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12 May 1961

MEMORANDUM FOR THE RECORD

SUBJECT : Meeting with Ing. Manuel Ray

PARTICIPANTS: Ing. Manuel Ray
Ernesto Betancourt
Rogelio Cisneros
James A. Noel 03

1. Ray did not return to Washington until early morning on Friday, 12 May 1961. He called me at 0700 from the airport. He was unable to fix a definite hour for us to get together due to the fact that he was expecting an appointment with a person he did not name some time during the morning. He later called a number of times from the Hotel Ambassador to advise me that he still had had no word on his appointment. At 1145, Mr. Betancourt called to say that he was with Ray and "Eugenio" (Rogelio Cisneros) and could we get together. I suggested they drive out to the Clarendon Hotel Court on Wilson Boulevard where I had taken a room for holding our meeting. They arrived in Mr. Betancourt's car at approximately 1200 noon time and we first went to the nearby Hogate Restaurant on Wilson Boulevard for lunch before we got down to the business of the prospectus.

2. During lunch we did not discuss the plan but I did take the opportunity to stress in a most serious way the need for absolute secrecy concerning our discussions today and any future discussions or developments which might take place in the future with respect to our relationship. All agreed on the need for tight security.

3. After lunch we drove to the Hotel Court and from approximately 1330 until 1730, we discussed the prospectus. Using Mr. Barnes' outline as a general guide, I stressed the importance of being able to present

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to the proper people at the earliest possible time a carefully thought-out plan of action which would set forth clearly the objectives -- what the project hoped to achieve; a statement of the problem; the strengths of the Castro regime following the ill-fated invasion; the status of the underground and its morale and capabilities; the extent of internal support for and discontent with the regime, etc., etc.

4. I also spoke of the need for describing the kind of activities which the Ray organization planned to engage in and the assets and capabilities which they have or can acquire to do the job. The need for explaining the relationship and coordination of the plan with the Revolutionary Council was discussed at some length.

5. I suggested that he include in the plan an itemization of the kinds of support which he would expect us to supply immediately as well as the kind and quantity of support which would be required of us as the project developed.

6. I also suggested that the plan include their views on how U. S. liaison and coordination could best be worked out; how funds would be funneled into the project; what commo and other training would be required; whether U. S. "real estate" would be needed, etc.

7. Ray outlined some of his thoughts regarding his proposed plan of action. According to him it contemplates action in three broad fields:

(a) Underground activity -- principally sabotage -- in the urban areas.

(b) Gradual buildup -- largely through clandestine infiltrations of small bodies of men -- of guerrilla forces in mountainous and defensible areas.

(c) A psychological warfare campaign within Cuba and abroad aimed at discrediting Castro and at the same time providing the people of Cuba something to fight for.

8. It is Ray's intention to depend almost entirely on maritime operations for the infiltration of personnel and materiel into Cuba. He also rules out of his plan the creation of another invasion army but does contemplate the training of groups of perhaps up to 150 men in other friendly

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countries of South America (he mentioned Venezuela as a possibility) and said he would explore the possibility of basing maritime operations in non-U. S. ports.

9. Ray said some means, other than Swan Island, must be found for reaching the Cuban population by radio broadcasts. He spoke of the possibility of short wave broadcasts from Venezuela and utilization of a commercial station in Miami which he understands can be clearly heard in Cuba.

10. Ray spoke of the desirability of stimulating the organization of "Pro-True Cuban Revolutionary" student groups in many countries of Latin America (he said a successful organization has been formed in Puerto Rico) and of sending qualified representatives to those Latin American countries where there is Soviet diplomatic representation to contact student and labor groups and leaders in an effort to present to them the true picture of the sorry state of students, workers, and intellectuals in Castro's Cuba.

11. Ray is also interested in the possibility of putting out a "News Letter" under MRP sponsorship which would discuss various aspects of the Cuban picture and set forth plans for Cuba after the fall of Castro. He thought such a news letter could go a long way towards correcting mistaken impressions among American university professors and in other circles as to the true nature of the Castro regime. He pointed to the recent letter from 63 Harvard professors which was recently published in the N. Y. Times as a "horrible example" as to how misinformed even university professors are on present day Cuba.

12. When the discussions got around to the need for conducting operations at least "under the umbrella" of the Revolutionary Council, and the need for obtaining Dr. Niro's concurrence before the U. S. would be able to support any operation, it was obvious that neither Ing. Ray nor Mr. Betancourt holds a high impression of the Council. Both feel that there is a strong possibility that the close public identification of the Council with the recent invasion may well have discredited the Council to such an extent that it commands no support or respect within Cuba.

For the sake of argument they were willing to concede that the political advantages of maintaining the Council for the purpose of forcing

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unity of the various exile groups may well outweigh its other obvious shortcomings. However, both feel, and Mr. Betancourt was quite emphatic on this point, that the Council as a body is not capable of directing clandestine actions against Castro and as a matter of fact is opposed to any further efforts at overthrowing Castro by sabotage and other subversive actions since they are completely "sold" on the thesis that Castro can only be removed by direct U. S. military action and therefore a continuation of Cuban underground activities can only result in needless and futile loss of life. In the fact of this attitude, Ray said he does not expect to receive much encouragement for his plan from the Council, although he is fairly confident that Dr. Miro's approval can eventually be obtained.

Mr. Betancourt thought that a workable solution might be found to their problem if the Council would agree to concern itself exclusively with (a) the current task of unifying the opposition, and (b) planning for its future assumption of power as the provisional government. Under this arrangement, operations aimed at the downfall of Castro could be entrusted to those leaders and groups (such as the MRP, MRR, and possibly the MDC) which have both the assets and the will to do the job. Mr. Ray thought that it might be feasible to create an operations planning board or command among the groups with demonstrated assets and thus avoid unnecessary duplication and confusion and make possible overall planning. It was obvious, however, that he would prefer to act autonomously in the execution of his program.

Mr. Ray was very critical of Arttime and claimed he was in possession of sufficient "facts" to convince him that Arttime, in collusion with elements of the camps, were planning to eliminate the MRP and its leaders from the picture, when the invasion succeeded. He said he "knows" that Arttime was being financially supported by wealthy ex-Batistianos of the Miami area.

13. Ray hinted at various times that the MRP may at some point find itself faced with the necessity of withdrawing from the Council and going it alone. He says that the Council is composed of "good men" but they have no assets or significant followings and "have nothing to offer the people of Cuba" and although the proclamation of the Council, as finally drafted, was a good one the "progressive" aspects of the proclamation were forced on the Council by the Americans and do not represent the true feelings of the majority of the Council members. He said the

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Cuban people are not likely to want to risk their lives on the basis of promises made by the present membership of the Council. He feels that acceptance of the Council would be improved by adding to its membership two or three more people whose names would be significant and meaningful to the Cuban people. He did not name any specific candidates.

14. Mr. Ray let me read a 13 or 14 page report which he had just received from the MRP coordinator in Cuba (Raimol Gonzales) which painted a dreary picture of conditions in Cuba since the failure of the invasion; was critical of the inclusion of Batistianos and "ninios bonitos" in the invasion force; conveyed the strong feeling that the Cubans had been betrayed by the Americans; and indicated that while the MRP organization was still pretty much intact physically, morale was almost completely shattered. Mr. Ray said he would provide me a sanitized copy (there were some operational and personal details) of the report for our information.

15. In view of this report from within Cuba, Mr. Ray said that he will wish to defer submitting his plan for our consideration until he is able to receive word from Cuba concerning the capabilities, willingness and feasibility of carrying out some of the activities he has in mind. He said it is useless to submit a program of action if the human elements to carry it out are lacking or completely demoralized. He thought he might be able to present his prospectus within approximately ten days. He said naturally he will not give the people inside any indication that he has been discussing a plan of action with us.

16. I urged Ray to consider submitting at least a preliminary and admittedly tentative prospectus at this time based on the assumption that his assets are still intact and will be willing to cooperate in order that it may receive early consideration. However, he stuck to his belief that this would not be practicable and reiterated the need for prior evaluation of the strength and morale of his following.

17. Ray asked concerning the detainees at McAllen, Texas, and wondered if they have been released. He was told that as far as I know they are still under detention. He said Mr. Goodwin had taken their names and promised to look into the matter. Mr. Betancourt

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said he would check directly with Mr. Goodwin re their status.

18. I invited Mr. Ray and/or Mr. Betancourt to call me over the weekend in case either should want to discuss the matter further. I had the feeling that Mr. Betancourt was personally in favor of submitting now a plan covering "short term" needs of their organization and it may be that such a paper will be submitted after he has an opportunity to talk with Mr. Ray in private.

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[JAMES A. NOEL]

JAN/dla

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