

AS submitted

DAILY NEWS

PUBLIC FORUM

9/9/94

Like China, like Cuba: It's time to open doors

President Clinton is paying a heavy price for succumbing to the same pathology that infected all presidents since Fidel Castro refused to play Washington's game. Now, in response to Castro's brilliant reaction to his foolish reinvigoration of the politics of hatred and hypocrisy, Clinton has only one intelligent option open to him: grant refugee status to all Cubans now in detention at Guantanamo and accept Cuba's offer to negotiate "all the outstanding issues" between the two countries as a condition of ending the suicidal refugee exodus.

Let's stop pretending, as well, that Castro's undemocratic ways are the stumbling block to normal relations between the two countries. The moral compromise with Cuba would be unnoticeable compared with the venality of Clinton's recent efforts to "make China an easier place for Americans to do business." The agreements just reached with the obdurately undemocratic Chinese government resulted in business deals worth "tens of millions of dollars." "We are not ideological or philosophical about this. We are relentlessly pragmatic," said Commerce Secretary Ron Brown. ("U.S., China decide on framework for trade talks," Daily News, Aug. 30.)

What is the more pragmatic alternative: ending punitive sanctions against Cuba, so that ordinary economic forces, to say nothing of the average U.S. tourist, can work toward a humane transition from dictatorship to democracy there; or continuing policies that guarantee more dead Cubans, and even less respect for President Clinton?

— Bill Becker
Woodland Hills