

U.S.-Cuban Relations During the Cold War

To the Editor:

Peter Monaghan's article "Does International-Relations Scholarship Reflect a Bias Toward the U.S.?" (September 24) discussed a controversy in the field of international relations, noting observations by myself and others that recent scholarship in this area has been marred by political bias; specifically, it was pointed out that scholars have distorted the factual record of U.S. interventions in third-world countries during the Cold War. Unfortunately, some of the letters to the editor about this article provide additional evidence of factual distortions, which further mar scholarship in this area ("International-Relations Scholarship," Letters to the Editor, October 29).

The most authoritative-sounding of the letters was by Mark Falcoff, who writes that the United States did not turn hostile toward the Cuban revolution until after Castro accepted Soviet aid in March 1960. He claims to have based his conclusions on the evaluation of thousands of documents that have been declassified. The only problem is that his facts are wrong. Falcoff states: "During this period [before March 1960], there were no 'bombing raids' -- just the occasional dropping of leaflets by exiles taking off from remote airfields in Florida. ... The plot to assassinate Castro ... forms part of another period in U.S.-Cuban relations -- namely, during the Kennedy Administration, by which time Castro had openly declared his allegiance to the Soviet Union."

The above is historical fiction. Fortunately, the facts are readily accessible. Bombing raids certainly were occurring during this period, contrary to Falcoff's account. I quote from an article in *The New York Times* of January 29, 1960, written from Havana: "Unidentified planes flew over Cuba today dropping incendiary bombs on cane fields in various districts." ...

Also, contrary to Falcoff's statements, assassination plots began during the Eisenhower Administration. ... The main source on this is the U.S. Senate report, "Alleged Assassination Plots Involving Foreign Leaders." ...

Apparently, Falcoff neglected to consult these sources.

Beyond this, Falcoff and Robert S. Snyder, in his letter, cite some secondary sources that support their views of U.S. intervention, while they neglect to mention sources that disagree with their views. ... These selective appeals to authority do little to advance our understanding.

It has now been a decade since the Cold War was put to rest; it is also time to put to rest scholarship that omits embarrassing details about U.S. conduct during the Cold War.

David N. Gibbs Associate Professor of Political Science University of Arizona
Tucson, Ariz.