Franklin D. Roosevelt — “The Great Communicator”
The Master Speech Files, 1898, 1910-1945
Series 3: “The Four Freedoms” and FDR in World War II

File No. 1533

1944 August 31

Toast to President - Elect San Martin of Cuba
I want to say a word of welcome to a gentleman whom I feel I have known for a great many years. Dr. San Martin came into my life very soon after I came to Washington in 1933. I am very, very happy that he is about to be inaugurated as President of Cuba, one of the three countries closest to us, not only geographically but in intercourse — visiting every day that goes by. We are a real neighbor, I think a good neighbor of Cuba.

Which reminds me, that the President-Elect is largely responsible for the good neighbor policy. I don’t know that he is aware he is in large part responsible, because of the fact that he was mixed up in the revolution in Cuba in 1933. And there was a real reason for dissatisfaction in Cuba with its own government; and firing started.

And there were a great many people in this country who said, “Ah, now you must intervene under the Platt Amendment for the third time.” And I got letters and telegrams that we must do something about this problem in Cuba.

And thinking it over for a week or two, as the trouble was continuing, I asked the ambassadors and ministers of all the other American republics to come to the White House. They came into my study and sat down, and I said, “Gentlemen, I am
I want to say a word or two to announce to a Government where I have known for a great many years, and am now.

I have known for the last several weeks I have been introduced to the

I am well aware that many of the great communicators of the world

myself and my colleagues, and in this connection -- whether it

get that done by the new generation. I know a good number of

part of the world,

what remains to me that the Government-people to forget

responsibilities for the new generation and I cannot turn my

To sum up in a few brief remarks of the event.

And that we are writing in the Revolution to come in 1932. And

gives me a good reason for gratification to think about the new

Government, and Titus O'Sullivan.

And there were a host of people in the country who

saw 'em. And now there are few more people who the first impression

the third time, and I see letters and reports that we must

do something about the problem in China,

And Franklin's far out a week on end, as the situation

were continuing. I mean the machinery and machinery of the

other American deputies to come to the White House.

They came into my office and say, you know. And I said, 'Conversation,' I said.
going to make a very revolutionary announcement. I have decided not to send the armed forces of the United States into Cuba. I am going to send some Coast Guard cutters, and other gunboats and small craft to the ports of Cuba, and send word to every American in Cuba that if they are afraid for their lives, to go down to a port and they will find a Coast-Guard revenue cutter they can get on, and we will take them home to the United States without any expense. And having done that, we will send word to all the people of Cuba to go right ahead and have the revolution. We think it's rather silly not to work it out some other way, but we are not going to interfere under the Platt Amendment."

Well, the result was there was a certain amount of trouble for a short time. We never fired a shot. The Congress of the United States repealed the Platt Amendment, and Cuba since that time has had no trouble at all.

The President of Cuba whom we have seen here before, we know he is a military man. The President-Elect was not of his party; and at very low cost -- I wish we could say the same thing about our coming election -- was elected President. He does not represent the military profession. He is a doctor, he is a professor.

And so we are looking forward to a new government in Cuba under their constitution and under the leadership of Senor Grau San Martin; and looking forward to it with a great deal of satisfaction, because we know he is a true liberal.

Some people, nowadays, say that a liberal is merely
another name for Communist. Senor Grau Martin is not a Communist. I know that. Other people say that a liberal is a Fascist. I know that he is not that. I think that all of us who know anything about it feel that Cuba is to be congratulated on having him as their next President. We in the United States look forward to an even closer relationship, and a better understanding with the government of Cuba, and the people of Cuba. We know that the President-Elect stands for certain ideals -- practical ideals, human ideals.

So we are very happy to have him here at the White House. And I hope that after the tenth of October, when his inauguration takes place, that he will come here very often. He knows, quite frankly, that it would probably be easier for him to come to Washington, during this war, than for me to go to Habana. But I hope when the war is over that as a private citizen, shall we say, or otherwise -- (laughter) -- I will have the chance to visit him in Habana.

So, to your health, Senor Martin.

(the Toast was drunk)

THE PRESIDENT-ELECT OF CUBA: (in English)

Mr. President, ten years ago I was obliged to take over my government in Cuba after the big, bloody revolution.

You, Mr. President, are right. Some people say I am Communist, and other people say I am Fascist. I take this
opportunity now to say I am the real Cuban, as you are the real
American; and I can be said to be American, for I am a Democrat.

Now I am going to take the rule of the government by
the popular election, which by the character of my people I
was assumed to be of true worth.

When I left Cuba two days ago, our people said to me:
Our best wishes to President Roosevelt, for his health and the
happiness of America.

And now I raise my glass to the heroic American
soldiers who are fighting for democracy.

(the Toast was drunk)

(changes here were made by
the President personally)
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And there were a great many people in this country who said, "Ah, now you must intervene under the Platt Amendment for the third time." And I got letters and telegrams that we must do something about this problem in Cuba.

And thinking it over for a week or two, as the trouble was continuing, I asked the ambassadors and ministers of all the other American republics to come to the White House. They came into my study and sat down, and I said, "Gentlemen, I am
going to make a very revolutionary announcement. I have decided
not to send the armed forces of the United States into Cuba. I
am going to send some Coast Guard cutters, and other gunboats
and small craft to the ports of Cuba, and send word to every
American in Cuba that if they are afraid for their lives, to go
down to a port and they will find a Coast Guard revenue cutter
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and they will find a coast guard cutter they can get on, and we will take them home to the United States without any expense. And having done that, we will send word to all the people of Cuba to go right ahead and have a revolution. We think it's rather silly not to work it out some other way, but we are not going to interfere under the Platt Amendment. Well, the result was that there was a certain amount of trouble in a short time. We never fired a shot. The Congress of the United States repealed the Platt Amendment, and Cuba since that time has had no trouble at all. And in this last election the President of Cuba whom we have seen here, we know he is a military man. The President-Elect was not of his party, and at very low cost -- I wish we could say the same thing about our coming election -- was elected President.

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