Chapter III

CUBA'S EFFORTS AT RAPPROCHEMENT WITH UNITED STATES
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The mid-1970s are often characterized as a period of rapprochement in US-Cuban relations. Although rapprochement between the two had been discussed in the 1960s, it had remained mainly an academic exercise with a few practical overtures that did not produce the expected results. For instance, in the period between the Missile Crisis and President Nixon’s inauguration, Cuba had reportedly made conciliatory offers to the United States on at least five different occasions, all of which had failed to elicit any response from the latter.1 With the dawn of a new era of realpolitik in international relations in the 1970s, however, better opportunities for negotiations had emerged. On the US side, the understanding with China, agreements with USSR, and the end of the Vietnam war; and on the Cuban side, the decline in its support for revolutions in Latin America and a more compromising attitude toward divergent systems in the region. These and other developments seemed to have reduced the importance of or made irrelevant some of the conditions set for negotiations by both countries, raising hopes of a possible rapprochement between the two.

Interestingly, it was Cuba that sent a set of subtle, often rather cryptic signals during the 1970s which, nevertheless, seemed to portend at least the beginning of a shift toward greater moderation in its policies toward the

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1. For details on Cuban overtures toward the United States during the 1960s, see Jorge Domínguez, “Taming the Cuban Shrew”, Foreign Policy (New York), no. 10, spring 1973, pp. 94-116.
United States. Lest any of these be interpreted as Cuban capitulation to the US, Castro as part of his negotiating strategy, followed the signals with acrimonious tirades against US imperialism. The juxtaposition of these conflicting views, often expressed by the Cuban leaders on consecutive days, naturally raised some rather pertinent questions about the nature of the signals. The curious nature of these overtures as also the fact that following a shift in American public opinion, the Nixon administration too made subtle modifications in its policy toward the island country during this period, led many to conclude that it was the United States that had taken the rapprochement initiative.

In examining the Cuban overtures--political, diplomatic and economic--the chapter attempts to carefully distinguish between Castro's offensive against the US at a rhetorical level and the substantive gestures to show that promoting some improvement in its relations with the US was certainly on the Cuban cards, much before the US took steps to soften its policies towards Cuba.

**Political Initiatives**

At the rhetorical level, Cuban initiatives towards normalizing relations with the US were long delayed. Even as late as April 1971, responding to President Nixon's statement to the press that the US might consider changing its policy towards Cuba if the latter as a first move changed its policy towards the US, Castro remained as trenchant and vehement as ever:

Now they almost seem to pine for a gesture from Cuba. But such a gesture Mr. Nixon--and we say this with all the honesty which characterizes this revolution and its statements--will never be made.2

Towards the latter half of 1971, however, there were indications of a shift towards some moderation. One of the earliest signals in this respect came from Castro during his visit to Chile in November-December 1971. The visit itself dramatized Cuban desire to find wider acceptance within the

hemisphere. Castro's stop-overs in Peru and Ecuador on his way back, in particular, emphasized the fact that Cuba would no longer limit its interactions to revolutionary socialist governments in the region.\(^3\) Showing greater willingness to accept ideological pluralism in the hemisphere, Castro, while in Chile, highlighted the new criteria for Cuba's interactions even with respect to the United States. While playing on the already familiar theme of not talking to the US as long as Nixon remained in office, he nevertheless added that a revolution in Washington would not be necessary for Cuba and the United States to re-establish relations. All that was necessary was the leadership of a US President of "wide vision and broad understanding". Regretting that Nixon was not such a President, Castro vowed that the former would never visit Cuba.\(^4\)

A year later, Castro reiterated a similar stand saying:

We don't demand, we don't establish as a prerequisite, that there be a socialist or even a progressive government in the United States, but at least there should be a realistic government, a government that will recognize the present world balance of power, a government that will realize that it is in no shape to continue playing the role of a world gendarme...\(^5\)

During his visit to Chile, Castro also set forward two conditions for normalization of relations with the US--an end to the war in Vietnam and an end to the US role of gendarme in Latin America. To these, he added two other conditions during a press conference at the Bulgarian capital, Sofia, in 1972--lifting the economic embargo of Cuba and vacating the US naval base at

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3. In mid-1969 Castro had insisted that, among other things, Latin American countries wishing to restore relations with Cuba must have undergone revolution as also condemn "crimes" committed against Cuba by "Yankee imperialism". Less than a year later he merely insisted that the country behave independently of the US.


5. On this occasion, Castro further pointed out that while the above mentioned demand was necessary for improvement of relations with the US government, relations with the US people was nevertheless "steadily improving". Speech delivered upon receiving the Frederic Joliot-Curie Medal from the World Peace Council and reprinted in *Granma Weekly Review*, 22 October 1972.
Guantanamo. He added that Cuba would wait for "two, four, ten years" until these conditions were met before resuming relations with the US.⁶ For the next year and a half these terms remained unchanged or were stated more harshly. The possibility of negotiating these terms was, however, never precluded. In the wake of the productive negotiations on the issue of hijacking in 1973, for instance, in a radio broadcast, Cuban political commentator, Guido García Inclán, whose reporting was recognized as reflecting the official government attitudes, cautiously invited the US to make further approaches to Cuba with similar "decorum and dignity". He hinted that similar procedures could well be extended to broader agreements. "When the USA was interested in searching for an agreement to prevent illegal and piratical traffic, it knew how to go about it".⁷

In early 1974 Cuba even softened its stance on conditions for negotiations. The first indication of this came from Fernando López Muino, the Cuban ambassador to Mexico. Stating that his country was not waging "a holy war" against the US, he pointed out that despite the fact that the US had on its own initiative broken relations with Cuba, the latter had never refused to negotiate with the Americans. More importantly, he presented a new and more moderate version of conditions for negotiations, stating that lifting of the American trade embargo was "the single and irrevocable condition" necessary for resumption of relations.⁸ The Cuban ambassador further clarified that continued use of the US naval base at Guantanamo was "not important" to Havana, and would not be an obstacle to the talks. Lest it be interpreted as Cuban capitulation, the ambassador's statement was followed by a "clarifying note" from the Cuban foreign ministry which, though


harsher in tone, repeated the single condition signal. Subsequently, Castro himself reiterated the same stand on several occasions. In an interview with the Mexican left-wing magazine, *Siempre*, for instance, Castro endorsed the single condition formula for negotiations, although he added that Cuba was in no hurry. Later that year, speaking at an interview, Castro pointed out that inevitability of US-Cuban ties:

First of all we are neighbors. Independently of our will, our geographical location and that of the United States makes us neighbours. We cannot move, nor can the United States. This is speaking realistically, but some day some sort of ties will be established between the United States and Cuba. It is dictated by geography, history, and the very interests of Cuba and the United States.

In an effort to be more accommodating, Cuban intransigence over the lifting of embargo too was subsequently moderated. Talking to members of the American press who had accompanied Senator George McGovern of South Dakota on his visit to Cuba in May 1975, Castro dropped his earlier insistence and stated that pending the complete removal of the embargo, discussions with the US could move ahead if the US would only lift its ban on trade in food and medicine. Interestingly, the question of the return of Guantanamo base was not raised by the Cubans even once. When Senator

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9. The Ministry's note placed the entire blame for bad relations on the US and demanded an unconditional lifting of the "blockade". It added that Guantanamo will be the "main point of any bilateral dialogue between the two nations", although the base "lacks strategic importance as far as Cuban national defence is concerned". FBIS, Daily Report, *Latin America*, 11 January 1974.

10. Luis Suárez, *Siempre* (Mexico City), 20 February 1974, pp. 18-23. Later in the interview, commenting on exile groups and terrorist activities Castro significantly did not blame the CIA. He said "the CIA no longer controls some of these buzzards. No, I don't think the CIA is doing those things; but they are being done by the 'little cadres' trained by the CIA".

McGovern himself broached the issue, Castro informed him that it was only "a secondary issue". Additionally, the Cuban leader reiterated his government's willingness to discuss legitimate differences with the US, including the question of compensation. In an attempt to ingratiate himself to the American public, Castro conveyed to them, through the visiting press, a wish of friendship in English. He said, "I understand it is not easy, because we belong to different worlds. But we are neighbors. In one way or another we ought to live in peace."  

Castro, it would appear, was particularly hopeful of reaching an accommodation with the US under President Gerald Ford. In sharp contrast to his vitriolic attacks on Nixon, he took a rather benign view of Ford. According to the Cuban Premier what was "particularly positive" about Ford was that, unlike Nixon, he had no personal links with the counter-revolutionaries. Castro, therefore, confessed that he saw Ford "with a certain hope in the sense that he may after all, adopt a different policy towards Cuba". Castro also singled out Henry Kissinger for some praiseworthy comments. In what may be regarded as the highest accolade a Cuban official has paid any American official ever, Castro said of Kissinger:

In general, we think highly of his [Kissinger's] capabilities. He is an intelligent and realistic man and truly able--so we are favourably disposed towards him...I do not believe that Kissinger has a personal position that is hostile towards Cuba, while Nixon undoubtedly had a personally hostile position towards Cuba...I must say that the positive facts that Nixon has shown in international policies are to a large extent also to be attributed to Kissinger."  

In showering such rich tributes on the American leadership, Castro was perhaps hinting that he was inclined to do business with the Ford-Kissinger team.


13. See Mankiewicz and Jones, n. 11, pp. 147-49.
Diplomatic Overtures

Overtures at a political level, such as those described were crucial in mitigating the atmosphere of relentless hostility between the two countries throughout the 1960s and eventually led to a few positive exchanges at a diplomatic level. The most significant diplomatic breakthrough was of course the signing of the anti-hijacking agreement in 1973. Hijacking became a serious problem between the two nations in the late 1960s when the number of US aircrafts hijacked to Cuba increased dramatically from 13 in 1968 to 31 in 1969. The problem specifically in this respect was that while the US and Cuba had already worked out arrangements for the return of the hijacked planes and passengers, the hijackers themselves could hope for asylum in Cuba. This had become a serious issue between the two countries particularly in view of the fact that Cuba had refused to be a part of the multi-lateral Hijacking Convention signed at the Hague in December 1970.

The initiative toward resolving the issue came from Cuba in September 1969 when it promulgated an anti-hijacking law which provided for the return of hijackers to their country of origin through bilateral agreements. Although, even under its new law, Cuba still reserved the right of political asylum for hijackers in case of danger of death or serious oppression, it agreed to hand over to their country of origin those hijackers described in the law as common criminals or mentally unbalanced. But a potential problem for the US was that Cuba's anti-hijacking law also covered any person who entered

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15. For a text of the Cuban law see ibid., pp. 64-65. See also New York Times, 20 September 1969.
or departed Cuba illegally. This meant that to get an agreement, the US would have to take steps against exile attacks and to return refugees who did not leave Cuba on the regularly scheduled "freedom flights". In addition, the preamble to the law also held US policy of blockade and aggression against Cuba responsible for having "fostered and encouraged" hijacking.

This perhaps explains the delayed response of the US government to the Cuban initiative. It was only in December 1969, after protracted discussions through the Swiss embassy which represented the US interests in Havana, that Washington notified the Cuban government its willingness to return hijackers of the Cuban ships and aircrafts on a reciprocal basis. But the talks between the two nations remained in a state of limbo because of US objections to the law covering illegal entries and departures by means other than hijacking.16

In September 1970, Cuba reportedly once again took the initiative for solving the hijacking stalemate. On 24 September, for the first time Cuba returned a hijacker directly to the US. The US officials were allowed to fly to Varadero, Cuba and take into custody Robert Labadie who had hijacked a Trans World Airlines (TWA) jet to Havana in August.17 Then in a significant departure from its previous preference for dealing with the US only through third party governments, the Cuban government proposed to talk directly with the US government. Cuban Foreign Minister, Raúl Roa, in a radio broadcast on 26 September stated his government's readiness to enter into immediate agreement with the US for reciprocal return of all sea and air hijackers if no exceptions to the accord were made:

If the US government really wishes to discuss in a serious and definitive way that the problem [hijacking], the Cuban government is willing to


subscribe right away an agreement on the basis established in the Cuban law no. 1266.  

Despite these initiatives, talks between the US and Cuba progressed slowly and negotiations eventually lapsed after March 1971, prompted in part by the decline in the number of hijackings. However, Cuba showed its favourable disposition through its promptness in returning the hijacked aircrafts to the US. In fact, the US Deputy Assistant Secretary of inter-American affairs in his testimony before the Senate Committee on Foreign Relations affirmed that "the practice on the part of the Cubans had been quite good in the sense of turning around those planes in 3 or 4 hours with as much comfort to the passengers under those circumstances that one could expect."  

He also pointed out that even with regard to American vessels shipwrecked or having some mechanical difficulty, the Cubans were good enough to allow US Coast Guard to come to their rescue, often in Cuban territorial waters.

It was only in late 1972 when serious hijackings led to a renewal of interest on both sides that negotiations were once again resumed. On 28 October 1972, an Eastern Airlines jet was hijacked to Havana, during the course of which a ticket agent of the airlines was killed. Cuba responded the next day with a diplomatic note proposing a renewal of efforts to reach an accord on anti-hijacking. What really precipitated the talks, however, was a hijacking in November 1972 which nearly caused a disaster in both US and Cuba. Discussions were thereafter held through the Swiss, starting on 25 November 1972 and concluding on 15 February 1973 in the signing of a five year agreement. It went into effect immediately to curb the hijacking of aircrafts and ships between the US and Cuba.

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19. US Senate, n. 14, p. 18
The accord granted each nation the right to deport the hijacker of aircraft or vessel or to try him in its own territory and according to its own law. It also permitted both nations to grant political asylum to hijackers under carefully defined terms, but committed each to punish any one who used its territory to organize attacks against the other. The latter provision was of particular importance to Cuba and was obviously intended to protect Cuba against attacks by exiles. Further, the agreement stated that each country would promptly return stolen air planes or vessels and protect innocent persons and goods on board and would send back "without delay" any ransom collected by the hijackers.

Despite US insistence that the accord did not foreshadow any improvement in US-Cuban relations, the "Memorandum of Understanding" on hijacking was a significant step forward in the improvement of relations between the two countries. It was the first time since the break of relations that a formal agreement had been reached between the two. From the Cuban point of view it was a "major gesture, going well beyond 'mutuality of obligation'." Castro confessed as much in an interview: "We [Cuba] took an important step when we signed the hijacking agreement. It was not a problem that was hurting us, because no planes were being hijacked from Cuba. We have no major airlines". And though during the same interview Castro asserted that the reason behind signing the agreement was "not a special desire to make a gesture toward the United States Government" but "concern for international public opinion", it was a well known fact that the latter had never been a serious constraint on Cuba's policies in the past. Perhaps what Castro wished to avoid was, as he admitted to Senator McGovern, not to appear in "the role of begging".


21. See US Senate, n. 12, pp. 2 and 13; and Mankiewicz and Jones, n. 11, p. 129.
The accord itself had been preceded by some minor conciliatory steps on both sides. In August 1971, in a step reminiscent of the "ping-pong diplomacy" between US and China, the US State Department allowed—despite the ban on travel to Cuba—a US volleyball team to travel to Cuba to participate in a pre-Olympic tournament. The twelve-man team, three coaches and officials, constituted the largest delegation of US athletes to visit Cuba since Castro came to power. About the same time, a Cuban baseball team was also given clearance to participate in a sports meet in Puerto Rico. In June 1972, a seven-man US delegation also participated in an international oceanographic conference held in Havana, marking the first time in twelve years that the US had been represented at an international meet in Cuba. Indeed, the possibilities of bilateral exchanges in sports, cultural and scientific activities remained a frequent topic of discussion between the two countries during this period. For instance, during Senator McGovern's visit to Cuba, both Castro and Carlos Rodríguez evinced keen interest in the possibility of having an American major league baseball team play in Cuba.

The initiative to implement the accord too came from Cuba. Important steps in this direction were taken in mid-1975, perhaps with a view to favourably influence the members of the US Congress who at that time were deliberating a possible lifting of sanctions on Cuba. In the summer of 1975

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24. During the visit, on a request delivered by Senator McGovern from Senator Edward Brooke, Castro also agreed to allow the parents of the Boston Red Sox pitcher Luis Tiant to visit the US. US Senate, n. 12, p. 2. In this respect it may also be pointed out that in 1975 one professor of law (also a justice of the Supreme Court of Cuba) and three students of law from Cuba participated in the moot court competition held under the auspices of the American Society of International Law. See US House of Representatives, Congress 94, session 1, Committee on International Relations, Hearings, *United States Trade Embargo of Cuba*, (Washington, D.C., 1976), p. 84.
Cuba sent back three US citizens held for hijacking in Cuba since 1971. In August 1975, after protracted communications with Senator John Sparkman, Castro returned to the US a ransom of $2 million which had been paid by the US airline Southern Airways for the release of passengers and crew of an aircraft hijacked to Cuba in November 1972. It may be here recalled that the Cubans had previously linked this case to broader questions by writing a check for repayment on a Cuban bank account in New York, which, like all Cuban assets in the US, had been frozen since 1960, and by offering payment in nickel, which was prohibited by the embargo. By offering direct payment through other means Castro not only yielded these debating points but also made what Kissinger described as "a positive step and a sign of good will" toward the US.

In marked contrast to the earlier decade, the mid-1970s also saw the relaxation of visa restrictions on travel to Cuba. Castro, who had hitherto been "highly selective" in allowing even US newspapermen into Cuba, now issued a series of invitations to a host of US journalists as well as politicians, academicians and businessmen to visit Cuba. Highly accessible and cordial to each one of them, he refrained from raising issues such as the Bay of Pigs invasion and the recently publicized alleged CIA assassination attempts against him that might have embarrassed the visitors. He focused instead on discussing the possibilities of US-Cuban rapprochement. Almost all American visitors returned convinced that Cuba was anxious for better relations with the US.


Remedial measures to iron out some long standing differences between the two countries were also taken during this period. Cuban "export of revolution" in the hemisphere had always been a major objection of the US government against the Castro regime. It was also partly responsible for Cuba's near isolation in the region. Exhibiting a new commitment to diplomacy in the 1970s, Cuba not only toned down its support for armed struggle but also recognized the possibility of different roads to progressive change. Castro's trip to Chile in 1971 where Salvador Allende had come to power through "vía pacífica" ie, elections, a policy earlier scorned by the Cuban leader, represented such a shift in Cuban policy.²⁸ Indeed, a US Senate Foreign Relations Committee report described Cuban support for Latin American insurgency at the time as "minimal".²⁹

Alongside, Cuba also made efforts to restore its relations with a number of Latin American countries. This policy effectively undercut the US government's justification for non-resumption of bilateral relations with Cuba on grounds that it was a part of the collective OAS policy to boycott Cuba.³⁰ By mid-1970s, not only did over a dozen Latin American countries reestablish relations with Cuba, but pressures from a number of them forced the United States to vote for the "Freedom of Action" resolution at the San Jose OAS conference in 1975, allowing each member state to determine for itself the nature of its economic and diplomatic relations with Cuba.³¹ Castro's diplomatic initiatives in the region thus forced the US to moderate its policies towards Cuba at least at the multi-lateral level.


³⁰. For the US government point of view on the issue see US Senate, Congress 93, session 1, Committee on Foreign Relations, Hearings US Policy Toward Cuba (Washington, D.C., 1974), p. 5.

³¹. See Department of State Bulletin, vol. 73, p. 404.
American concern for human rights in Cuba and particularly for the plight of the political prisoners was another issue that had for long remained an irritant in US-Cuban relations. Public opinion in the United States, ever since the trial of Batistianos in the early 1960s, had been outraged over Cuba's dismal human rights record. During Congressional hearings and in the media, critics had always insisted that recognition of Cuba ought to be denied because of its violations of human rights. They argued that resumption of diplomatic and commercial relations with Cuba might imply countenance of the human rights practices under the Castro regime and thus violate all moral principles. According to the Cuban point of view, however, human rights was an internal matter which "only the Cuban people have the right to judge". Cuba had, therefore, disallowed even international organizations, such as the Amnesty International, to make on the scene inspections of its prisons. Furthermore, the Cuban definition of human rights included freedom from hunger and misery, racial prejudice, unemployment and illiteracy. On all these points, they countered, the US had a poor record and, therefore, no right to criticize the record of other countries.32

In the 1970s, however, Cuba began to make efforts to set right its human rights record. It seemed to have recognized and accepted the fact that so long as it rejected outside examinations, it would remain vulnerable to serious criticism. Perhaps with a view to counter US estimate that there were 20,000 to 100,000 political prisoners in Cuba, Castro in an interview with the American press asserted that 80 per cent of the counter-revolutionaries arrested during the first five years of the revolution had been released.33 Although the veracity of his claims could not be checked and Cuba continued to insist that the fate of the remaining political prisoners in Cuba was "a question of justice, not a question of negotiations", Cuban officials seemed to


indicate to American visitors concerned about human rights that their
government did not maintain an inflexible policy on the issue.\textsuperscript{34} In fact, in a
significant gesture Castro in October 1974, allowed two visiting Congressmen,
Senators Jacob K. Javits and Clairborne Pell, to visit a prison camp. Besides,
shortly after their return, as "a gesture of good will" toward them, he even
agreed to release four Americans, held prisoners in Havana.\textsuperscript{35}

A serious shortcoming of the negotiations conducted between the United
States and Cuba until the fall of 1974 had been the lack of direct contacts
between the two governments. Hitherto all talks had been conducted
indirectly through intermediaries. Although both sides had periodically
expressed dissatisfaction over the lack of direct contact, the initiative to
correct the situation came from the US. It was reportedly Kissinger who in
November 1974 signalled to Havana the US interest in direct discussions.
Cuba responded positively and two months later direct secret talks were held
in Washington and New York, between Under Secretary of State, William
Rogers and two Cuban envoys--one of them a long time intimate of Castro.
These meetings sub rosa went on for almost a year. The discussions focused
on the resolution of the legacy of long years of non-recognition: the trade
embargo, compensations for $1.8 billion in US property expropriated after the
revolution; release of $30 million in Cuban assets frozen by the US; release of
political prisoners in Cuba; reunion of Cuban families; and the status of
Guantanamo naval base in Cuba.\textsuperscript{36} However, before these meetings could
result in any concrete steps, Cuba's involvement in the 1975 Angolan civil

\textsuperscript{34} See Barry Sklar's report of his conversations with Isabel Hernandez Tapanes, Chief of
the North American and Caribbean Sections of Cuba's Ministry of Foreign Relations, and
Dr. Mario Ugidos, Justice of the Popular Tribunal (Cuba's Supreme Court) in US House of
Representatives, Congress 94, session 2, Committee on International Relations, Report,

\textsuperscript{35} US Senate, Congress 93, session 2, Committee on Foreign Relations, Report, The United

\textsuperscript{36} New York Times, 29 March 1977.
war brought the talks to an abrupt end, terminating all hopes for a US-Cuban rapprochement.

Economic Diplomacy

The one area in which Cuba particularly looked forward to American initiatives was economic relations. After all, the cornerstone of the US overt anti-Cuban policy was the so-called "policy of economic denial". Initiated during the Eisenhower administration the policy cut off trade between US and Cuba, eliminated the Cuban sugar quota, banned the import of all products containing Cuban components, blacklisted ships trading with Cuba—even forbade their entry into US ports—and withheld foreign aid to countries trading with or aiding Cuba.37 Following the US lead, most major industrialized countries generally limited their Cuban trade and imposed stringent credit and payment terms, but on the whole resisted US pressure to break ties altogether.

Although Cuba wanted to retain normal trade relations with the US, given the euphoria surrounding the success of the revolution during the initial years, it reacted to the US policy of economic denial with defiance. With the support of the socialist countries, it vowed "to prove to America...that a colonial country, no matter how near the oppressing country...can free itself and...knowing how to find the fraternal aid of other countries...become invincible".38 In fact, Castro confidently asserted that Cuba could easily forgo trade relations with the US: "We don't need them to live.


Even trade with them could mean some advantages, but nothing great, nothing essential for the economy.\textsuperscript{39}

As against such a defiant attitude, a new sense of pragmatism marked Cuban foreign policy during the 1970s. Cuban leaders not only appeared favourably disposed towards discussing the merits of US political and economic system, particularly its achievements in the field of technology, but they also seemed to have realized that since the socialist camp could not satisfy all of Cuba's requirements, economic necessity dictated the restoration of economic ties with the US.\textsuperscript{40} Even as early as 1969 Castro spoke of such a necessity:

The fact is that our country, for technological reasons, because no country anywhere can produce everything, has a series of industrial needs of different kinds, especially those deriving from agriculture, and in other fields of industry, in which we require technology from the non-socialist world, in a series of fields in which the socialist camp is unable to supply us with certain machinery and factories.\textsuperscript{41}

So much so, in the 1970s, Cuba moved to expand its economic and commercial ties with a number of Western countries, both within the hemisphere and outside. Beginning in 1973, countries such as Canada, France and Argentina offered trade financing credits to Cuba totalling about \$3.324 billion to be used to finance exports from the grantor.\textsuperscript{42} From Cuba's point,

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{39} Fidel Castro's speech on 26 July 1963 as quoted in ibid., p. 42.
  \item \textsuperscript{40} See Mankiewicz and Jones, n. 11, p. 156-57.
  \item \textsuperscript{41} See Cuba in Focus, n. 38, p. 43.
  \item \textsuperscript{42} A US Department of Commerce study reported that Cuba's trade with countries outside the socialist group increased from "a low of less than 20% of total trade in 1966 to almost 32% in 1973, and in 1974 to more than 41%." US Department of Commerce, n. 37, pp. 16-18.
\end{itemize}
however, economic ties with the US held out the promise of additional benefits as it would give Cuba "access to the technological achievements realized by the United States". At the same time it would drastically reduce transport costs for Cuba.\(^{43}\)

The Cuban leadership, therefore, repeatedly asked the United States to lift its economic blockade against Cuba. Indeed, so keen was Castro that he even hinted to Senator McGovern that a recalcitrant nationalist ego on Cuba's part might no longer obstruct relations with the US: "May be sometimes we react with a little pride. We could resist the blockade for another fifteen years. But nobody would profit from that."\(^{44}\)

Similarly, in an interview granted to foreign journalists in Havana soon after the US announcement of a partial lifting of the blockade, Castro welcomed the gesture as "positive steps" which had been received "with satisfaction".\(^{45}\) And although he went on to add that in essence the blockade still remained in effect, and was a stumbling block to negotiations, he did not rule out the possibility of talks:

I think there can be negotiations over how to negotiate [but] in order for these to be serious, responsible [detailed] and just negotiations...the blockade in its essential points must be lifted. This doesn't mean that we are opposed to contacts. It doesn't even rule out some talks".\(^{46}\)

In fact, even prior to this interview Castro had given evidence of his eagerness to interact with the US in the economic field. He extended

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43. Castro spoke of these benefits during his interview with Mankiewicz and Jones. See n.11, p. 131.

44. See US Senate, n. 12, p. 13.


invitations to select US businessmen such as Cyrus Eaton and Edward Lamb to visit Cuba to study the prospects for US-Cuban trade. More significant was his invitation to Martin Klingenberg, a Washington attorney who had been instrumental in the reestablishment of trade relations with China.47

Despite the modifications brought about in the foreign policies of both the United States and Cuba during the mid-1970s, no substantial progress towards rapprochement was achieved. The process of normalization of relations was made more intricate and laborious by the set of obstructions between the two countries that remained unresolved. It may be worthwhile here to draw a comparison between US normalization of relations with China and Cuba to show how the American attitude played a crucial role in facilitating and thwarting rapprochement with the two countries respectively. In the case of Sino-US rapprochement, the very size and importance of China alone—in contrast to small and weak Cuba—made a strong case for shifting away from the maintenance of mutual hostility pattern with all its attendant policy ramifications. As regards Cuba, however, the US general tendency remained that of inaction—an unwillingness, in the absence of adequate incentives to break away from the prevailing pattern of mutual hostility. Thus, unlike in the case of Sino-US rapprochement, where a common recognition that mutual interests would be better served by the restoration of more normal relations led both sides to down-play their differences during the initial contacts, normalization of relations in the case of Cuba was deferred until after the resolution of outstanding differences between the two nations.

Obstacles to Rapprochement

In broad terms, four such outstanding issues can be identified—(1) US claims for compensation against the Castro regime; (2) the Cuban demand for the return of Guantanamo; (3) the lifting of the US embargo on Cuba and resumption of US-Cuban trade relations, and; (4) the question of free emigration from Cuba and the activities of the Cuban exiles in the US. The


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apparent intricacy of these four problems and their bearing on the outcome of any final solution to US-Cuban diplomatic and economic divorce makes each worthy of intensive study and evaluation. The following presentation attempts to elucidate the main outlines of each issue and to provide some basic background information in order to highlight the relative unimportance of these issues during the 1970s. An attempt is also made to contrast Cuban stand on these issues with that of the US to show how the latter's intransigence was detrimental to the efforts for a rapprochement.

US Claims for Compensation

Compensation for the Cuban expropriation of American property between 1959 and 1960 has often been cited as one of the significant barriers to US-Cuban rapprochement. The issue remained a crucial one in view of the fact that it is directly linked to the question of sugar trade as well as the type of relationship the US would accept to see established with Cuba.48

Compensation became a contentious issue when in accordance with the so-called Law of Nationalization decreed on 6 July 1960, the Castro regime seized sizable amounts of US-owned property. A provision for compensation in 30-year bonds at two per cent interest was contained in the decree law. It provided for payment through the creation of a special fund to which contributions would come from the sale of sugar to the US market—but only after the Cuban sales exceeded 3.5 million tons annually at a minimum price of 5.75 cents per pound. Until sales reached this level and price, no payment of principal or interest was to be made on the bonds. The practical effect of this provision was the effective non-payment of all nationalized properties. For, it was contingent upon the sales to the US market at volume and price levels far in excess of those prevailing at that time. Not surprisingly, therefore, Havana’s plan was unacceptable to the US which

accused the Cuban government of violating international law by seizing the property of American nationals without provision for the payment of "prompt, adequate and effective compensation".

Estimates on the value of US property nationalized by Cuba, mostly in 1959-1960, varies according to source. The Cubans have calculated 800 to 900 million pesos, based on the declared tax value of US property in late 1960, the time of the big nationalization wave. The US Department of Commerce estimated $956 million in 1961. However, the US Foreign Claims Settlement Commission (FCSC) authorised by President Johnson in 1964 to adjudicate claims, quoted a figure close to $2 billion in 1972. The FCSC reviewed 8,816 claims totalling $3,346 million; of these 5,911 claims equalling $1,780 million were recognized and 1,195 claims denied. Computing the 6 per cent interest per annum on this amount the total claims summed up to about $3.5 billion. This was more than double the claim (principal and interest) against China and larger than the claims against any other country.49

Cuba has always recognized the legitimacy of compensation. Initially, Castro offered payments through bonds in view of Cuba's limited resources. However, pressed with increasing US demands for full compensation in dollars, Cuba resorted to defend its action by asserting that only "equality of treatment" was required. This was interpreted as meaning that nationalization was licit so long as both foreigners and nationals were offered the same treatment. Still another view held that only partial compensation was required. Another argument advanced by Castro during the 1970s was that the US embargo and activities against the revolution have provoked considerable economic losses which would require payment of US compensation three or four times higher than the US claims in compensation for nationalized property.50 The specifics of the counter


50. Fidel Castro, as quoted in Mankiewicz and Jones, n. 11, p. 140.
claims, however, were not formulated. Instead, Castro hinted that the issue of compensation might be solved through negotiations once the blockade was lifted. In fact, in 1975 Carlos Rodríguez told a visiting American that Cuba was willing to provide "some net transfer of funds to the US government". The statement perhaps reflected Cuban hopes to settle the issue through some lump-sum payment to the US government.51

The United States, on the other hand, at least until the mid-1960s, continued to entertain hopes of claim recovery on the belief that Castro would sooner or later be replaced by a government more amenable to US influence. Thus in 1964, the Congress and President Johnson approved Title V of the International Claims Settlement Act of 1949, authorizing the Foreign Claims Settlement Commission to review the validity of (and certify) claims against the Cuban government. The provision, however, specifically precluded authorization to pay for these claims, leaving awards open to future negotiation "with a friendly government in Cuba when diplomatic relations are resumed".52

Although the 1970s saw a greater willingness on the part of the US government to accept the stability of the Castro regime, President Nixon showed little inclination to negotiate the contentious issue of compensation with Cuba, despite frequent questioning about the possibility following the rapprochement with China.53 In fact, expropriations of US properties became prominent public issue in US relations with two other Latin American governments—Peru and Chile—during Nixon's tenure. Even under President Ford, although a "new direction" on Cuba was proclaimed, the issue of

51. See Abraham Lowenthal, "Cuba: Time for a Change", Foreign Policy, no. 20, fall 1975, pp. 65-86.


compensation continued to be cited as a serious diplomatic problem between the two countries. Thus, Assistant Secretary of State for inter-American Affairs, William Rogers told a House Committee in 1975:

We are prepared to improve our relations with Cuba...We are prepared to engage in direct [dialogue] without preconditions or ultimatum...[but] we cannot put aside the interests of half a million Cuban refugees to whom we have given asylum...nor can we ignore the substantial claims for compensation held by United States nationals. In all events, our negotiations toward these ends must be sober and businesslike.54

Interesting as it may seem, on the US side, it was the executive branch rather than the business groups that continued to keep the issue of compensation alive. During the 1970s it ceased to be a crucial issue for business corporations since the economic effects of the compensation issue had by this time been greatly reduced. As a result of US federal tax provisions most affected companies and individuals had recovered most of their losses incurred on account of Cuban expropriations. A case in point is the claim of the American and Foreign Power Co. Inc. (AFPC) whose Cuban subsidiary, the Cuban Electric Company (which supplied 90 per cent of all electricity sold in Cuba prior to its expropriation in 1960) held the highest certified claim in dollar against the Cuban government--$267,568,413.02. In 1967, the AFPC and Cuban Electric filed a consolidated tax return whereby because of tax deductibility of losses resulting from seizure of Cuban properties, the AFPC estimated that no federal taxes would be payable for the years 1960 through 1967. Moreover, when in 1968 the AFPC merged with its parent corporation, Ebasco, the latter was able to carry forward the tax deductible benefits.55 Thus not only were the short term losses of large companies greatly minimized by the application of tax benefits, in some cases, they actually enhanced the company's financial position. Similarly, the Congressional liberalization of tax laws for smaller companies greatly reduced their losses.

54. Ibid., vol. 73, pp. 596-99.

The corporations that lost business in Cuba therefore had little financial stake in pressing for compensation. Although the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) rules require repayment for previous deductions when the property is recovered or compensated, decisions on the extent of repayment are based on the condition of the property. In the case of payments through FCSC, the small amount of reimbursement to the companies and the IRS is further minimized by years of inflation. Few companies therefore anticipate that the compensated claim would have to be returned to the IRS in full. Indeed, the fact that compensation has ceased to be a salient issue in US-Cuban relations was also made evident by the fact that in the 1970s, representatives of some expropriated companies visited Cuba to assess the market for spare parts, machinery and equipment.56 Some even made sales to Cuba under special licenses.57 Not surprisingly, therefore, many of these companies came to look upon the compensation issue as an unfortunate restriction on their trade and investment opportunities. They were inhibited in this regard by the Cuban Assets Control Act, which precluded normal banking and shipping arrangements and Congressional action tying the trade embargo to the settlement of the outstanding FCSC claims.58

In other words, over a period of time, the compensation issue has lost much of its significance in the context of US-Cuban relations. It has been kept alive only by the US government. It is relevant here to point out that whereas the US government in the past has successfully negotiated the compensation issue with a host of countries, including the Soviet Union, China and Poland, similar arrangements have not been worked out with Cuba. Past experience shows that most claims settlements have been paid


from blocked assets or through negotiated lump-sum payments. The Soviet Union, for instance, paid only $8.6 million against the approved awards of $70.57 million in US claims against the Communist regime prior to 1933. Similarly, in the case of Hungary, compensation paid from liquidating the Hungarian assets in the US provided only minimal payment of $1,653,647 against a total claim of $58,181,408.

In the case of Cuba, however, provision for payment of compensation from the proceeds of vested property blocked in the US under the Cuban Assets Control Act was excluded since it covered only a part of the award.59 Neither has the US agreed to accept a mere token compensatory payment from Cuba as it did in the case of China. In the latter case, it was the US long term political and trade advantages that warranted the de-emphasis of the compensation issue as a step toward normalization of relations. The US policy makers do not see such opportunities in Cuba and this perhaps explains why the issue continues to remain an obstacle to rapprochement.

**Guantanamo: Its Political, Military and Legal Status**

Despite the complete break in US-Cuban relations in 1961, a vestige of the traditional American relationship with Cuba that still remained was the US naval base at Guantanamo. The base was established after the Spanish-American War of 1898 as a condition for "guaranteeing" Cuban independence.60 Since that time the Cubans had always resented the base as

59. A census conducted by the Treasury Department showed that the amount available from blocked assets would be trivial—just over $60 million, of which only $2.5 million corresponded to assets of the Cuban government.

60. Following the Spanish-American War, the US "leased" the Bay from Cuba (2 July 1903) for an annual fee of $2,000 in gold coins of the US, with rights that were stipulated in the Platt Amendment of 1901 and later incorporated in the treaty between the US and Cuba of February 1903. Subsequent treaty of 29 May 1934 had abrogated the Platt Amendment but permitted the US to retain the naval base. See Walter J. Raymond, "The Feasibility of Rapprochement between the Republic of Cuba and the United States: The Case of Guantanamo Naval Base", *Caribbean Quarterly* (Mona, Jamaica), vol. 21, nos. 1 and 2, March-June 1975, pp. 35-59.
an infringement of their sovereignty. Such sentiments were obviously exacerbated under the intensely nationalist and revolutionary regime of Fidel Castro. Cuba's position on the American presence according Castro was thus:

There is a "base on our island territory directed against Cuba and the revolutionary government of Cuba, in the hands of those who declare themselves enemies of our country, enemies of our revolution, and enemies of our people."

Since coming to power, therefore, the Castro regime has repeatedly insisted that the US return the territory occupied by the Guantanamo base to Cuba, and has always included the question of the base in its list of demands that must be met before any negotiation contemplating the normalization of relations can be initiated. Indeed, with the exception of its first year in power, the Cuban government refused to cash the cheque paid by the US as fee for lease, because it did not recognize the legitimacy of the US occupation of Cuban territory.

Traditionally, Guantanamo's military importance was directly related to the geopolitics of the Caribbean and the latter's strategic importance to US security. The American military strategists saw Guantanamo as a vital installation needed to insure US control of the Caribbean sea area and defend its approaches to the Panama Canal. Upto the Second World War, the Guantanamo base did play a vital strategic role in the defence of the US and the Western Hemisphere. Since then, however, technological advances in modern weaponry and its delivery systems have changed the geopolitical perspectives and consequently the strategic value of Guantanamo. Most defence experts acknowledge the reduced military utility of the base. Way back in 1960 itself, the Life magazine editorialized this fact:

With the increasing mobility and endurance of modern armaments, military men concede that Gitmo is no longer absolutely essential to American defence. But they would hate to lose it.62

Nevertheless, it has to be granted that the base has immense practical utility to the US navy, particularly for training purposes. Its location provides near-perfect weather conditions for both aerial and naval shakedown and refresher training and the necessary isolation for gunnery and anti-submarine warfare practice. In addition, over the years the facility has been excellently equipped to support its new basic mission: i.e., of being an isolated warm-water training base for the fleet. Even as a training base, however, Guantanamo is not indispensable to the US. In fact, not only is the base very expensive to maintain and operate, but in recent years the near-by Roosevelt Roads Naval Base in Puerto Rico has been developed as a viable alternative to Guantanamo.

The most important factor accounting for the continued US control of Guantanamo has been its political importance. Hanson W. Baldwin, the former Editor of the New York Times elucidated this point most succinctly:

Gitmo’s political and philosophical importance transcends its military utility. The base stands today as a symbol of US power and prestige. Its future is clearly linked with the fortune of other US overseas bases—particularly, with the future of the Panama Canal Zone and of Chaquamoos, our leased base in Trinidad. What we do in one will effect all. If we are bullied, bullied, blackmailed, or persuaded to abandon Guantanamo, the effects will be apparent throughout the Caribbean and in Latin America.63

However, in view of the US disposition in the 1970s to satisfy Panamanian desires in terms of the canal, even the assertion that negotiations for a possible modified status of Guantanamo would jeopardize American "rights" in other comparable situations did not seem to hold. Despite Guantanamo’s reduced political and military importance to the US,


the official US position on the base has wavered only slightly from the Presidential statement made on 1 November 1960 which argued that the US presence at the naval base was legal since it was based on international agreements with Cuba. While emphasizing that the agreement could neither be modified nor abrogated unilaterally, the statement made clear US intentions with regard to the base:

Our government has no intention of agreeing to a modification or abrogation of these agreements and will take whatever steps that may be appropriate to defend the base...Because of its importance to the defence of the entire hemisphere, particularly in the light of the Sino-Soviet bloc, it is essential that our position in Guantanamo be clearly understood.64

Notwithstanding the US insistence on the legality of its presence, the Castro regime has challenged US contention on two counts. One is the assertion that since it did not sign the original agreement and treaty, it is not bound to respect them. Such an argument, however, does not hold, since the Castro regime had earlier indicated that it would respect Cuba's international obligations. Besides, international law also is quite clear on this point on the basis of the so-called Doctrine of Succession of Treaty Obligations.65 A second Cuban argument contends that the provisions have no force since the agreement had been forcefully imposed under the threat of continued American military presence unless Cuba agreed to sign. This argument too is nullified in view of the reaffirmation of the treaty by Cuba through the treaty of 1934.

Apart from legal argumentations and periodic protests, however, the Cuban government has done little other than reluctantly tolerate American presence in Guantanamo. Aware that it lacks the means or capacity to evict the US from the base either politically, militarily or legally, the Cuban

64. As quoted in Bender, n. 7, p. 111.

government has taken a consistently moderate and pragmatic approach toward this issue. For example, in 1960, President Osvaldo Dorticós stated:

In proper time and through the proper political procedures we will claim the territory, [but] we would never commit the stupidity of providing the North American Empire with a pretext to invade us by attacking the naval base.\textsuperscript{66}

Years later, in November 1971, Castro voiced a similar opinion when he stated with confidence that his country would "eventually" get the US navy out of Guantanamo and perhaps "without firing a single shot".\textsuperscript{67} Not surprisingly, Cuba has neither taken direct action against the base nor has it made the existence of a foreign base in its territory the focus of a major campaign in international forums such as the UN.

In fact, the 1970s saw further moderation in Cuban position on this issue. Castro not only made it explicit that American presence at the base was a "secondary" issue to be negotiated with the US but he even chose not to raise the issue during Senator McGovern's visit to Cuba.\textsuperscript{68} Cognizant of the fact that the American strategists feared that Guantanamo once reverted to Cuba might well become a Soviet base, Cuban officials hinted that as a result of discussions with the US, a neutralization arrangement might be worked out so that facilities at Guantanamo as well as those in Cienfuegos be made available for repair and refuelling of ships from the United States as well as other nations.\textsuperscript{69}

\textsuperscript{66} Newsweek, 14 November 1960, p. 27.

\textsuperscript{67} Washington Post, 23 November 1971.

\textsuperscript{68} US Senate, n. 12, p. 14.

\textsuperscript{69} This view was expressed by Isabel Hernandez Tapanes, chief of the North American and Caribbean section of Cuba's Ministry of Foreign Relations to Barry Sklar, specialist in Latin American affairs, Congressional Research Service during the latter's visit to Cuba in 1975. See US House of Representatives, n. 34, p. 12.
In contrast, the US government, continued to maintain that "Guantanamo is, has been...a convenient facility, traditional facility for the US navy". And although the US policy makers noted that the issue might be taken up for discussion after the resolution of several higher priority items, they maintained that this could be done only within the context of the total Cuban settlement question. Reflecting such an opinion, the Deputy Assistant Secretary of State, Robert A. Hurwitch admitted before the Congressional Committee that if the US were "to have a completely new relationship with the present or future government of Cuba...the question of Guantanamo would not be...a major problem.70

As long as the US government continues to stress the political implications of a change in the status of Guantanamo and links such a change to a general Cuban settlement, the base will continue to remain a latent issue and another of the obstacles to be removed for the full settlement of the US-Cuban differences.

The Question of Lifting of Embargo

From the Cuban point of view the most important issue that continues to vex any talk of Cuban-US rapprochement is the question of US embargo and the resumption of US-Cuban trade. In the years prior to the revolution, the US provided roughly 70 per cent of Cuba's imports while more than 60 per cent of Cuba's exports were destined for the US. The decaying political relationship between the US and Castro regime (aggravated by the American suspension of the Cuban sugar quota) resulted in significantly decreased trade between the two nations during the 1959-1960 period. In October 1960, the US placed an official embargo on exports to Cuba. By 1961, while Cuba's export figures to the US fell to less than 5 per cent, Cuba's imports from the US too declined to less than 4 per cent. Since 1962, when a complete embargo on US trade with Cuba was established, trade between the two (limited to vital medical supplies or purchases by international organizations) has been

70. US Senate, n. 14, p. 83.
almost nil.\textsuperscript{71} Subsequently, every attempt was made to isolate Cuba economically, including diplomatic representations and pressures upon American allies. As a result of American pressure as also due to political tensions between Cuba and several Latin American countries, the OAS in July 1964 imposed sanctions suspending all trade and shipping with Cuba.

This necessitated a total restructuring of Cuban trade patterns. The socialist bloc henceforth became Cuba's dominant trade partner, supplying 79.8 per-cent of Cuba's imports by 1966 and absorbing 81.4 per cent of Cuban exports in the same year.\textsuperscript{72} Despite Cuba's successful restructuring of its trade relations, there can be no gainsaying the fact that over the years the embargo has hurt the Cuban economy in many different ways.\textsuperscript{73} This explains why the Cuban government has persistently maintained the lifting of embargo as an essential precondition for US-Cuban negotiations. Even when Castro in the mid-1970s, in an effort to be more accommodating toward the US downgraded all other previously held conditions, he resolutely demanded at least a partial lifting of the embargo before discussions with the US could take place. Faced with persistent Cuban demands as well as increasing pressure from Latin American countries for lifting of the embargo, the US government in 1974 partially lifted the sanctions by allowing foreign subsidiaries of American companies to trade with Cuba. Subsequently, the US also eased restrictions on third country ships engaged in Cuban trade. The US policy makers, however, emphasized that these concessions had been made as an exception to the embargo and that US policy regarding trade with Cuba had not changed.\textsuperscript{74}

\begin{enumerate}
\item See US Department of Commerce, n. 37.
\item Ibid., p. 8-13.
\item For details see Donald Losman, "The Embargo of Cuba : An Economic Appraisal" \textit{Caribbean Studies} (Rio Piedras, Puerto Rico), vol. 14, no. 3, October 1974, pp. 95-119.
\end{enumerate}
As far as the lifting of economic blockade is concerned, the initiative lies almost entirely with the US. Cuba, on its part, has tried to facilitate trade with the US both by attempting to reduce its dependence on the socialist bloc and concomitantly trying to expand its diplomatic and commercial ties with non-socialist countries both within the hemisphere and outside. It is on the US side that a complicated net of obstacles remain unchanged. One such impediment is the question of the US claims for property expropriated by the Cuban government. As long as these claims are pending, normal banking and shipping relations cannot be restored, since Cuban assets in the US would be subject to possible attachment. Moreover, the US Congress has passed a legislation preventing Cuba from receiving "any benefit" until the President determines that Cuba has taken appropriate steps to settle the outstanding claims, 50 per cent of which are those of US citizens.

The eventual volume of trade between Cuba and the US would also depend on Cuba's trade status. Cuban exports to the US would be subject to very high "discriminatory" tariff treatment until "most-favoured nation" (MFN) and "non-discriminatory" tariff status is granted to the island. Under the provisions of the US Trade Act of 1974, in order to get the MFN privilege and receive trade credits from the Export-Import Bank, Cuba will have to meet two conditions: freedom of emigration and signing of a bilateral agreement with the US.

Above all, because Cuba remains basically dependent on its sugar exports, the question of resumption of US-Cuban trade is closely linked to the question of a resumption of Cuban sugar sales to the US. In the years prior to the revolution, a substantial portion of Cuba's sugar entered the US market under a preferential quota system with price advantages. Since the suspension of the Cuban sugar quota by the Eisenhower administration, Cuban share in the US domestic market has been re-allocated to other, primarily Latin American countries. Moreover, the "suspended" quota of 1.5

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75. For a comprehensive treatment of this issue see Lynn Darrell Bender, "Cuba, the United States, and Sugar", Caribbean Studies, vol. 14, no. 1, April 1974, pp. 155-60.
million tons earlier allowed to Cuba has been reduced by the Sugar Act Amendment of 1971. The prospects for Cuban sugar reentering the US preferential market therefore appear dim, particularly in view of the active lobbying by the vocal foreign and domestic sugar constituency.

**The Cuban Exiles Factor**

Another contentious issue between US and Cuba that remained unresolved is the question of free emigration from Cuba and the presence of sizable number of Cuban exiles in the US. Estimates provided by the US State Department in the early 1970s indicated that approximately 560,000 persons had left Cuba since 1959 to settle in other countries—all but 50,000 in the continental US or Puerto Rico.76

In the years immediately after the revolution when relations between US and Cuba had not yet been broken, a great majority of Cubans who were dissatisfied by the changes being brought about by Castro legally emigrated to the US, rather easily.

Following a break in diplomatic relations, "legal" departures from Cuba became difficult. Although between 1961-1965 a total of 183,469 Cubans did manage to emigrate to the US in two different waves, the greatest number of legalized departures took place following Castro's announcement on 28 September 1965 that all those who wished to leave the island could do so freely. To facilitate as well as regularize the flow, an agreement with the help of Swiss mediation was reached between the US and Cuba on 6 November 1965, according to which the US agreed to airlift all Cubans registering for emigration on twice a day flights, five days a week at US government expense. The period for registration was stipulated to end by May 1966. As a result of this agreement some 277,242 Cubans had been airlifted by early 1972 when the flights were permanently suspended.

76. Figures supplied by the office of the Cuban Coordinator, US Department of State as quoted in Bender, n. 7, p. 117.
Although the massive departure of the socially and economically better placed elements of the Cuban society during the early years of the revolution did create serious manpower shortage in Cuba, especially of the professional classes, the emigrations also helped Castro to get rid of the most immediate sources of potential opposition to his rule as also contributed to consolidating the support of those who enthusiastically embraced the new order. In fact, in subsequent years Castro manipulated the emigrations to flush anti-social elements such as criminals, drug addicts, disabled and infirm people out of Cuba.

The question of free emigration from Cuba has thus become more of a problem for the US. During the initial years, the US championed the cause of free emigration from Cuba on humanitarian grounds and as a supplement to the underlying objectives of its isolate-Castro-policy, which sought to preserve an active resistance of the Cuban people to the existing regime in Havana. However, in the recent years in part because of the modified attitude of the US government with respect to the temporary nature of the Castro regime, and in part because of a growing Congressional resistance to the continued funding of the entire Cuban refugee programme, the United States has not been entirely unhappy about the cessation of the Cuban airlift.

Besides, the cohesive anti-Castro movement that the US had hoped would one day replace the Castro regime has failed to emerge among the Cuban exiles in the US. They continue to remain a politically disunited lot. In fact, whereas in the 1960s, there were about 200 anti-Castro exile organizations, a decade later their number had reduced to a mere dozen. Nevertheless, the existence of Cuban exiles in the US has been persistently used by Cuba to keep alive the specter of US invasion and thus justify its close ties with the Soviet Union.

To sum up, the record of Cuba's relations with the US during the early 1970s definitely shows not only positive responses to US overtures, but initiatives taken with a view to normalize relations with Washington. Cuba's suggestion of a single condition formula for negotiations and the signing of a "Memorandum of Understanding" on hijacking with the US.
constituted two such major initiatives towards rapprochement. In fact, the softening of Cuba's stand on issues that had hitherto been singled out as outstanding obstacles to rapprochement had turned these into virtual non-issues. Progress towards their resolution was stalled more by US rather than Cuban intransigence.