December 8, 1942 [Remarks + Toast to President of Cuba and Reply] 1442

FDR Speech File

A TOAST
BY THE PRESIDENT
AT THE
STATE DINNER FOR
PRESIDENT FULGENCIO BATISTA OF CUBA
DECEMBER 8, 1942
GIVEN ABOUT 9.15 P.M., E.W.T.

THE PRESIDENT: Back in March, 1933, there was some talk about our relationship with our neighbors, which I suppose includes not only our farthest neighbors, say in the Argentine, but also the nearest neighbor we have -- in Cuba.

Everybody in this country at least, and I think in other parts of the world, appreciated the ideal -- the ideal of the Good Neighbor. But they were words only; they had never been fulfilled. They had never been used for the fulfillment of the ideal; and in the summer of 1933 there were many reasons for it. The fact remains that there was serious trouble in our nearest neighbor; and a young man -- one of our youngest Ambassadors -- went down there to Havana, and came through the subsequent troubles in Havana with flying colors.

The main point I want to make is that when these troubles occurred in Havana, an unprecedented meeting was called at the Executive Offices. At that meeting we had all the Ambassadors and Ministers of all the American Republics.

And I said to them, speaking as a liberal, and very simply, "I think the time has come to recognize the practical exposition of the Good Neighbor Policy. I want to take this occasion to tell you that under a somewhat ancient treaty between the United States and Cuba we are permitted -- and in a sense because of necessity we are compelled by that treaty, which was better known as the Platt Amendment -- we are compelled to go into Cuba -- a free people, and one we helped to free and set up as

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a sovereign nation -- not various ones."

And I said, "Gentlemen, I am not going to do it. I am not going to apply the Platt Amendment. I am not going to send either the Army or the Navy to another nation or Cuba."

Well, there was a lifting of eyebrows among a good many of those nineteen other envoys. What is this new President of the United States going to do?

I said, "I am going to exercise the Good Neighbor Policy, because this is the first chance I have to put it into practical effect. If any Americans want to leave Cuba, they will have every opportunity. If any Americans want to get out, they can go down to the nearest port, and they will find a revenue cutter or a patrol boat of some kind that will take them or meet out this time out. I am not going to land a single American soldier or sailor on the soil of the Cubans. I think this is an internal matter, which Cuba is fully competent to settle."

Well, that was the beginning. I think the Bible says, "Ye shall be known by your deeds."

And that particular act, throughout all the American Republics, did have an effect, because the United States proved in a practical way that it would apply the doctrine of the Good Neighbor.

Somebody in the paper, a few days ago, called it by a new term -- which I think is rather good -- called it not just the policy of the Good Neighbor, but the policy of the Good Partner. In other words, all of these Republics of ours are not just neighbors. We are partners in the common good -- all of us.

We are beginning more and more that the word "partner" means that any country -- or other individuals -- cannot be happy and prosperous

until all the hemisphere is happy and prosperous; that if one nation of the twenty-one -- of the twenty-two, if we include our neighbor Canada -- is unhappy and full of unrest, in a serious depression which affects the lives of all their people, that that affects the happiness and the prosperity of all the other twenty, or twenty-one.

And on this dais I see a young man, and I think he had a vision. He was an army officer, and he took part in that revolution of 1933 in a very modest way. Today the Cuban people are very happy that he is holding the office of Chief Magistrate of the Republic of Cuba.

And so while he is not entirely a stranger with us -- he has been here before -- we received him as a Major General in command of the Armies of Cuba -- we are now very happy to have him come back to us as the President of our nearest neighbor, the Republic of Cuba; and I drink his health.

(President Batista replied to the President very briefly in Spanish)

NOTE: THIS WAS NOT GIVEN OUT TO THE PRESS, BUT VIA MR. EARLY'S MEMORY ON 12/9/1942 OF THIS TRANSCRIPT.

JR.

President Batista's Reply (From Translation)

Mr. President:

Although I am not a stranger to your shores and to you, as your expressive words have well stated tonight, on this occasion I have the high honor of visiting you as President of my country. Those deeply tragic days of the year 1933, the memory of which has hardly receded by the passage of time, had hours of profound preoccupation for us and of grave dangers for my country.

I was then an humble sergeant of the Cuban Army and God willed to place me at the head of that movement of revindication which has been, and continues as such, standing for a generating cycle of new forms in the domestic and foreign policy of Cuba. Over our destinies there was hanging the power of intervention of the Government of the United States of America in the personal affairs of the Government of the Island, provided for by the so-called Platt Amendment, inserted into the text of the Constitution of 1901, but which, fortunately, has been eliminated by your clear vision and the constant conduct of the Cuban people, deeming them worthy of their right to free determination. It pleased the Fates that there should occupy the Presidency of this great nation in that epoch a statesman of your virtues, who knew the value of taking advantage of an opportunity and make effective his intimate convictions of human decorum and political

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dignity, in place of the mistaken scruples and fears of innovation which surround reformers.

The Cuban people have always been very jealous of their sovereignty, Mr. President, but at the same time very grateful for the services which have been, or may be rendered them. We do not forget that our independence and liberty were attained with the valiant and decisive participation of the citizens and government of the land of Washington, Jefferson, Lincoln, and of others of such rank, who, like yourself, have contributed to the glorious traditions of this Nation, the soldiers of which mingled their own blood with our own, and as our own, gave their lives, being led, among others, by a Roosevelt, for which my country bears eternal gratitude.

Now, Mr. President, not just one country, but many, are in a worse situation than was Cuba before the famous "Joint Resolution" and the United States has responded with that valor which is now characteristic in her history as a lover of liberty and of democracy.

Because between Cuba and the United States there should not re-appear the jealousies of the kind which made her dubious, on different occasions, of mutual good faith; because we are pleased to observe the Good Neighbor Policy carried on by your Government; because it evidences the respect which the Government of the United States holds towards our own and the sovereign rights of all peoples, I have not hesitated to declare, publicly, that we Cubans consider as the indisputable leader of our times the President of the United

States, by whose forcefulness, talent and valor, we, who desire the triumph of Democracy over the arms and deeds that are designed to vilify with violence and brutality the human conscience, are guided, I toast, Mr. President, your health and success.

(this translation received at
the White House from the State
Department March 3, 1944)

At the State Dinner for President Fulgencio Batista of Cuba

December 8, 1942

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because of necessity we are compelled by that treaty, which was better known as the Platt Amendment -- we are compelled to go into Cuba -- a free people, and one we helped to free and set up as a sovereign nation -- and restore arms."

And I said, "Gentlemen, I am not going to do it. I am not going to apply the Platt Amendment. I am not going to send either the Army or the Navy to restore order in Cuba."

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We are recognizing more and more that the word "partner" means that any country -- on either hemisphere -- cannot be happy and prosperous until all the hemisphere is happy and prosperous; that if one nation of the twenty-one -- of the twenty-two, if we include our neighbor Canada -- is unhappy and full of unrest, in a serious depression which affects the lives of all their people, that that affects the happiness and the prosperity of all the other twenty, or twenty-one.

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WASHINGTON

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By The President
at the
State Dinner for President
Fulgencio Batista
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