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CIA HISTORICAL REVIEW PROGRAM
RELEASE AS SANITIZED

26 March 1959

1007
MEMORANDUM FOR THE RECORD

SUBJECT: NSC Briefing (398th), Thursday, 26 March 1959

1. The following items were prepared:

- ~~a.~~ [REDACTED]
- ~~b.~~ [REDACTED]
- ~~c.~~ [REDACTED]
- ~~d.~~ [REDACTED]
- ~~e.~~ Cuba
- ~~f.~~ [REDACTED]

DELETED TEXT
NOT RELEVANT
TO BAY OF PIGS

2. [REDACTED]

3. [REDACTED]

The Director next dealt with Cuba and followed his briefing notes carefully. Considerable discussion was generated, particularly in the light of Castro's forthcoming trip to the U.S. to address a convention of newspaper editors in Washington on 17 April. A major question, particularly in the light of Castro's anti-U.S. attitude, was the posture to be taken by the U.S.

[REDACTED]

4. The briefing took a full half hour.

THOMAS J. PATTON

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25 March 1959

CUBA

- I. Cuba's revolutionary government is a dictatorship under Prime Minister Fidel Castro.
- A. Castro has absolute power and is sole arbiter of all government policies and actions.
1. He has had no administrative experience and resorts to demagoguery to whip up popular support.
- B. Castro's economic policies, such as agrarian reforms, cutting rents and utility rates, have alienated most sound business and commercial groups.
1. Castro's numerous capricious public statements, i.e., calling for a one-class society, have also caused apprehension.
- C. The "war crime trials" have created criticism at home as well as abroad.
- D. However, Castro still retains overwhelming popularity with the lower classes.
- II. Castro's strong anti-American attitude, shaped by intense nationalism was again revealed in a 22 March speech, following a moderate speech from the same platform by former Costa Rican President Figueres.
- A. Figueres discussed "perils that threaten the revolution."
1. Businessmen and the wealthy should not be antagonized and the leaders of the government must guard against demagoguery and dishonesty, which lead to tyranny.
 2. Figueres urged Cubans to understand the facts of the cold war and that "a great power cannot permit an enemy to exist" close to its shores.

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2. Even is some talk of Cuban counter-revolution later this summer but no organized opposition yet.

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B. Figueres' moderate approach strongly refuted by Castro and his official news organ.

1. Favoring a "neutralist" position in world affairs, Castro implied that the US Naval Base, Guantanamo, endangers Cuban security.
2. Castro also accused the US of supporting Latin American dictators and said that the US encourages anti-Castro activities.

III. Communists, operating openly and legally, have gained footholds in the organized labor movement, the armed forces, and possibly the press.

A. The government is not now Communist dominated or controlled, however, although the potential for further Communist penetration exists.

1. Castro has indicated he will not allow the Communists to "steal the revolution" from him.
2. So far, however, there has been no serious attempt to proscribe Communist activities.
3. A vehicle for Communist penetration of the army is a new G-6 Section which is in charge of "educating" the troops. Marxist teachings are prevalent.

IV. Castro's campaign against dictatorships has assumed two forms: encouragement of revolutionary plotting against "dictatorships" and pressure for the exclusion of "dictatorships" from membership

in the Organization of American States (OAS). *but if he could - he might*

A. Castro has denied any intention to intervene militarily. Cuba, however, has become a meeting ground for revolutionaries desirous of receiving Cuban arms, equipment or financial support. ^e

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B. Argentine pro-Communist Ernesto "Che" Guevara has been dealing with revolutionary groups. ^{from Haiti, San Domingo, Nicaragua, &} Some low level members of the "26 July" movement are probably aiding exile groups.

1. "Che" Guevara, one of the original group who invaded Cuba with Castro, has facilitated Communist activities in Cuba. On 18 March he stated: "We are going to get a Soviet ambassador here in Cuba one way or another."

C. Castro, in his campaign against dictatorships, is ^{now at odds} at variance with other liberal leaders in the area, principally Venezuelan President Betancourt and former Costa Rican President Figueres. They fear that Castro's dealings with Communist-influenced exile groups would introduce pro-Communist regimes.

1. Figueres and Betancourt may assist rival non-Communist rebel groups.

V. Revolutionary plotting in Cuba is directed primarily against the governments of the Dominican Republic, Haiti and Nicaragua.

A. Castro is apparently supporting Communist-influenced Dominican & Nicaraguan exile groups.

B. Castro's greatest interest is in overthrowing Dominican Dictator Trujillo.

1. His interest in Haiti is primarily as a potential base for operations against the Dominican Republic.

a. An invasion of Haiti, however, might spark a "Caribbean war" since the Dominican Foreign Minister informed the Embassy that an attack on Haiti would be considered an attack on the Dominican Republic.

2. Nicaragua is of less immediate interest to Cuba but is more susceptible to invasion than the Dominican Republic.

C. Preparations against "dictatorships" probably have not progressed much beyond the planning stage.