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BETHEL for CONGRESS



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REPUBLICAN CANDIDATE WARNS: 'KEEP SOVIETS OUT OF CARIBBEAN'

Paul Bethel is the Republican candidate for Congress in Florida's new 13th District. He has dealt with Cuban and Latin American affairs for the past 14 years, and has written extensively -- "The Reporter", "National Review", "Human Events", plus three books on the subject. He served in the American Embassy in Havana.

The candidate is especially strong in the field of Soviet military and political penetration of the Western Hemisphere, and Cuba's role in it. In his address to the Platform Committee of the Republican National Convention, Mr. Bethel warns: "The Soviets are testing the will of the U. S. to keep a Soviet naval force out of the Caribbean", saying of Russian strategy that it envisions, "a plan to breach our Caribbean defenses, outflank the Panama Canal and eventually control that waterway. If the pattern of escalation (always just below the level of confrontation) continues, the Russians will use Cuba for basing the H-II or Y-class submarines -- the latter armed with 16 underwater-launched missiles achieving a range of over 1500 miles".

Mr. Bethel called on the Republican Platform Committee to issue a reaffirmation of American determination to keep a Russian naval presence out of the Caribbean. That presence, among other things, said Bethel, "enormously impresses Latins", and explains in part why many Latin American governments are moving toward rapprochement with the Communist regime of Fidel Castro.

(full text of remarks attached)

Immediate Release

BETHEL URGES TOUGH POLICY TOWARD CASTRO AND THE SOVIETS

As you know, I testified before the Platform Committee in 1968. And, as many of you also know, I have been associated with the problem of Cuba and the balance of Latin America since 1958 when I was first assigned to the American Embassy in Havana. I must say to you to day that the position of the United States in this hemisphere continues to deteriorate while that of the Soviet Union continues to build.

Here are the stakes. Our chain of defense in the Caribbean begins at Boca Chica in Key West. It continues through the Straits of Florida to the U. S. Naval Base at Guantánamo, extends through Roosevelt Roads in Puerto Rico, and anchors in Trinidad. The major purpose of this defense chain is to protect the Panama Canal -- surely one of the most strategic inter-oceanic waterways in the world.

What are the Soviets doing? Why are they doing it? They are testing the will of the United States to keep a Soviet naval force out of the Caribbean. If our will falters, the Russians plan to breach our Caribbean defense, outflank the Panama Canal and eventually control that waterway. First, the Kremlin sent to Cuba an F-t pe submarine armed with 8 torpedoes. Next, came the E-II class nuclear-powered guided missile sub. More recently, on May 4, the Russians sent the advanced G-II submarine, carrying three Serb (SS N-5) solid fuel missiles. These missiles are fitted with a one megaton warhead and have a range of 650 miles.

If the pattern of escalation (always just below the level of confrontation) continues, the Russians will use Cuba for basing the H-II or Y-class submarines -- the latter armed with 16 underwater-launched missiles achieving a range of over 1500 miles.

It would be political expedient, I suppose, for a candidate for Congress to say that the Republicans have turned back the disastrous course by the Democrat Party which led to the lodgement of Soviet power in Cuba in the first place. I cannot say this, because it is not the truth. Moreover, this would not serve our President well. He needs plain talk -- not political flattery -- to guide him in his decisions. My purpose is to reinforce what I know to be the President's own preoccupation with a predatory Communist power.

The point is this: The presence of the G-II in Cuba introduces a weapons system capable of offensive action against the United States and the Western Hemisphere. We did not react with a vigor that would discourage further Russian probes. More may be expected.

The Soviet purpose is global. Consider that the United States is becoming more and more a have-not nation in terms of raw materials. Consider that such vital materials as bauxite and oil come to Gulf Coast and East Coast ports through the Caribbean, and one can readily appreciate Cuba's importance to the Russians as a point of military interdiction of vital trade routes. And may I add here that about one-third of the material we send to Vietnam comes from Gulf and East Coast ports, and that overall about 98 per cent of our material for Vietnam goes by sea.

In view of the steady intrusion of a major Communist power into this hemisphere-- the U. S. S. R. -- I urge the Platform Committee to make a flat statement warning the Soviet

Union that it must stay out of the Caribbean. We have both economic and military levers which can be applied -- for example, a huge trade pact now under consideration.

It is also important to understand that Latin American countries are enormously impressed by force and the show of force. In their eye, the forward movement of Soviet military strength and the failure of the U.S. to react in the face of that movement means that Communism is the wave of the future. We lament the fact that Latin countries are, one by one, beginning to move toward rapprochement with Fidel Castro's Cuba. We fail to understand the psychological motivation. A flat warning to the Russians, backed by our own show of force in the Caribbean, is definitely needed.

As for Fidel Castro's Cuba, it is less a country than it is a forward base for aggression. Under Russian protection, Cuba continues to train and export guerrillas, whose purpose is not so much to overthrow governments as it is to intimidate those governments, create political instability and the flight of capita. Them, enter the Russian embassies, trade missions and the like for the more subtle task of internal subversion. Mexico was the object of precisely these tactics in 1971; Bolivia in 1972. Cuba remains the fulcrum of Soviet strategy in the Western Hemisphere. Let us have no doubt about it.

I have discussed the military situation. Now, a few words regarding human suffering. I ask the Republican National Convention to consider the problem of 30,000 Cuban exiles in Spain. Several years ago, I helped Canadian Pacific Airlines in a plan that would guarantee funds to Cubans stranded in Spain, and permit them, once in the U.S., to pay off those loans in installments. The plan was negated by our immigration laws and a less than flexible attitude in the Department of State. I call upon you to lift these restrictions.

As you know, I have had doubts about the Cuban airlift. I doubted that this airlift-- unless something else were added -- was in the best interests of Cuban freedom and our own national posture. I felt, and still feel, that the airlift should not have been agreed to back in 1965 unless, first, 1-U.S. citizens and dependents in Cuba were brought home and 2- Cuban political prisoners were released. The Johnson Administration failed to do so then, and our bargaining position has since evaporated. Castro still holds 782 U.S. citizens and 1438 dependents in Cuba against their will.

I urge the Platform Committee to take note of the plight of U.S. citizens in Cuba -- Many of them bereft of food and shelter and forced to work as slave labor for the Castro regime. They are only slightly less P.O.W.'s than our men in North Vietnam. Republicans should condemn the Castro regime and pledge to the families of those citizens that they shall not be forgotten.

In a few words, then, this country has every reason -- a duty -- to keep uppermost in our minds the threat posed by Communist power in the Caribbean. It will not subside by itself. I may only be caused to subside with a policy adequate to the threat.

On the other hand, there is no question that the stated policy of Senator George McGovern would only expedite Soviet control of the Caribbean and lead to a steady de-escalation among Latin American countries in resisting Communist political pressures. McGovern would recognize the illegitimate regime of Fidel Castro; he would give away our Guantanamo Naval Base. Either of these moves would be tragic. Taken together, they spell disaster.