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*JFK Review*

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July 29, 1963

MEMORANDUM NO. 55 FOR GENERAL EARLE G. WHEELER (JCS)  
 CAPTAIN E. R. ZUMWALT, JR., USN (CDD)  
 MAJOR GENERAL J. D. ALGER, USA  
 REAR ADMIRAL V. WENDT, USN  
 MAJOR GENERAL J. W. CARPENTER, III, USAF  
 BRIGADIER GENERAL H. M. ELWOOD, USMC

*sent*

SUBJECT: Interdepartmental Coordinating Committee of Cuban Affairs;  
Transmittal of Information

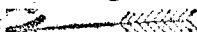
Attached are items of interest furnished through Department  
of State channels.

Signed  
Joseph A. Califano, Jr.

Joseph A. Califano, Jr.  
General Counsel

Attachment  
As Stated

cc: Mr. Adam Yarmolinsky (OSD) *sent*

Mr. Califano  
Lt Col Haig  
ASG 

SECRETARY OF THE ARMY  
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BRITISH EMBASSY

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HAVANA

June 20, 1963

I enclose a copy of a minute by Scott about a dinner party given by officials of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs at which they developed the theme of co-existence with the United States and spoke in an apparently indiscreet manner, which is quite unusual for them.

2. We do not know exactly what to make of all this, but it looks as though the Ministry is following up Castro's allusions to his desire for more normal relations with the United States with a deliberate attempt to convince us and through us, the Americans, that this is in fact their policy. We are also not sure how Varona fits into this picture. Until he joined Protocol Department about a month ago, he worked with the National Council of Culture and edited the magazine "Pueblos y Cultura". He has told us that he was pushed out of this job because of his support for abstract art against the socialist realism school. It may be that his sarcasm at the expense of the Russians and other apparent indiscretions, may be no more than a reflection of his disappointment at losing his old job. On the other hand, he may have been transferred to Protocol Department with a special brief to work on the Western missions in the hope of reducing our, and indirectly the American, distrust of Cuba. The way in which he speaks would be consistent with an attempt to persuade us that the Cuban revolution is more nationalist than communist and can be relied upon to turn away from Moscow when Russian support is no longer indispensable. Some old members of the 26th of July Movement probably believe this quite genuinely, even if they are naive in supposing that they would ever be able to jump out of the lion's mouth once they have been swallowed.

3. You will notice from paragraph 4 of the minute that Cuban officials have said that Khrushchev's visit is likely to be quite soon and may be timed to coincide with the 26th of July celebrations. This would, of course, gratify Cuban vanity, especially as Castro was in Moscow for May Day and may therefore be largely a question of wishful thinking. I imagine Khrushchev himself will have many other factors to consider -- but it could happen.

4. I am copying this letter to Greenhill in Washington and to Barker in Moscow.

(H. S. Marchant)

H. H. K. Slater, Esq., C.M.G.  
American Department,  
Foreign Office.

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Last night I was a guest at a small dinner party given by Sr. Roberto Melendez (Sub-Director of Protocol) at the official protocol house in Cubanacan. He was supported by Sr. Ivan Congora (the head of the Co-ordination Section of Protocol), Sr. Varona, about whom Mr. Byatt has recently written a minute, and Sr. Herminio Garcia (one of the attachés in Protocol Department). The other guests were Mr. Etter of the Swiss Embassy, M. de la Bastide, who is in charge of German interests at the French Embassy, and Mr. Fulford of the Canadian Embassy. My present day Havana standards, the dinner was remarkably lavish and the atmosphere was relaxed and even convivial. Melendez and Varona, who did most of the talking on the Cuban side, made a more determined effort than I have so far encountered among Cuban officials, to convince me that Cuban policy is now to work for co-existence with the United States.

2. During dinner, Melendez remarked that Castro's recent speeches, particularly those in Russia, had been free from attacks on the United States, and had shown that he was ready for better relations with the Americans. He said that during the visit to Russia, Castro had been given such definite assurances of Soviet support that Cuba now felt that she had nothing to fear from American aggression. When I asked whether the Russians had advocated a less provocative policy towards North America and the rest of Latin America, Varona said that he believed that this was so. Melendez added that Castro's attitude reflected the feelings of the Cuban people. They were not vindictive and had no feeling of hostility towards the Americans. If Kennedy were to visit Havana tomorrow he would be given a tumultuous reception. Varona said that he thought that the American press and the American people generally, were now less unreasonable and hysterical about the Cuban question. The Americans could hardly be expected to modify their policy before the next presidential election, but things might move more quickly if Kennedy were re-elected. He expected to see a move towards a worldwide détente, and not merely over Cuba. Kennedy had made an admirable speech about ten days ago which was most encouraging. Melendez, (who was with Castro during his Russian tour) spoke at some length about the very favourable personal impression which Khrushchev had made on the Cubans and said that he left them in no doubt that he was genuinely in favour of co-existence.

