



WHOSE MAN IN HAVANA? ADVENTURES FROM THE FAR SIDE OF DIPLOMACY by John W. Graham

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AFTERWORD

“When my generation set out, the going was good.”

—Evelyn Waugh

The stories, especially in Book I, the period when I was working for the Department of External Affairs, reflect a more challenging and entertaining career than I could ever have imagined when I joined. My experience was not unique. Colleagues have different but similarly varied tales to tell. One common thread is that they were good years. Although the reasons for job satisfaction vary widely, I believe that my generation was blessed with some shared features which are less visible and in some cases non-existent for our successors. We were no brighter – just more fortunate in our timing.

When I joined the foreign service in the late fifties I caught the tail end of the much ballyhooed Pearsonian golden age. Although not always golden, it was a good time to be in External Affairs. The good times dipped a few times, but they did not come to an end with Mr. Pearson’s departure. A shortlist of the favourable conditions for the next forty or so years would include the view that the main lines of our foreign policy were mostly sound and that much of the time we felt pride in being part of a national enterprise that was doing positive things for the country and for the international community. More often than not we had exceptional – as well as eccentric – role models. With few exclusions, we respected the judgment and skill of our foreign ministers. We were told by esteemed foreigners that we had a first class foreign service.¹ Also, there was, more often than

not, a reciprocity of confidence between ministers and professionals. This last was critically important because it spoke to a culture of foreign service in which senior professionals were participants in the consultative process with ministers.

The Harper government's calculated departure from what had been a largely shared, small 'I' liberal approach to the world surprised all of our friends and disappointed most of them. There can be no doubt that Canada's new vision has significantly eroded our leverage in the international community. But policies can be rectified. What is not so easily salvaged is the damage done to the culture of foreign service and, of course, more broadly and more seriously to the culture of public service.² When deputy ministers are dissuaded from asking awkward questions of ministers or from freely offering to spell out the plusses and minuses of new policy proposals, the 'don't rock the boat' and 'top down only' messages are not lost on the ambitious. Contamination seeps down the chain. The worst part of this corrosive dynamic is that after a number of years, it becomes 'the new normal'. With each passing year, fewer people in the business remember the former culture and its values. Declining numbers mourn their passing. Equally unfortunate would be the temptation for incoming governments, whatever their complexion, to find that loss of memory and the new 'no questions asked' compliance convenient. The ultimate loser, of course, is the country whose vital interests can no longer be pursued with unencumbered professionalism.

Now, lest I oversell the joys of my time in harness and assign full responsibility for the present darkness to the Harper government, I should acknowledge that an adversarial attitude toward the foreign service preceded the Harper government. Under Messrs. Chrétien and Martin it was often carping; under Mr. Harper it has been hostile. There were occasions under Mr. Mulroney and Mr. Trudeau when we invited censure. Vanity was occasionally a contributing factor, no doubt swollen by the fact that our names (as ambassadors and high commissioners) followed the unfortunate and antique prefix "Excellency". In Latin America, imagine the cumulative effect of *excelentissimo*.

It was never my intention in pulling these chapters together to write a book of advocacy. If there are lessons to be drawn, the plan was to have them emerge without fanfare from the narrative. For better or for worse, I have already broken that resolution. The gate being off its hinge, I will

add one more observation to this polemic. In my experiences in the Dominican Republic, Cuba, Central America, the Balkans, Ukraine, and Central Asia, one disturbing and recurring memory stands out: the secret policeman as king – unfettered, above the law, unrestrained by objective and non-partisan oversight, redefining the meaning and value of liberty, and recalibrating the measures necessary for a ‘secure’ society. In Canada we are still at a healthy distance from being a society where laws are malleable, but there are signs that we are letting the guard down.

These signs bring to mind one of those many days in Bosnia when the instructions of the OSCE head office in Sarajevo appeared to be generating the exact opposite of the goals graven in the Dayton Peace Agreement. Brooding at my desk in Bihac I recalled what Pogo the possum had said from deep in the Okefenokee Swamp in similar circumstances. Pogo was the creation of Walt Kelly, the best cartoon satirist of the McCarthy era in the United States. In my fortnightly dispatch to head office I quoted Pogo: “We has met the enemy – and he is us.” Once again, head office did not reply.

NOTES

DOMINICAN REPUBLIC

- 1 Fandino's is one version. Others claim that Trujillo was in the coffin at the church in San Cristobal.
- 2 The bizarre details of the final unravelling of the Trujillo dynasty are set out in the chapter 'A is for Aristide'.
- 3 Restored to the status of embassy from consulate general after the forced departure of the remaining members of the Trujillo family.
- 4 During the civil war in 1965, the offices on the second floor became the headquarters of Colonel Caamaño, head of the 'Constitutional' forces then fighting both a right wing coalition and President Johnson's Marines.
- 5 Clark Leith later became provost and vice president of the University of Western Ontario.

CUBA

- 1 Peter T. Haydon, *The 1962 Cuban Missile Crisis: Canadian Involvement Reconsidered* (Toronto: Canadian Institute of Strategic Studies, 1993), 130.
- 2 This paragraph also notes that "the Prime Minister informed the President that the Canadian Government would maintain its diplomatic representation in Cuba but would do nothing to indicate support or sympathy for the Castro regime," and concludes by citing the president's "warm appreciation for Canadian assistance" relating to "restrictions on Communist bloc air traffic to Cuba." RG 25 series, Cuba 1960-65, Department of External Affairs, Library and Archives Canada.
- 3 David Coleman, *The Fourteenth Day* (Norton, 2012). Coleman's title is intended to signal that White House tapes, previously unreleased, reveal that the crisis did not end after two weeks, as generally accepted, but continued

- for several months, as President Kennedy and his colleagues attempted to secure the removal of as much nuclear weaponry from Cuba as possible.
- 4 Ibid., 168.
 - 5 Subsequently I learned that standard equipment for covert activity such as this were tiny cameras disguised as watches and pens. There was also a miniature camera which could take a series of pre-programmed snaps with one hand from a moving vehicle. These were not offered.
 - 6 Historians agree that there had been a mix of motives behind placing nuclear missiles in Cuba, some suggesting that the leverage gained by the presence of missiles in Cuba would have been a vital bargaining chip for Krushchev's overarching plan to push the allies out of Berlin, a gambit that would have involved deceiving Castro.
 - 7 Consular Activities in Cuba were concerned with Canadians in legal or other distress.
 - 8 The April Fool of 1964 was so successful that the tradition of attempting to bamboozle Gaby once a year continues to this day, often with the help of confederates, including Chuck Svoboda. The success rate is impressively high.
 - 9 Maureen, the wife of a British colleague, actually produced a Soviet jeep containing puzzled Czech technicians who were compensated with food and drink.
 - 10 The scavenger hunt preceded the final selection and the raising of the new flag on February 15, 1965.
 - 11 At this point the ambassador was Leon Mayrand.
 - 12 Michael Arkus "Swimming with Fidel: The Toils of an Accidental Journalist," CreateSpace Independent Publishing Platform, 2014, 222.

UNITED KINGDOM

- 1 These lamps were also used for many years by coal miners.
- 2 Winner of the Governor General's award in 1974 for *The Siren Years* (MacMillan), the most famous of his four diaries, which chronicles his life from 1937 to 1945, including the London Blitz, when he was a young officer at Canada House.
- 3 These treasures were the legacy of Peter Larkin, a tea tycoon, appointed by Mackenzie King as high commissioner in 1922. Larkin secured the old Union Club, which became Canada House, and his widow donated the exotic furnishings. In my subsequent incarnation at Canada House (1981–83) I fought to prevent this collection from being sold at auction.

- 4 Nancy Gelber, *Canada in London* (Canada House, 1983).
- 5 Despite several near-death experiences at the hands of cost cutters, sanity and Canada House have survived. While diplomacy has changed in several fundamental ways, making an impression on the host and the host's entrepreneurial and cultural elites has not. This beautifully-appointed room, the receptions and concerts in it, and the location, have made Canada House cost effective.
- 6 I was minister for cultural and public affairs. At that time the high commissioner and the deputy high commissioner had offices in MacDonald House in Grosvenor Square. From 1939 to 1942, this office in Canada House had been occupied by L.B. Pearson.
- 7 Most clubs are now open to women.

JAPAN

- 1 Until dismantled by the Harper government in 2012. At that time there was a cadre of over 7,000 scholars in 55 countries focused on one or more disciplines of Canadian Studies.

GUYANA

- 1 This Alberta-based company is the one that supplied the Christmas trees.

TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO

- 1 Cuthbert dances to calypso and jazz.

GRENADA

- 1 External Affairs telegram LCR 1944 of October 24, 1983. The Canadian government had previously delivered a message to the Junta appealing for the avoidance of violence (same telegram).
- 2 Canadian Embassy Havana telegram 2654, October 31, 1983. At the time of the invasion there were 743 Cuban construction workers and 43 regular soldiers (same telegram).
- 3 Also a boost for tourism as it would accommodate large commercial aircraft more readily than at Pearls.
- 4 Speech by Bishop on March 23, 1983, in which he also referred to the "warmongering Reagan."
- 5 In speaking to Ambassador Gotleib, Deputy Secretary of State Ken Dam asked that the Canadian government bear in mind "the enduring psychological effects of the Iran hostage situation and of the very present psychological effects of the attack on US Marines in Beirut." Washington telegram 2373, October 26, 1983.
- 6 The OECS formally sought US military assistance on October 22. A similar request was issued by Grenada Governor-General Sir Paul Scoon.

- 7 The admonition of Napoleon's foreign minister to a group of foreign service cadets at the Quai d'Orsay.
- 8 Our assumption was almost certainly linked to the fact that a few days before when both Trudeau and his deputy prime minister (also secretary of state for external affairs), Allan MacEachen, were out of the country, it was Pepin who was acting prime minister.
- 9 RG 25 volume, 12551 Situation Report, Library and Archives Canada, October 20, 1983. There were more Canadian tourists, but they were unregistered and hence not included in the count.
- 10 LCD telegram 8386 of October 25, 1983. This telegram was also used in the briefing given to US Ambassador Robinson the same day by Minister Pepin.
- 11 The title of the foreign minister at this time was Secretary of State for External Affairs.
- 12 Soon after this experience a fully equipped Operations Centre was established in the Pearson Building.
- 13 At a meeting in the State Department on October 26, and in response to blunt concerns expressed by Canadian Ambassador Gotlieb, Deputy Secretary of State Ken Dam offered the less than reassuring message that "consultation with Canada had been considered. Military and operational considerations had to prevail in decision not to forewarn Canada, but there was recognition that Canada had very specific interests in that region." Washington telegram 2373 of October 26, 1983.
- 14 Ann Elizabeth Wilder, Grenada Revolution Online.
- 15 Library and Archives file RG 21-3 Grenada vol. 11.
- 16 Operation Urgent Fury, Ronald H. Cole, Joint History Office. Office of the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, 1997.
- 17 Grenada sitrep #14, 1400 hours, October 26, 1983.
- 18 Ibid.
- 19 UN documents A/RES/38/7 Meeting 43, November 2, 1983
- 20 Ibid.
- 21 My bureau added the condition, accepted by the US side, that the agenda would also encompass Central America.
- 22 I kept the T-shirts as souvenirs.
- 23 Associated Press, April 30, 1985.
- 24 Edward Seaga, prime minister of Jamaica, subsequently telephoned Pierre Trudeau to apologize. *Globe and Mail*, October 28, 1983. Seaga also indicated that a Caribbean prime minister had been charged with informing Trudeau in advance, but had failed to do so. Prime Minister Adams of Barbados also apologized to Trudeau.
- 25 See "The Funeral of the Honourable Forbes Burnham" chapter.

CENTRAL AMERICA AND COLOMBIA

- 1 Composed by Keith Bezanson and the author.

PANAMA

- 1 General Noriega is now serving his sentence in a Panamanian prison.
- 2 Meredith Daneman, *Margot Fonteyn: A Life* (Viking Press, 2003).

CENTRAL AMERICA

- 1 Twenty-five years later, promising change has been undone by narcotics, corruption, and gang wars. The incidence of violent death now exceeds that of the eighties in El Salvador, Honduras, and Guatemala. Of the four countries beset by conflict in the eighties, only Nicaragua enjoys relative peace.
- 2 Speech by the Rt. Hon. Joe Clark, September 26, 1986.
- 3 Rt. Hon. Joe Clark, Secretary of State for External Affairs press release, August 5, 1987.
- 4 The Contras, originally a small Nicaraguan guerilla force opposed to the Sandinistas, became a US proxy force, increasingly armed and financed by the United States and supported by mercenary troops.
- 5 The passions ignited in Canada by the Spanish civil war led to the formation of the

Mackenzie-Papineau battalion, whose members fought against Generalissimo Franco and Spanish fascism. Similarly, hundreds of Canadians went to Nicaragua, but unlike in Spain, they were almost entirely non-combatant, contributing instead in a variety of supportive roles and earning the nickname 'sandalistas'.

- 6 On a visit to Managua, Nicaragua, in 2006, a former officer in the Sandinista Foreign Ministry told me how pleased she and many others had been with the balanced approach Canada had taken to the Central American crisis.
- 7 Including Colonel Donald Ethell, subsequently lieutenant governor of Alberta.
- 8 Excepting on Grenada as spelled out in that chapter.
- 9 There was a relatively free movement of ideas which percolated both down and up. My experience ten years before as director of the tiny Academic Relations division is illustrative. See the Japan chapter and footnote #24. Consultative dialogue between ministers and senior public servants has been largely dropped from the public service culture. This retrograde development has been especially evident under the Harper government.

VENEZUELA, HAITI, AND THE DOMINICAN REPUBLIC

- 1 At the close of the posting President Perez bestowed upon me the "Orden del Libertador, Gran Cordon," a distinction I share with Fidel Castro and the late Muammar Gaddafi.
- 2 It was no longer an embassy, because the United States, like all other states in the OAS, had broken diplomatic relations when Trujillo attempted to assassinate President Betancourt of Venezuela.
- 3 Following bitter disagreement with the Catholic Church, Arístide resigned from the priesthood in 1994.
- 4 This anomaly was, I think, first discovered by Alexander von Humboldt.
- 5 Jose Toribio Medina's *Relacion del Nuevo Descubrimiento por muy Gran Venturas del Capitan Francisco de Orellana* (1855) reproduces an account of Francisco de Orellana's epic voyage of discovery from Peru to the mouth of the Amazon, written in 1542 by Friar Carvajal, a member of the expedition.
- 6 Twenty years later the greatly diminished Waimari-Atroari were paid compensation and provided health facilities and teaching in their own language. Attempted genocide under the military dictatorship has only recently been under investigation by a commission appointed

by President Dilma Rousseff. Tribal numbers are beginning to recover.

- 7 Highway BR-174 is now resurfaced and linked to a newly built road, Venezuela route 10, which connects Santa Elena de Uairen to Ciudad Bolivar.
- 8 979 metres, or 3,212 feet, on Auyantupui.
- 9 University Naval Training Divisions (UNTD).

BOSNIA

- 1 While the basic Muslim faith remained in Bosnia, in many areas traditional discipline had been diluted by generations of aggressive Yugoslav secularism. During the Bosnian war, moral and material support for the embattled Muslims came in part from the Middle East. In post-war Bosnia, support often took the form of zealous efforts to restore traditional discipline, but in 1996 there were few signs of the new proselytism in Cazin.
- 2 Most of the money came from remittances paid by relatives working in Western Europe, and some from widespread criminal activities.

PARAGUAY

- 1 IFIS: the Washington-based International Foundation for Election Systems.

GUATEMALA

- 1 Portillo was eventually extradited to the United States and sentenced to prison. Released in 2015, he returned to Guatemala.
- 2 United Nations Human Development Report for Guatemala 2003.
- 3 Term for a White ruling class in Central America.
- 4 Beckett and Pedley, RAND.
- 5 Recent evidence indicates that the income gulf in Latin America as a whole is slightly diminishing, but not in Guatemala where the gap is widening. *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, 2015 Book of the Year.
- 6 Ronald Wright, *Time Among the Maya*, 1989.
- 7 FRG: Guatemalan Republican Front.
- 8 Since the Dominican Republic election crisis of 1994, the OAS has usually been forthright in their election assessments even when this has involved questioning a sitting government's claim of electoral victory. Judgment on the Nicaraguan election of 2011, which glossed over serious irregularities (not the overall results), was one exception.
- 9 An independent tabulation of the presidential vote.
- 10 Author in FOCAL paper, October 2003.
- 11 The most frightening of these was Cyril, chapter 'Goudau-Goudau: Return to Haiti'.

VENEZUELA

- 1 Already in trouble under Chavez, Venezuela is sinking under the dysfunctional management of his successor, Nicolas Maduro.
- 2 I was chair of FOCAL at this time.
- 3 Jimmy Carter presided at the Carter Center press conference and unfortunately overstated the fairness of the election as a whole by failing to note government abuses during the campaign. Subsequently he was accused by the *Wall Street Journal* of obfuscating the real result and colluding with Chavez. Appalled by this calumny, I wrote to the *WSJ*, which published my letter explaining the absurdity of this accusation.

UKRAINE

- 1 One of the reasons the government's deception failed was the courageous audacity of the interpreter for the deaf on the national (government controlled) television network. Using hand signals, instead of translating exactly the government's concocted version of the election results, she expressed incredulity and conveyed to her audience that what she was hearing was false. The deaf across the country were able to communicate this unvarnished version to a wider Ukrainian audience.

PALESTINE

- 1 These points and others about contradictory policies were made more strongly and, of course, much more publicly by President Carter in his book *Palestine, Peace not Apartheid* published soon after these elections.

NICARAGUA

- 1 The limerick is quoted by Salman Rushdie in his book *The Jaguar Smile: A Nicaraguan Journey*, (Picador 1987) and has been adapted from the nineteenth-century limerick about a tiger in Niger by William Cosmo Monkhouse.
- 2 Vasco Nunez de Balboa was a Spanish explorer and the first European to see the Pacific Ocean from the New World.
- 3 Former Argentine foreign minister
- 4 The small Carter mission had not been invited to formally observe the election. We were 'informally' assessing.

EL SALVADOR

- 1 Chips was resident ambassador in San Jose, Costa Rica, and non-resident ambassador to Panama, Nicaragua, and El Salvador.
- 2 This posting was early in Pickering's career. A very impressive professional, he was to become the deputy secretary of state many years later.

- 3 For the past decade Villalobos has been a fellow of St. Antony's College, Oxford.

HAITI

- 1 Carlo Dade, then executive director of the Canadian Foundation for the Americas (FOCAL), Marcelo Varela, associate director for the Americas at the Carter Center, and myself as a member of the "Friends."
- 2 First published by North Point Press in 1942.

EPILOGUE

- 1 For example, Sir Humphrey Trevelyan, one of the UK's great diplomats, cited Canada's and Yugoslavia's foreign services as among the best in the world: *Diplomatic Channels*, MacMillan 1973.
- 2 As Professor Donald Savoie explains in comments on the Duffy case, this condition is seriously exacerbated by the power of the PMO, a situation that is "fraught with danger for democracy, for national unity and sound public policy...". *Globe and Mail*, August 14, 2015.

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John W. Graham never imagined that his apprenticeship in the Canadian foreign service would have him stationed in Cuba covertly monitoring Soviet military operations on behalf of the CIA in the immediate aftermath of the Missile Crisis – the stuff of novels. Other assignments, both as a Canadian diplomat and as a member of international organizations proved also to be unexpected and bizarrely entertaining. *Whose Man in Havana?* examines the lighter and human side of diplomacy, but almost everywhere the dark side intrudes. The intersection of both is black comedy, and there is much of that – often woven around critical policy analysis. Although the book is focused mainly on Latin America and the Caribbean, it ranges across Bosnia, the UK, Ukraine, Japan, and Kyrgyzstan.

JOHN W. GRAHAM is a graduate of Queen's and Cambridge Universities. He is a former director general and ambassador in foreign affairs and was first head of the Unit for the Promotion of Democracy at the OAS. He led several, and participated in many, electoral observations. Graham was the international mediator in the Dominican post-election crisis of 1994 and chair of the Canadian Foundation for the Americas. Other assignments have been undertaken as a member of former President Jimmy Carter's Friends of the Inter-American Democratic Charter. He lives in Ottawa where he is a writer and editorial cartoonist for a community newspaper.



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