

EDITORIAL

THE CASE OF CASTRO.

By DANIEL DE LEON

ABOUT thirty and odd years ago, when General Baez, the deposed President of the Dominican Republic, landed in this city he was promptly met with a law suit for damages by an American citizen who claimed he was outraged in Santo Domingo by the General during his incumbency as President. The case for the ex-President was argued by William M. Evarts. The argument was simple, terse, cogent. The acts of an official in his official capacity are reviewable only in the courts therefor provided by the country's constitution. If the other courts in the official's country have no jurisdiction over his official acts, much less so courts abroad. The point was enforced with numerous citations from international law, backed by a mass of precedents, and of argument illustrative of the absurd untenableness of the opposite, the view of the plaintiff in the case. The court so held. The case against ex-President Baez was dismissed.

Why, upon what principle of law—civil, international, or criminal—can Cipriano Castro, the ex-President of Venezuela, be refused admission to the United States upon his arrival on the *Touraine*¹ and ordered deported back to France, as Washington despatches say has been determined on in Washington?

The allegation of Washington despatches to the effect that Castro “is a great criminal, guilty of offences against the law of Venezuela”—that allegation, if it smites Castro at all, smites the Washington Administration with double force. Castro has for four years been endeavoring to re-enter his own country—a curious endeavor for an alleged “fugitive from justice”—and it is the Washington Administration most prominently that has blocked Castro's path homeward.

Is, however, Castro guilty of crimes committed in Venezuela, in his official ca-

¹ [SS *La Touraine*.—R.B.]

capacity, then, the unbroken line of precedents in international law unlock his nation's gate to him, and bid the Washington Administration to keep hands off. Napoleon was a prisoner of war. While Great Britain refused him admission to her soil, she did not inconsistently set him adrift, but deported him and held him caged in her own island of St. Helena.

What then is Castro's real offence that it can drive the Administration at Washington to defy precedent, law, common sense and justice alike? The offence is, indeed, of prime magnitude.

When the now discredited and disgraced "Acting Secretary of State" Loomis was the Minister of the United States at Caracas, and used his office for commercial chicaneries of the Bermudez Asphalt Company, even to the point of securing an "ultimatum" from his home government against Venezuela;—at that critical juncture what President Castro did was to manage to get possession of an autograph receipt by Loomis of a round sum of money from the Bermudez Co.; cause the same to be photographed; and cause copies of the photograph to be furnished to all the members of the diplomatic corps in Caracas. At home, in Venezuela, Castro's master stroke knocked the bottom from under the "ultimatum," and cleared the atmosphere; abroad, throughout the civilized world, the stroke exposed the Washington Administration as being in the hands of cliques of commercial adventurers, a disreputable pack of political pirates, unworthy to represent a great nation.

Small wonder that the Taft Administration, which, in its South American policy, continued the "Roosevelt policies," should be so blindly enraged against Castro as now to fly off the handle of Law, of Sense, and of International Propriety.

Transcribed and edited by Robert Bills for the official website of the Socialist Labor Party of America.
Uploaded May 2014

slpns@slp.org