

NSC BRIEFING

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14 July 1960

State Department review
completed

CUBA

- I. Enthusiastic initial response of Castro officials to Khrushchev's public support was reflected in speeches at 10 July mass rally, but there was an interesting contrast between "Che" Guevara's and Fidel Castro's speeches that suggests Fidel's possible embarrassment at Soviet embrace of his regime.
- A. Guevara told crowds "Cuba today is a glorious island defended by the rockets of the greatest military power in history... We are practically the arbiters of world peace."
- B. But Fidel, in his sickbed TV talk on the same day, while recognizing Khrushchev's "spontaneous" declaration of support, said: "Cuba does not depend for the defense of its sovereignty and independence on Soviet rockets, but rather on the reason and justice of its cause."
- C. By 13 July, Guevara indicated that he may have had a change of heart when he said in an interview: "Any Soviet attempt to establish a Communist satellite in Cuba would be resisted to the last drop of blood."
- D. Most educated Cubans oppose alignment with Soviet bloc, and though opposition still unorganized and leaderless, US embassy believes implications of Khrushchev's speech should be a powerful influence in developments over next few weeks.
- II. Internally, trends continue toward tighter dictatorship and enhanced Communist influence.

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- B. Pro-Castro lawyers, some in militia uniform, seized offices Havana Bar Association and on 8 July named new governing board.
1. The duly elected board is protesting to President Dorticos, who is president of National Bar Association, but probably to no avail.
 2. Ambassador Bonsal comments: "This is another important step in establishing monolithic support of government by professional institutions."
- C. Cuban press announced 6 July that all provincial officers of powerful Communist-controlled Cuban Workers' Confederation have been replaced by men "who truly respond to the revolutionary moment in which the country now lives."
- D. Communist leader Carlos Rafael Rodriguez is becoming increasingly prominent and [redacted] he may be named minister of finance.
1. He has long been one of Castro's closest advisers, but until recently has remained in background.
- E. Cuban ambassador [redacted] defected 11 July with strong anti-Castro, anti-Communist declaration and announcement he would work to oust Castro.
1. He was sixth ambassador to defect in last 30 days.
- F. US Embassy has growing feeling that Castro may be willing to sacrifice Cuban interests for sake of what appears to be his greater ambition--humiliation of US, wrecking of inter-American system, and eventual "liberation" of all Latin America.

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G. Castro's illness apparently genuine

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III. Castro's ministers of economy and commerce reported worried over possible US embargo on foodstuffs, but are confident they can lick oil and sugar problems.

A. [redacted] embassy's agricultural attache says these officials feel they would face "dangerous situation" if US cuts off food shipments to Cuba (primarily lard, rice, flour, and corn.) They fear this would be worse than imminent shortage of farm and industrial machinery parts.

B. Current very depressed market for tanker charters eases Soviet effort to supply Cuba with oil.

1. It is only because of depressed market that Soviet Union can deliver oil to Cuba and other distant markets at competitive prices.

2. British, Norwegian governments have already indicated to American embassies their inability to influence tanker owners against accepting Soviet charters or to violate existing arrangements.

IV. In 12 July press conference, Khrushchev ridiculed reports of Soviet interest in military bases in Cuba: "A most silly fabrication. What do we need bases in Cuba for?"

A. Highly doubtful that Soviet Union would carry its commitments to Cuba to extent of establishing base there.

- V. Among the US acts of "intervention" and "aggression" cited in Cuba's request for UN Security Council action was "the recent meeting of the NSC, at which the future of Cuba was discussed as if that country were a factory or a subject people."
- VI. Khrushchev's missile threat and Cuba's call for UN Security Council debate have startled many Latin American governments out of earlier aloofness, and majority favor formal inter-American consideration of problem.
- A. OAS Council is to meet Saturday morning to consider Peru's request for meeting of foreign ministers.
1. Meeting would be primarily concerned with Cuban problem.
 2. Several high-ranking Argentine foreign ministry officials had favored a similar initiative.
 3. Brazilian foreign ministry officials favor a strong stand on Cuba.
 4. Chile is now expected to support a call for an OAS meeting on Cuba despite its previous insistence on an informal Latin American effort to conciliate US-Cuban differences.
 5. Most smaller Latin American countries have for some time supported view that the Cuban regime is a hemisphere problem.
- B. But most Latin Americans fear domestic reaction to pro-Castro groups.
1. Brazilian, Bolivian, Chilean, Peruvian, and Venezuelan officials have expressed concern that pro-Castro strength in their countries will limit their ability to support the US.

C. Mexico, probably traditionally the most sensitive to any suggestion of foreign interference in internal affairs, has taken equivocal stand.

1. Strongly pro-Cuban leftist minority attacking US policy on Cuba and pressuring Lopez Mateos government to take firmer pro-Cuban stand.

a. On 7 July influential leftist ex-president Lazaro Cardenas attacked US "economic aggression" against Cuba, compared Cuban position today to Mexican position after foreign oil interests seized there in 1938.

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c. Leftists may further seek to exploit innate Mexican resentment of US "interference" in its affairs.

2. Only clarification of Mexico's official position on Castro regime given in 11 July press release by Foreign Minister Tello.

a. Declared recent pro-Cuban statements by Mexican congressmen do "not necessarily" reflect opinions of Lopez Mateos administration.

b. Recognized existence in Mexico of "deep affection" for Cuban people.

c. Advocated efforts to solve US-Cuban difficulties within framework of OAS.

VII. Latin Americans appear surprised at US announcement of new aid plan for hemisphere.

- A. Only official comment to date is from Brazil. President Kubitschek in press statements 11 and 12 July seemed annoyed he not consulted, expressed hope that plan, when known, would show US has adopted positive attitude toward his "Operation Pan America."
1. Said "palliatives and emergency measures" will never cure the ills that beset Pan-Americanism.
 2. Kubitschek's chief foreign policy advisor quoted privately and in press 11 July as saying "Fidel Castro had to make a pact with Russia before the US would think about OPA."
- B. Bolivian leader right-wing government forces commenting on Cuban situation 12 July said privately "unlikely any Latin American country would speak out very strongly against Castro in OAS since all grateful to him for awakening US to Latin American realities."

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