

Statement on Cuba  
4 Humboldt Street  
Cambridge 38, Mass.  
May 18, 1961

Dear MR. GEORGE GERBNER:

Though for the time being things have quieted down, the pressures for intervention in Cuba continue to mount in government circles and in the press. Any incident might give the excuse for further intervention to those who, in their frustration, impatience, and bad judgment, feel this is the time and place for a "show-down with Communism". We feel it is imperative for members of the intellectual and academic communities to speak out in protest, in the manner of the French intellectuals' influential statement on Algeria.

Quite possibly you have seen or heard of the enclosed Open Letter to President Kennedy; it appeared in the New York Times on May 10. This statement is not merely an indictment of CIA ineptitude or a rebuke for failure to use sufficient force to destroy the Castro government, but calls into question basic matters of policy and ethics. It is one of a number of statements that might lay the groundwork for public debate concerning our country's past and future role in Cuba and in other situations that may turn out to be as explosive.

We know from correspondence that in a number of universities similar actions have been taken. We would like to suggest several such possibilities in order to maintain the momentum of protest and the vitality of debate:

1. Raise money to reprint the enclosed statement, exactly as is, in a local or campus newspaper. You may also wish to collect more signatures, but the distinction between original and added signatures must be made clear.
2. Prepare another statement and publish it, with local signatures, in the New York Times or elsewhere.
3. Use as the text of your statement an affirmation of the four resolutions in the Open Letter. In this case only local names should be used, not those of the original signers. We must request that the names of the original signatories be used only if the statement is published in its entirety.
4. Draft a letter to President Kennedy and have it signed by as many people as possible.
5. Initiate a campaign of individual telegrams and letters to the President.

Our insistence on use of the Open Letter in its original form does not rest on any pride of authorship. We do not care at all whether you wish to use our original advertisement or some other form of protest; it is simply that it would be too time-consuming to get the consent of the original signatories to modification of the text that was, like all such documents, a hurriedly worked-out compromise, though one quite representative of such consensus as academicians are capable of. (If the advertisement is reprinted, please add the name, Dorothy Lee, Lecturer on Anthropology, Harvard University; Dr. Lee's name was inadvertently omitted from the published list.)

We suggest issuing press releases about your activity to the wire services and local news media, and mailing copies of any published statement to President Kennedy, Secretary of State Dean Rusk, Senators Fulbright and Morse, your own local Congressmen and Senators, and other key figures in the Congress and the White House.

We'd like to know of any action you take.

Cordially,

Eric Bentley

David Riesman

Letter also sent to: *Eric Bentley*  
*Mr. Dallas Smythe*  
*David Riesman*

# AN OPEN LETTER TO PRESIDENT KENNEDY:

THE STRUGGLE against Communism in the Western hemisphere will not be won by brandishing the Big Stick. None of us approves the Castro regime's repression of civil liberties within Cuba, nor its dependence on the Communist bloc. But we believe the United States' attempt to destroy Castro fails to come to grips with the meaning of the recent Cuban experience, and seriously endangers the pursuit of our most vital interests in world affairs.

It is now a matter of record that the attempt at counter-revolution was planned, organized, and directed by an agency of the United States government. This agency, acting in secret and deceiving both the American people and the Cuban rebels—particularly the most democratic among those rebels—has blundered in an inexcusable and almost inconceivable manner. But this was more than a failure of *technique*; it was a failure of *policy* itself.

THE MAJOR PREMISE of U. S. Cuban policy for at least a year has been that we must crush Castro. Indeed, when certain of today's rebel leaders were still members of the Castro government, the United States had already demonstrated its disenchantment with the Cuban Revolution. Our enormous economic power, which might have been wielded to further Cuban democracy, was wasted in a fruitless effort to weaken and undermine the new regime. Whether from aversion to revolution, or from fear of expropriation of American property, our government acted so as to encourage those tendencies towards dictatorship and anti-Americanism latent in any Latin American social upheaval. The United States' determination to isolate Cuba made the Soviet bloc Castro's only source of military and economic support. This resulted, as has happened so often before, in a sharp increase in the power of the local Communist party.

Today, Castro may well, in fact, represent a threat to the security of the Americas. But this is not primarily a military threat. The danger Castro poses is clear: that by subversion or example his particular brand of social revolution will spread through Latin America. The burden, then, is on us. It requires a vastly greater effort than we have yet made to demonstrate that genuine social reform is compatible with democratic institutions.

Meanwhile, any further effort to destroy Castro would serve only to intensify terror within Cuba. A more formidable American-inspired rebel invasion, or the sending of American troops would, we believe, have still more disastrous consequences. "Victory" by American intervention would require bloody war and prolonged occupation. Can anyone believe that a free Cuban government would emerge from these circumstances? More important, even if we did succeed, by such means, in replacing Castro, we would still have done far

greater damage to ourselves than to international Communism. We would have established anti-Americanism as the central theme of Latin-American politics for decades to come.

Already, Mr. President, in the view of such cautious and responsible journals as the *Manchester Guardian* and the *Observer*, the CIA fiasco has undone much of the good your administration has achieved in the world arena, and substantially weakened Ambassador Adlai Stevenson's effectiveness in the United Nations. Your threat to impose our will in the Caribbean, whatever the wishes of the other American states, and in violation of inter-American agreements, has created widespread suspicion that the United States will reorient its foreign policy in the direction of Soviet-style power politics. Further intervention in Cuba will give the lie to our professions of respect for treaty obligations, and will make it much more difficult for us to persuade the peoples of Asia, Africa and Latin America that we will act towards them with understanding.

We, therefore, endorse the resolution adopted by the Cuba Protest Meeting held at Harvard University on April 26, 1961:

- RESOLVED: that the United States Government should:**
1. reverse the present drift towards American military intervention in Cuba;
  2. give no further support for the invasion of Cuba by exile groups;
  3. seek instead to detach the Castro regime from the Communist bloc by working for a diplomatic detente and a resumption of trade relations; and
  4. concentrate its constructive efforts on eliminating in other parts of Latin America the social conditions on which totalitarian nationalism feeds.

We are distressed that there has been so little public discussion of the alternatives to present U. S. Cuban policy. With a few notable exceptions, debate has centered on the varieties of intervention rather than on the decision to intervene. In the press, consideration has been circumscribed by an uncritical acceptance of the early decision to overthrow Castro and more recently, by an equally uncritical acquiescence in the call for national unity. We believe that there are alternatives, that debate is necessary—though it would be foolish to suggest that the alternatives can be seized without courage and patience. The first imperative is a cooling-off period, and an announcement of our willingness to test the sincerity of the Cuban offer to negotiate differences.

WE REGARD this issue as a crucial and revealing measure of our desire to assume responsibility for new directions in foreign affairs. Surely we have confidence enough in the ways of freedom to accept this challenge.

JAMES LUTHER ADAMS, Lamont Professor of Divinity, Harvard  
 GORDON ALLPORT, Professor of Psychology, Harvard  
 ERIC BENTLEY, Charles Eliot Norton Professor of Poetry, Harvard  
 REUBEN A. BROWER, Professor of English, Harvard  
 ALLAN KNIGHT CHALMERS, Professor of Applied Christianity, Boston University  
 SERGE CHERMAYEFF, Professor of Architecture, Harvard  
 NOAM CHOMSKY, Associate Professor of Modern Languages, M.I.T.  
 WENDELL CLAUSEN, Professor of Greek and Latin, Harvard  
 ALBERT SPRAGUE COOLIDGE, Lecturer on Chemistry, Harvard  
 JOHN P. DAWSON, Professor of Law, Harvard  
 GIORGIO deSANTILLANA, Professor of Humanities, M.I.T.  
 L. HAROLD DE WOLF, President of the Faculty, B.U. School of Theology  
 JOHN T. EDSALL, Professor of Biological Chemistry, Harvard  
 RUPERT EMERSON, Professor of Government, Harvard  
 MONROE ENGEL, Lecturer on English, Harvard  
 JACOB FINE, Professor of Surgery, Harvard Medical School  
 RODERICK FIRTH, Professor of Philosophy, Harvard  
 DONALD FLEMING, Professor of History, Harvard  
 CALEB FOOTE, Walter Meyer Visiting Research Professor of Law, Harvard  
 JOHN N. GAUS, Professor of Government, Harvard  
 EDWARD GEARY, Assoc. Professor of Romance Languages, Harvard  
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 ALBERT GUERARD, Professor of English, Harvard

ERIC HAVELOCK, Professor of Greek and Latin, Harvard  
 LILLIAN HELLMAN, Visiting Lecturer on English, Harvard  
 HANS HOFMANN, Associate Professor of Theology, Harvard  
 H. STUART HUGHES, Professor of History, Harvard  
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 PAUL E. JOHNSON, Professor of Psychology, Boston University  
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 PAUL T. LEHMANN, Lamont Professor of Divinity, Harvard  
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 LAURENCE LEVINE, Associate Professor of Biochemistry, Brandeis  
 ERICH LINDEMANN, Professor of Psychiatry, Harvard Medical School  
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## Partial List

This statement, drafted by members of the Harvard faculty, was circulated informally among scholars and intellectuals in the Boston area. Its publication was financed by those listed above, and other interested persons in the academic community. The advertisement is an independent response to the Cuban crisis, and has no connection with any existing organization. Statement on Cuba, 4 Humboldt Street, Cambridge 38, Mass.

For Reprints of this statement write to: "Statement on Cuba" - 4 Humboldt St., Cambridge 38, Mass.