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Cuba



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July 8, 1961

MEMORANDUM FOR MR. RICHARD GOODWIN

SUBJECT: Cuban Covert Plan

Analysis of this plan shows that it envisages (a) "an island-wide resistance organization responsive to Agency direction"; "internal assets under close Agency control and direction"; (b) "support and guidance to those anti-Castro groups who are revealed to have a potential for clandestine operations"; and (c) "primary operations bases" in the US. In short, what is intended is a CIA underground formed on criteria of operational convenience rather than a Cuban underground formed on criteria of building political strength sufficient to overthrow Castro.

Despite the pretense of political impartiality, the effect of these CIA specifications is obviously to favor those groups most willing to accept CIA identification and control, and to discriminate against those groups most eager to control their own operations. I. e., the plan discriminates in favor of mercenaries, reactionaries, etc., and discriminates against men of independence and principle. Thus these criteria eliminate the Manuel Ray group; yet I can find nowhere in the documents any explicit exclusion of pro-Batista people.

Leaving aside the moral merits of this discrimination, the practical effect is to invest our resources in the people least capable of generating broad support within Cuba. The Agency fails to confront the key problem: i. e., that those most capable of rallying popular support against the Castro regime are going to be more independent, more principled and perhaps even more radical than the compliant and manageable types which CIA would prefer for operational purposes.

My recommendation is that you stop this paper in its present form and demand that it be recast to make political sense. The key is the

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statement that our covert activity "should be viewed only as the covert contribution to any national program designed to bring about the eventual replacement of the Castro government." This is correct; and there follows from it (a) that our covert activity should encourage the spread of the political sentiments within Cuba most likely to rally support for Castro's overthrow (which means, for example, Ray rather than Batista), and (b) that our covert activity should harmonise with our basic national policy of rescuing the Cuban Revolution, as set forth in the White Paper.

It is a fallacy to suppose that clandestine activity can be carried out in a political vacuum.

Arthur Schlesinger, jr.

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JFKL: Arthur M. Schlesinger Papers, Classified Subject Files, b. WH 31-48, f. "Cuba (3 of 5)."

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