin American audiences'' attention, the program itself was yet to have any concrete goals in the early months of the new presidential administration, and USIA staff listed it second of their two regional objectives. Warning the hemisphere of Castro's danger to regional peace and prosperity ranked as the agency's first objective in their memorandum to Murrow. IAL staff listed a detailed account of the themes they intended to emphasize in their anti-Castro messaging. They would attack his totalitarian government, stressing its:

> betrayal of the ideals of the revolution, its suppression of human liberties, its treason to the ideals of Western civilization, and especially to the democratic concept that government rests on the consent of the governed...its atrocities, its

[62] Ibid.

[63] Ibid.

> calculated subservience to the Sino-Soviet bloc and the threat this offers to the free institutions of the countries of the Western Hemisphere.[64]

These themes echoed the ideas from John McKnight's earlier memorandum to Murrow. The USIA cemented its anti-Castro public diplomacy strategy in place less than one month after "Operation Zapata." With the Voice of America, the agency planned to counter Castro's charges against the United States through a respected, factual news source, while offering hope to Cubans that conditions would improve once Castro was no longer in power. Simultaneously, the USIA would lead a regional information campaign against Castro to Latin Americans, emphasizing Castro's danger to regional security and future prosperity. Covertly, the USIA continued to cooperate with other government agencies in a campaign to topple the Cuban leader.

Local USIS post activity again incorporated these changes into their country objectives. USIS staff in El Salvador submitted their newest Country Plan to Washington, DC, in the early summer of 1961. Field office personnel serving in the small Central American nation noted in their report that many among the "ill-informed and emotional masses" likened the communist-tinged "Castroism" with *fidelismo's* original revolutionary ideals. "It is the inability [among the local audience] to discriminate," wrote USIS-San Salvador staff, "which presents both problems and challenges in holding the line."[65] While the Alliance for Progress and messages promoting political, economic, and social stability occupied the first two objectives,

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[64] Murrow to Kennedy, "Our Latin American Program" undated, contained in memo from John P. McKnight to "Jim", May 15, 1961, A – General – 1961, Confidential, USIS-San Jose Subject Files, box 2, San Jose RG 84, NACP.

[65] USIS-San Salvador, "Country Plan (El Salvador)," June 29, 1961, USIS Country Plan, 1959-1961, USIS-San Salvador Subject Files, box 1, San Salvador, RG 84, NACP.

USIS-San Salvador personnel continued their anticommunist messaging, particularly emphasizing the Castro-Communist connection and its threat to El Salvadorans.[66]

Using the Exiles

Among the informational messaging after 1959 was a new and powerful propaganda source for USIA planners to incorporate into their Latin American programming: Cuban exile stories. Accounts of refugees fleeing their homes to escape Castro due to the Cuban government's disastrous reform policies and oppressive political system joined USIA's established anti-Castro narratives. The Cuban exile narrative proved invaluable to USIA propaganda efforts, as both direct evidence of local dissatisfaction with the Cuban government and a more relatable example to show other Latin Americans the potential outcomes of successful Cuban-like revolution in their own countries. The exiles also allowed the USIA to portray the United States as a supportive and generous ally to those escaping political oppression.

The Voice used Cubans fleeing the island as a theme at least as early as November 1959, reporting on the exodus of Cubans from the island's professional ranks. Comparing their flight to East Germans seeking refuge in West Germany, the VOA broadcast explained Cubans left their homes because they could no longer tolerate the Castro regime, "and preferred to seek a new life in countries where they could once more breathe with freedom."[67] Subsequent documentaries and reports appearing in early 1961

[66] USIS-San Salvador, "Country Plan (El Salvador)," June 29, 1961, USIS-San Salvador Subject Files, RG 84, NACP.

[67] Fred Galvan, "The Exodus of Professionals from Cuba," November 30, 1960, News Analysis #1470, VOA, *Scripts,* mf, Reel 19.

capitalized on the arriving exiles as source for interviews, offering the opportunity to evoke sympathy among Latin American audiences for their displaced neighbors, as USIA writers emphasized themes of betrayal and danger using these first-hand accounts.

The VOA initially relied upon outside productions for its broadcasts, acquiring the documentary, *Las Barbas de tú Vecino* (*Our Neighbor with the Beard*) from a Miami-based production company in January. The USIA promoted the film to its field posts as a "comprehensive and sometimes vehement cross-section of opinion on the Castro regime" through a series of interviews with Cuban exiles from diverse backgrounds.[68] The USIA's initial agency-produced radio documentary on Cuba appeared in early February. "Anatomy of a Broken Promise" was a radio feature emphasizing Castro's betrayal of the Cuban Revolution's initial principles, using excerpts of exile interviews on their experiences in Castro's Cuba.[69] Other similar-themed documentaries followed for motion picture production. *The Right to Live* relayed to Latin American audiences how the United States assisted Cuban exiles as they arrived in Florida, while also providing first-hand accounts of the negative aspects of life in Cuba at the time.[70]

Agency-produced materials highlighting the flight from Cuba storyline soon appeared in other mediums as a part of the USIA's anti-Castro and anticommunist programming. USIA staff developed a series of articles gleaned from interviews with

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[68] US Information Agency Circular, "Motion Pictures: *Our Neighbor with a Beard* " (La Barbas de tu Vecino), January 16, 1961, G – Motion Pictures – Confidential, USIS-San Jose Subject Files, box 3, San Jose, RG 84, NACP.

[69] Michael A. Hanu, "Anatomy of a Broken Promise," February 7, 1961, Special Feature, VOA, *Scripts*, MF, Reel 22. The Voice re-broadcast the film as a four part series one month later over a two week period. See USIA, Director's Staff Meeting, February 13, 1961, Director's Staff Meeting Notes 1961, Meeting Notes, box 2, Director's Office, RG 306, NACP.

[70] US Information Agency, *The Right to Live*. February 28, 1961, The Right to Live (1961) English, Movie Scripts, 1942 – 1965 (hereafter cited as Movie Scripts), box 38, RG 306, NACP.

Cubans arriving in Miami for local USIS field posts to disseminate in their own countries through local media or as publications. The first, "Eight Days a Prisoner," contained Cuba's *El Mundo* news editor Ernesto Ardura's account of his time as a prisoner in Cuba and the oppressive environment the Cuban press encountered under the Castro regime.[71]

Cuban arrivals to the United States also proved to be valuable assets for the USIA beyond their capacity as a powerful thematic element in agency programming. The newcomers also directly contributed to the information efforts, serving within the USIA in both an administrative and technical capacity and created programming for the anti-Castro campaign. The newly opened USIS-Miami field office employed eleven Cuban staff members in their ongoing operations in the early 1960s. Working in South Florida amid the incoming flow of Cuban exiles, USIS-Miami staff served as the linchpin for gathering and producing the USIA's Cuban content. Local personnel interviewed arriving exiles on conditions at home, combed through Cuban publications, and recorded Cuban radio programs and the audio from television signals that reached the US mainland.[72] These materials comprised the factual information that the USIA relied upon as evidence they could present to Latin American audiences to support US claims of Castro's totalitarianism.

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[71] US Information Agency, Press and Publication Service, "Eight Days a Prisoner," February 15, 1961, USIS-San Jose Subject Files, box 2, Costa Rica, RG 84, NACP.

[72] "Current USIA Programs in Cuba," February 6, 1963, Psychological – USIA, etc. (also possible Castro electronic counter-measures), Subject Files, box 38, ARA/CCA, RG 59, NACP; C. Conrad Manley, interview, February 21, 1988, transcript, interview by John Hogan, ADST, http://www.adst.org/OH%20TOCs/Manley,%20C.%20Conrad.toc.pdf (accessed February 25, 2016). As head of USIS-Miami, Manley noted that USIS-Miami also relied on the assistance of exiled members of the Cuban Court Reporters Association to help the field office translate these signals to English.

Cuban writers and performers also found work with the Voice of America, as the agency's radio, television, and film divisions ramped up their programming for the Cuban issue. In Miami, veteran Cuban writers María Julia Casanova and Jorge Jiménez Rojo contributed to the USIA propaganda effort by writing radio scripts for productions such as *El Testigo* (*The Witness*).[73] Armando Couto, creator of the popular Cuban program *Los Tres Villalobos*, renewed his popular Cuban-produced series upon settling in Miami and signed a contract with the Voice of America to broadcast these programs as part of their packaged programming that Latin American USIS posts distributed to interested local radio stations. The agency ordered 176 episodes of the radio program, a fictional radio drama "in which three brothers fight Castro tyranny," broadcasting the episodes directly to Cuba through the VOA.[74]

Local USIS posts in the region augmented these centrally-created productions with their own programming. In Costa Rica, USIS-San Jose information personnel developed their own weekly radio feature entitled, *Cuba bajo el Terror* (*Cuba under Terror*). USIS staff billed the series as a "documentary," but loosely applied the term, as the information officers at the post actually combined agency reports on events and conditions in Cuba to create first-person accounts from fictional characters. The field office contracted with a local actress to perform as a variety of characters, "a widow, a

[73] Maria Julia Casanova, Cuban Theater Digital Archive, http://ctda.library.miami.edu/creator/1523 (accessed February 25, 2016).

[74] US Information Agency to USIS-San Jose, "Reporting Conflict of Interests, re use of the series Los Tres Villalobos," February 7, 1962, F – Radio, 1962, Confidential, USIS-San Jose Subject Files, box 3, Costa Rica, RG 84, NACP; *House Appropriations Committee Hearings, Eighty Seventh Congress, Second Session, 1963* (Overseas Mission – Latin America Area), (Washington: USGPO, 1962), 193, HathiTrust, http://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=mdp.39015022382587;view=1up;seq=9 (accessed February 25, 2016); "Current USIA Programs in Cuba," February 6, 1963, Psychological – USIA, etc. (also possible Castro electronic counter-measures), Subject Files, box 38, ARA/CCA, RG 59, NACP.

teacher, a doctor, etc," to dramatically express "the hardships suffered by the Cuban people under communist dictatorship."[75]

With the Alliance for Progress campaign in fully functioning after the summer of 1961, the USIA's anti-Castro rhetoric remained but lost priority to the agency's much more upbeat and positive messaging that accompanied the Latin American assistance program. Yet the Kennedy administration did not abandon its efforts to diminish Castro's influence and remove the Cuban leader from power. While the CIA continued "Operation Mongoose" throughout 1961 and into 1962, Kennedy and his foreign policy advisors maneuvered to expel the island nation from the Organization of American States, achieving their goal in January 1962 at the Punta del Este Conference. The administration also implemented its policy to economically isolate the island nation from other Latin American nations through the US government's ongoing Economic Denial Program.[76]

Materials USIA information officials crafted to discredit Castro and undermine the Cuban government flowed from all sections in the Washington, DC, headquarters to the agency's field offices. The USIA's Latin American division reported press outlets in the region ran an average of fifteen USIA-produced, Cuban-themed articles per week.[77]

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[75] USIS-San Jose to USIA Washington, "Evidence of Effectiveness: New radio program, Bajo el Terror, produced by USIS-San Jose," September 14, 1961, F – Radio – General – Confidential – 1961, USIS-San Jose Subject Files, box 3, Costa Rica, RG 84, NACP; USIS-San Jose Memorandum, Juan Francisco Rojas to Mr. Rivera, "Bajo el Terror," August 29, 1961, September 14, 1961, F – Radio – General – Confidential – 1961, USIS-San Jose Subject Files, box 3, Costa Rica, RG 84, NACP.

[76] For an account of the events at the Punta del Este Conference, see Schoultz, *That Infernal Little Cuban Republic,* 173-175. For the "Economic Denial Program," see Schoultz, *That Infernal Little Cuban Republic,* 200-208.

[77] Memorandum From the United States Information Agency Operations Officer for Operation Mongoose (Wilson) to the Chief of Operations, Operation Mongoose (Lansdale), July 20, 1962, *FRUS*, 1961-1963, X, Cuba January 1961 – September 1962, doc. 356.

The agency produced thousands of copies of anti-Castro books and millions more of a series of cartoon booklets on the Castro Regime and its oppressive tactics against the Cuban people. Through the airwaves, the VOA devoted three of its nine hours of Spanish broadcasting daily specifically to Cuban audiences, with a series of news, editorials, and entertainment features.[78]

USIA officials arranged for a commercial release throughout the region of their newly-produced motion picture that condemned Castro's reforms and emphasized his betrayal of the Cuban Revolution. The ten minute animated film, *La Tierra Prometida* (*The Promised Land*), presented a simple, dark interpretation of the Cuban government's agrarian reform program. Emphasizing themes of betrayal, the short animated film depicted how a former member of Castro's insurgency, Manuel, fought Batista for the right of land ownership. Upon Castro's victory, Manuel received his land, only to slowly have it, and any promise of prosperity, disappear as the government confiscated his farmland and transitioned to a communist economy. At the end, the Cuban government accuses Manuel of being a counter-revolutionary and executes the former freedom fighter. Here, the film ended with a female narrator's voice:

> Back in the mountains,
> Fidel gave you
> His own solemn promise
> That your dreams would come true.
>
> So here, Cuban peasant,
> Here is your land –
> Promised and dug,
> By a tyrant's hand![79]

[78] Ibid.

[79] USIA, *Promised Land,* Promised Land (1962) English, Movie Scripts, box 36, RG 306, NACP.

La Tierra Prometida and related programming were all part of the USIA's continued coordinated effort to turn Latin American public opinion against Fidel Castro and to prevent Cuban-inspired reform measures from gaining further popularity in the region. By the summer of 1962, USIA strategists had their anti-Castro policy and messaging to Latin America well in place, emphasizing economic hardship in Cuba as a result of Cuban government reforms, exile accounts of poor conditions on the island under Castro's oppressive leadership, and the communist influence that guided Cuban actions on the island and throughout the region. These harsh messages ran alongside, but separate from, the USIA's optimistic and friendly Alliance for Progress campaign.

Conclusion

Cuba and Fidel Castro quickly emerged as a significant public relations issue for the United States throughout Latin America after 1959. The deteriorating diplomatic relations between the two nations and the Eisenhower, then Kennedy, administration's decision to oust Castro forced the USIA to devise a different informational strategy. Agency planners needed to both explain the US position to Latin American audiences and to gain regional support for future efforts to intervene in Cuban politics. By 1961, USIA strategists decided on messaging that presented Fidel Castro as a danger to Latin American solidarity and peaceful social and political advancement, portrayed the Cuban people as victims of an oppressive ruler, and labeled Cuba as a base for communist expansion in the hemisphere. The United States government, through the United States Information Agency, attempted to alter prevailing Latin American public opinion using positive themes for the Alliance program, but that did not mean that the USIA abandoned

anti-Castro informational programming in the process. Events in the fall of 1962 provided the USIA with ample opportunity to fully demonstrate communist Cuba's danger to both the region and the world.

CONCLUSION

> "I appreciate all that you are doing. Cuba today betrayed and humiliated, with the help of God and the sister countries of America, will once again be free."
>
> – Excerpt of letter from an anonymous Cuban Voice of America listener, *USIA 22d Report to Congress*, January 1-June 30, 1964

Cuba once again assumed the top priority within the United States Information Agency (USIA) when on October 14, 1962 a US U-2 high altitude reconnaissance aircraft photographed evidence of offensive nuclear-capable missile sites under construction in Cuba. As people world-wide turned to the media to remain updated over the tense standoff between the United States and the Soviet Union, the USIA performed a key role in the Cuban Missile Crisis. Agency staff maintained a constant barrage of informational materials through all of its mediums throughout the world that kept audiences informed and justified US actions with tangible evidence. This included not only all of Latin America, but also the Caribbean island serving as the focal point of the standoff.

Every arm of the USIA information machine took part in the crisis, not only during the tense thirteen days that led to the Soviet's withdrawal of their nuclear missiles from Cuba, but in the weeks and months that followed. The former period allowed the Agency to serve its role in providing foreign audiences with accurate news on the situation and to clarify the US position. The latter provided the USIA with ample material to continue demonstrating the dangers Castro and his communist ideology presented to Latin America and the world.

Agency personnel in Washington, DC, worked to provide their field offices throughout Latin America, and elsewhere, materials that United States Information Service (USIS) post information officers could disseminate to local audiences, including photographs and transcripts of President John F. Kennedy's speeches during the affair. The Voice of America (VOA) initiated twenty four hours per day broadcasting to the region, using its existing short-wave facilities, beginning with the President's announcement of the launch sites on the island. VOA staff also moved a portable radio transmitter to Marathon Key in South Florida to broadcast messages directly to the Cuban people during the crisis. This array complemented several other commercial radio stations in the United States whose owners voluntarily donated their facilities to the Voice as they attempted to broadcast to Cubans the truth regarding the ongoing standoff between their two nations.[1] During the emergency, USIA officials maintained consistent themes when communicating with Latin Americans. Many of these themes echoed the agency's long-term messaging strategy already in play on the issue, such as Castro's betrayal of the Cuban Revolution and the dangers his relationship with the Soviet Union posed to the region.[2]

The October Crisis demonstrated, USIA officials wrote to members of US Congress, "an excellent measure of the present flexibility and capacity of the USIA to act

[1] US Information Agency, *19th Report to Congress, July 1 - December 31, 1962*, 6-7, HathiTrust, https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=mdp.39015028986845;view=1up;seq=634 (accessed February 25, 2016). For an account of the USIA during the Cuban Missile Crisis, see Nicholas J. Cull, *The Cold War and the United States Information Agency: American Propaganda and Public Diplomacy, 1945-1989* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008) 214-217; See also Chapter 6 in Gregory Michael Tomlin, "The Fishbowl World: Edward R. Murrow, John F. Kennedy, and the Cold War," (PhD diss., George Washington University, 2013), 142-193, ProQuest Dissertations and Theses (accessed February 26, 2015).

[2] US Information Agency, *19th Report to Congress, July 1-December 31, 1962*, 11.

directly in support of foreign policy."[3] The events also supplied USIA strategists with ample material for their programming on the Cuban problem and themes that carried on well after the Soviet Union removed the missiles from the Caribbean island. As in Guatemala eight years earlier, the crisis provided the USIA with tangible proof for its fact-based white and grey propaganda messaging. Agency staff could rely upon recent examples of US efforts to protect the security of the Western Hemisphere, and they could illustrate the deceitful tactics of Castro and his communist Soviet ally to disrupt regional peace.

After the crisis, USIA personnel recommended that the Agency continue to "keep the record straight" when responding to Cuban and Soviet propaganda on the event.[4] For Cuba, USIA strategists suggested continuing with themes the agency already incorporated in its regional messaging. The programming would link Cuba to the Soviet Union and portraying the island as an outpost for communism and a danger to hemispheric solidarity, foster the idea that Fidel Castro had betrayed his revolutionary ideals and the government's reform measures had failed, and promote the collective strength and will of the region through the Organization of American States. As their final suggestion in handling the Cuban issue in the post-crisis environment, USIA planners recommended a message to "wound the vanity" of Castro "by playing down, preferably ignoring, his role in Cuba."[5]

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[3] *House Appropriations Committee Hearings, Eighty-Eighth Congress, First Session, 1964* (General Justification Statement), (Washington: USGPO, 1964), 24, HathiTrust, https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=mdp.39015022382744;view=1up;seq=34.

[4] United States Information Agency Office of Policy, "News Policy Note No.2-63," January 11, 1963, Cuba 1962 Policy – Briefing Papers Oct.-Jan. 63, Subject Files, box 30, ARA/CCA, RG 59, NACP.

[5] "News Policy Note No.2-63," January 11, 1963, Subject Files, RG 59, NACP.

Within Cuba itself, the Agency continued to broadcast similar messages to Cuban audience, with the additional theme "that Cuba one day will be free," in an effort to turn Cuban public opinion against Castro.[6] For both audiences, USIA strategists believed that their overt anti-Castro message should rely upon factual information; but even factual information could be used in a dramatic and persuasive manner. Castro's actions: his alliance with the Soviet Union, promotion of violent revolution in Latin America, and complicity in instigating a nuclear-tipped global crisis, provided USIA officials with ample opportunity to disseminate fearful messages to Latin Americans while also promoting a much more hopeful message through the Alliance for Progress.

As with much of the relationship between the United States and Cuba after October 1962, the propaganda battle settled into a permanent, but secondary affair to more pressing events for the USIA and US government. After President Kennedy's silent agreement with Soviet Premier Nikita Khrushchev that the United States would refrain from any future invasion attempts in Cuba – along with Kennedy's pledge to remove US missiles from Turkey – in exchange for the Soviet Union's dismantling of missile sites on the island, the US position on Cuba solidified into a lasting foreign policy.[7] The Kennedy administration, and Lyndon Johnson's advisors during his successive presidency, persuaded much of the leadership in Latin America to join with the United States in economically and diplomatically isolating Cuba from the outside world. Soon,

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[6] "Current USIA Programs in Cuba," February 6, 1963, Psychological – USIA, etc. (also possible Castro electronic counter-measures), Subject Files, box 38, ARA/CCA, RG 59, NACP.

[7] For an examination of the Missile Crisis and the negotiations between Kennedy and Khrushchev, and its effects on US foreign policy regarding Cuba, see Part II and III of Aleksandr Fursenko and Timothy Naftali, *One Hell of a Gamble: Khrushchev, Castro and Kennedy, 1958-1964* (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 1997). This agreement also compelled the United States government to increase its efforts to restrict Cuban exiles from launching raids against the Cuban government from the United States.

events in Vietnam would consume the Johnson administration and remove resources from propaganda efforts in Latin America to Southeast Asia. Save for the occasional flare up however, the diplomatic relationship between the two nations remained unchanged throughout the remainder of the twentieth century.

Urgent needs in other parts of the world did not end the USIA's Cuban activities completely. The USIA did continue to promote US policies in the region, particularly the Alliance for Progress, but anti-Castro messaging remained consistent going forward, as well, though not as severe as before October 1962. The Agency produced the television program *Blueprint for Terror* for Latin American audiences. The half-hour episode presented "evidence gathered by the Venezuelan government and OAS," of Cuban arms shipments to equip Cuban-backed communist rebels in Venezuela, USIA officials relayed, "to substantiate charges of aggression against the Cuban regime."[8]

USIS field post personnel throughout the region, too, continued to produce programming to undermine the Cuban government. For example, USIS-Buenos Aires distributed a pamphlet title, *Castro y la Gastronomia Cubana* (*Castro and the Cuban Diet*), in 1967, demonstrating the worsening food crisis on the island. In a cleverly designed pamphlet, with a cover featuring an image of Castro examining three small beans through a magnifying glass to increase their size, USIS staff featured illustrated images depicting staple foods in the Cuban diet, complete with the pre-1961 amounts that the average Cuban consumed. Lifting the panels revealed the current drastically reduced numbers, augmented by imagery depicting the rationed food supplies that, "after seven

[8] *United States Information Agency, 22d Review of Operations*, January 1-June 30, 1964, 23, USIA 22nd Review of Operations, 1-6/1964, Review of Operations Reports: 8/1953 – 12/1971, box 3, Office of Research and Assessment/Office of the Historian, RG 306, NACP.

years," Pamphlet authors concluded, "is the meager menu that the communist government of Fidel Castro gives the Cuban people."[9]

For the island itself, the primary method of communication remained focused on the radio waves that Castro could not adequately prevent from reaching into the island. Broadcasting eight hours and forty five minutes of content per day to Latin America by the beginning of 1963, the Voice of America devoted three hours and forty five minutes of that programming directly to Cuban audiences. Split into two time slots in the morning and evening, these transmissions included news, features, commentaries, and entertainment segments for Cubans. *Cita con Cuba* (*Appointment with Cuba*), part of the evening broadcast, was an hour-long segment that included, in addition to news reports, segments on Cuban athletes in the US and thirty minutes of USIS-Miami furnished material consisting of exile interviews, letters from Cubans still on the island, and "commentaries refuting the latest Cuban propaganda claims."[10]

Paralleling the VOA, the CIA-controlled Radio Americas, formerly Radio Swan, continued transmitting to the Caribbean island through the decade, encouraging listeners to overthrow the Cuban regime. Radio Americas finally ceased operations in 1968, with some of their staff and programs moving under the VOA. Cuban-specific broadcasting continued within the VOA, but these programs also declined until only *Cita Con Cuba* remained a regular thirty minute feature by the 1970s. These segments still contained

[9] *Castro y la Gastronomia Cubana,* no date, Buenos Aires, Castro and the Food Situation in Cuba, Spanish, FY 67, Master File Copies of Field Publications, box 313, Press and Publications, RG 306, NACP.

[10] "Current USIA Programs on Cuba," February 6, 1963, Subject Files, RG 59, NACP. For an overview of *Cita Con Cuba programming*, see Howard Handthorne Frederick, "Ideology in International Communications: Radio Wars between Cuba and the United States" (PhD diss., American University, 1984), 47, ProQuest Dissertations and Theses (accessed February 26, 2015).

messages promoting insurrection on the island, but as with other USIA programs, VOA broadcasts to Latin American audiences concerning Cuba maintained a muted tone moving forward. [11]

Direct US propaganda measures to Cuba did not escalate again until the 1980s under President Ronald Reagan. The new administration assumed a more aggressive posture on the Cold War than what had been US policy since the late 1960s. Along with a renewed focus on communism, particularly in Latin America, the Reagan administration increased pressure on communist Cuba.[12] Additionally, a strong Cuban exile community developed within the United States, gaining influential access to US congressional leaders. Foremost among them was the powerful Cuban American National Foundation (CANF), which wealthy Cuban exiles created in 1981.[13] It was this nexus of Cuban exile influence and US government Cold War posturing that lead to a renewed effort to disseminate propaganda to Cuban audiences through programming, "to provide for the broadcasting of accurate information to the people of Cuba."[14]

The first of the new measures was radio broadcasts from the US mainland, which the US government authorized under the Radio Broadcasting to Cuba Act in 1983. Radio

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[11] Frederick, "Ideology in International Communications," 46-49.

[12] For an analysis of US foreign policy in Central America to contain and roll back communism from the late 1960s to the 1980s, see Walter LaFeber, *Inevitable Revolutions: The United States in Central America* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1993).

[13] María Cristina García, *Cuban Exiles and Cuban Americans in South Florida, 1959-1994* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996), 147-152. García examines Cuban exile politics from the 1960s to the 1990s in chapter four of her work.

[14] Quote taken from Lars Schoultz, *That Infernal Little Cuban Republic: The United States and the Cuban Revolution* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2009), 402. For an overview of Radio and TV Marti, see Schoultz, 399-404, 439-442; García, 147-149, and especially Nicholas J. Cull, *The Cold War and the United States Information Agency: American Propaganda and Public Diplomacy, 1945-1989* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 428, 449-450, 478.

Marti began transmitting to Cuba in 1985 operating under VOA guidelines, but with the CANF-controlled programming. Using a large blimp tethered to the ground in the Florida Keys, television broadcasts to Cuba joined the effort several years later after the US Congress passed the Television Broadcasting to Cuba Act in 1990, authorizing Television Marti. US propaganda to Cuba entered the digital age when Radio Marti incorporated satellite broadcasts and the Internet as part of its communications method in the early 2000s.[15]

Effectiveness of USIS-Havana Operations

It is difficult to gauge USIS-Havana's success in Cuba between 1953 and 1962. The USIA took no surveys on the island in the almost eight years the agency maintained a local presence, leaving those studying public diplomacy in Cuba at the mercy of US Embassy analyses and anecdotal evidence, with all of their potential biases.[16] Demonstrating Cuban resistance to US interference is decidedly simpler, as a number of scholarly publications offer evidence that many Cubans rejected North American messaging by the 1950s in favor of distinctly "Cuban" culture, politics, and ideals. Louis Pérez notes how local events altered many Cubans' perceptions of the US in his work *On Becoming Cuban*. Pérez identifies US support for Batista, coupled with a disruptive economic crisis despite Cuban acceptance of US economic theory, as catalysts for changing Cuban public opinion of their northern neighbor. As scores of unsatisfied

[15] Schoultz, 442-443.

[16] The USIA did attempt to conduct a survey in Cuba in 1959, but found the environment too dangerous for the undertaking. See *Departments of State, Justice, the Judiciary, and Related Agencies, Appropriations for 1962, Hearings before the Subcommittee of the Committee on Appropriations, House of Representatives, Eighty-Seventh Congress, First Session 1962, vol.2,* 259.

Cubans embraced more "Cuban" ideals, Pérez notes, their new approach "necessarily implied confrontation with things and ways North American as a means of differentiation and distinction."[17]

Lillian Guerra, too, demonstrates the changes in Cuba after 1959 that altered local perceptions of the United States. Where Pérez's work presents an organic situation by which Cubans rejected US values, Guerra finds that the new government and Cuban media orchestrated these rejections in order to construct a "grand narrative" of the Cuban Revolution that united all Cubans behind the movement's programs and leadership. As part of this new narrative, Guerra contends, Cubans themselves became the "primary protagonists in an unending battle between good and evil, freedom and imperialism."[18] Molding their new narrative, the Cuban government and subservient press encouraged the public to participate in the effort of "cleansing Cubans" of, among other things, "the indignity of…decadent, neocolonial values."[19]

Whether Cubans spurned US values as an individual decision or due to government persuasion, their actions left no room for USIA messaging on the island. USIS-Havana staff built their programs around the very themes that the popular Cuban narrative no longer accepted. The Cuban government and media linked anticommunism as a counterrevolutionary tool to discredit the revolution, while the field post's economic messaging bolstered the status quo on the island where US business interests dominated. Similarly, field post messages promoting US culture garnered little interest, as Cubans

[17] Louis A. Pérez, *On Becoming Cuban,* 448-469, 473.

[18] Lillian Guerra, *Visions of Power in Cuba: Revolution, Redemption, and Resistance, 1959-1971* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2012), 5.

[19] Ibid.

typically experienced US culture first-hand through North American tourists, or worked in US-owned hotels and casinos in Havana, which many Cubans associated with the vice corrupting the island. As with culture, Cubans' direct personal experience undermined USIS-Havana's ability to promote US political ideology, due to both the Eisenhower administration's previous support for the Batista regime and a history of US intervention on the island. The Cuban government and media's continued effort to discredit the USIA by linking the agency with US news services that local opinion makers deemed hostile to Cuba only further paralyzed the USIS field office.

Though Pérez and Guerra demonstrate Cuban attempts to rid the island of US influence in response to local needs, there is also evidence supporting the argument that the USIA's work in Cuba promoting US values and foreign policies, along with messages stressing Cuban-North American friendship, continued to keep much of the Cuban public tied to their northern neighbor. As this dissertation demonstrates, US diplomatic personnel and official visitors repeatedly commented on continued Cuban goodwill for the United States. USIA reports from Cuba often remarked on the goodwill many Cubans retained for the United States. Visiting the island in January 1960, a senior USIA official noted the "warmth of the Cubans for the US.[20] During a 1960 Congressional Hearing, former US Ambassador to Cuba Arthur Gardner remembered his experiences, stating "I never heard anybody use the word 'Gringo,' or say 'Yanqui get out,' or anything like that."[21] USIS-Havana officers recalled good working relationships with

[20] USIA, Director's Staff Meeting, February 29, 1960, Director's Staff Meetings, 1960, Staff Meeting Notes; 1953-1965, box 2, Office of the Director/Executive Secretariat, RG 306, NACP.

[21] *Communist Threat to the United States through the Caribbean, Hearings before the Subcommittee to Investigate the Administration of the Internal Security Act and Other Internal Security Laws of the Committee on the Judiciary, United States Senate, Eighty-Sixth Congress, Second Session, Part 9,* August

Cubans in the media throughout the period. Working as US Consulate in Santiago de Cuba in 1960, G. Harvey Summ stated that during his time in Cuba, he "found nothing but courtesy and kindness," even during the most contentious year between the US and Cuban governments.[22] USIS-Havana messaging, though part of a greater deluge of messaging to Cuban audiences, certainly factored into facilitating such adherence.

While anecdotal, these observations buttress other sources that note similar pro-US sentiment in Cuba during the period. Jorge I. Domínguez uses two North American surveys conducted in Cuba to measure public sentiment to United States interaction in Cuba in his study of Cuban politics and society. Relying on data from US-based privately sponsored surveys in 1956 and 1960, Domínguez offers evidence that Cuban public sentiment was not completely hostile to the US presence on the island. The initial poll measured Cuban opinion of the local US-owned power and light company, revealing that only seven percent of the respondents complained of the company's foreign ownership.[23] The broader 1960 survey addressed Cuban attitudes to current events on the island in the wake of the government's reform policies. As with the earlier survey, this poll noted a lack of hostility towards the United States. This survey also offered evidence of, if nothing else, that elements of the Cuban public did not consider the US a threat to Cuba, as only six percent reported concern of US intervention in the nation's political

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27, 30, 1960 (Testimony of Arthur Gardner, Chairman of the Board of Bundy Tubing Co.) (Washington: USGPO, 1960), 664.

[22] G. Harvey Summ, Interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy, March 5, 1953, ADST, http://adst.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/12/Summ-G.-Harvey.pdf (accessed April 15, 2016).

[23] Jorge I. Domínguez, *Cuba: Order and Revolution* (Cambridge: Belknap Press of Harvard University, 1978), 118.

affairs. [24] As Domínguez states, "The Cuban people were neither hostile to nor apprehensive of the US in 1960.[25]

In conjunction with such surveys, the mere fact that so many Cuban exiles fled to the United States once the revolutionary government began its reform program indicates that US messaging, both from the US government and undoubtedly from decades of US commercial and economic influence to the island, factored in their decision to flee to the United States. In a 1968 study, a trio of scholars surveyed Cuban exiles living in Miami. Among their findings, the authors noted, their survey indicated that seventeen percent of interviewees leaving Cuba between 1958 and 1962 cited growing communism in Cuba as a factor in their final decision to leave.[26] Anticommunist messaging had remained the fixture for USIS operations on the island through the field office's existence and surely contributed to this anticommunist sentiment.

Familiarity with the United States also played a role for Cubans choosing the United States as their destination. As Louis Pérez notes in his work on Cuba, those Cubans who left their homes for the United States did so, in part, out of a sense of familiarity with the United States. They were, as he states, "the people most effectively integrated into North American structures," arguing also that "familiarity with North

[24] Domínguez, 142. This survey did, however, demonstrate the new government's popularity in Cuba, with sixty five percent of respondents indicating that they believed they were better off in 1960 than in the past. See *New York Times*, "'Civil War' Risks to Castro Noted," August 2, 1960.

[25] Domínguez, 142.

[26] Richard R. Fagen, Richard A. Brody, and Thomas J. O'Leary, *Cubans in Exile: Disaffection and the Revolution* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1968), 88-90.

American ways…encouraged exile."[27] While many variables factored into Cuban comfort with the United States, USIA programming that for so long had promoted life in the United States surely played some role in their positive association with their neighboring country.

Perhaps a better way to prove the USIA's effectiveness in Cuba is to reiterate the popularity of USIS-Havana's programming in the period. However, even this simple analysis raises questions. For instance, Cuban newspapers, radio and television stations incorporated USIA materials within their own programming, but there is little way to know if Cuban media ownership used USIA products for ideological reasons or as a way to ensure that there was always ample content to retain their audience's interest. It may be telling that the most popular programming USIS-Havana distributed, particularly in attributable form, were materials promoting US science and technological achievements rather than purely ideological messaging, such as anticommunism.

That the USIA-coordinated educational and professional exchanges and the two binational centers also remained popular between 1957 and 1960 also demonstrates USIS-Havana's public diplomacy accomplishments. For the exchange program, the number of Cubans who participated actually increased in the latter years of the US presence on the island, with seventy-five program participants traveling to the United States between 1957 and 1960. By comparison, forty two had ventured North between 1953 and 1956 during the seemingly less contentious period.[28] This offers evidence of

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[27] Louis A. Pérez, Jr. *On Becoming Cuban: Identity, Nationality, and Culture* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1999), 500-501. Family and friends in already living in the US also facilitated Cuban decisions to settle in the United States, see Fagen, Brody, and O'Leary, *Cubans in Exile*, 102.

[28] *House Appropriations Committee Hearings, Eighty Seventh Congress, First Session, 1962* (Exchange Program with Cuba, 1951-1961), (Washington: USGPO, 1961), 1300-1301, HathiTrust, https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=mdp.39015022382975;view=1up;seq=1310 (accessed April 10, 2016).

continued Cuban interest in the United States as a source for educational or professional enrichment, just as USIS-Havana staff promoted.

Similarly, both the Havana and Santiago de Cuba binational centers reported large numbers of visitors and students for the various programs each facility offered, indicating they remained popular among the local population even during the diplomatic crisis between the two nations. The center in Havana expanded throughout the period to meet local demand for its services. The Santiago facility's leadership, which opened during the first year of the revolutionary government's control of Cuban politics in a region of Cuba well-versed in anti-imperialistic sentiment, reported such success as to consider expanding its programs soon after opening. Still, the question remains if people took these classes, particularly courses that taught English, as an indicator of Cuban interest in the United States or due to more practical concerns, such as the fact that learning English offered greater employment opportunities on the island.

Though there is difficulty in specifying to what degree USIS-Havana programming influenced Cuba public opinion, it is much clearer that the Havana field office activities and objectives matched both the USIA and US foreign policy planners' assumptions of Cuba and Latin America during the period. When the United States Information Agency assumed control of the information and cultural activities in Cuba in August 1953, US policy makers had few concerns that the Caribbean nation might drift away from US influence or threaten the Cold War consensus in a stable Latin America. Long under US hegemonic domain, the Cuban economy had little to gain from upsetting North American interests. Prevailing notions among North Americans was that the people of the two nations enjoyed a mutually beneficial and historic connection. The

United States had provided Cubans with political independence and economic investment. Cubans were, and should remain, thankful for US assistance. Such thinking permeated throughout US society, including the nation's foreign policy apparatus and public diplomacy strategy and messaging during the period; they did not fade easily.

USIA strategists disseminated their programming in Cuba through their USIS-Havana field office based on messages that relied upon similar assumptions. USIA Latin American officials and USIS officers on the island imagined a Cuban population that overwhelmingly shared the same values, goals, and ideology of their long-time northern ally. There were of course those who did not appreciate US influence, and many bristled at past US interventions, but the Cuban audience had bought in fully to the "American way of life" by the 1950s. All that was needed, USIA officials believed, was a program that accentuated and reminded Cubans of their relationship with the US and their duty in the Cold War.

When revolution came to the island in response to the Batista government, USIA officials took little heed of the changing public sentiment in Cuba. The insurgency appeared small and isolated. Batista, though contributing little to public perceptions of the United States as an ally to an unpopular dictator, kept the island nation firmly aligned with US interests. USIA staff in both Havana and Washington, DC, only slowly grasped the changing Cuban public mood regarding the United States in the insurgency's final months.

By the time USIA personnel on the island reexamined their objectives, events in Cuba proceeded rapidly and limited the field office's ability to provide messages that resonated with Cuban audiences. In the span of half a year, Batista quickly lost control of

his government and fled, while Castro and his revolutionary compatriots gained complete control of Cuban politics. Events afterwards continued at a similar speed, as the new government consolidated its power and enacted island-wide reforms. These, and subsequent events, disrupted US influence on the island and lead to incidents that fostered further hostility between the two nations.

USIS activity on the island could not catch up to the rapid pace with which Cuban events occurred. The small field office quickly lost access to the media outlets it needed to spread its programming, and officials on both the island and Washington, DC, could not respond with appropriate strategies and sufficient output to counter Castro's immense popularity, nor his multitude of tirades against the United States. A supplicant Cuban media that echoed the Cuban government's anti-US rhetoric further drowned any pro-US voice. Hamstrung by an initially hesitant US foreign policy and lack or resources, the USIA found itself on the defensive, unable to respond in tone or volume to Cuban propaganda messaging between 1959 and 1961 and incapable of adequately promoting US interests on the island, even as the US government took a more adversarial position against their Cuban counterpart.

Losing the Cuban audience, the USIA instead focused on Latin America as a whole in the agency's effort to contain the Cuban Revolution from reaching disaffected audiences in Central and South America, and force Castro out of power beginning in 1960. Messages to Latin Americans of the dangers Castro posed to the inter-American system, to the ability of other nations to prosperously advance socially and economically, and the threat a communist-controlled Cuba presented to US Cold War strategy augmented the USIA's continued programming to Cubans stressing that the embattled

nation could return to the Latin American fold upon Castro's demise. These messages remained constant well after 1962, even as successive presidential administrations continued promoting policies that isolated Cuba from the international community. The USIA, meanwhile, turned their attention to public diplomacy concerns elsewhere in the world to continue the Cold War struggle.

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