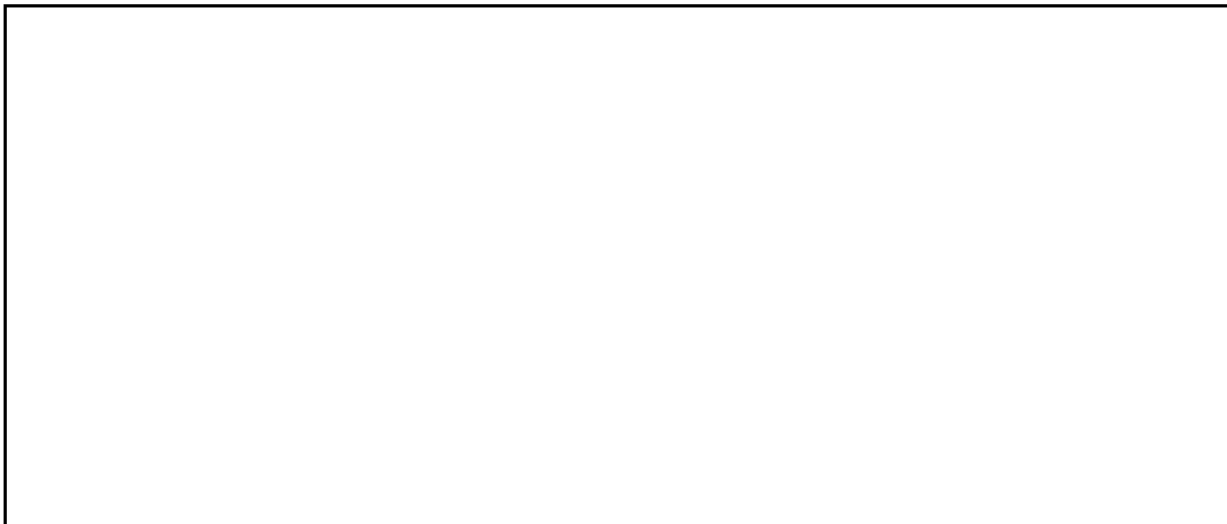


TOP SECRET

13 February 1969

MEMORANDUM FOR THE RECORD

Morning Meeting of 13 February 1969



Godfrey noted that, if there is a repeat of last year's Tet offensive, it will take place between now and 17 February, with the likelihood that any major offensive action will be undertaken over next weekend.

D/ONE reported that no problems were encountered in coordinating NIE 11-11-69, Soviet Chemical and Biological Warfare Capabilities, and SNIE 93-69, Brazil. He reported that SNIE 20-69, Security Conditions in Western Europe During President Nixon's Visit, will be ready for telephonic coordination tomorrow and that the only potential security problem envisioned at the moment is in Berlin.



Carver reported that his office is set for twenty-four-hour operations to meet the Tet offensive contingency.

TOP SECRET

Bross related that General Maxwell Taylor was briefed yesterday on Biafra/Nigeria and raised questions regarding the adequacy of our intelligence effort in Biafra.

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The Director noted receipt of an NSC study memorandum calling for a SecDef review of South Vietnamese internal security capabilities. He noted Agency requirements for input to the study and agreed with Carver's suggestion that SAVA be the primary focal point for input. Carver noted that he will rely heavily on DD/P-provided data.

The Director commented that he saw ACDA's Gerald Smith, who greatly appreciated the DD/S&T briefing.

The Director asked the DD/I to assemble appropriate publications for a possible visit to the LBJ ranch this weekend.

The Director summarized yesterday's JCS briefing on strategic targeting. DD/S&T suggested that he provide the Director with some of his Strategic Panel's thinking on this matter.

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Goodwin called attention to the 13 February Wall Street Journal article speculating on Cuban/U. S. diplomatic ties.

Goodwin reported an inquiry from Tom Lambert of the Los Angeles Times on tomorrow's briefing of the student editors.

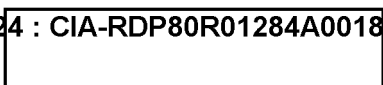


L. K. White

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*Extracted and sent to action officer

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13 FEB 1969

Fidel & Uncle Sam

Some See Possibility U.S., Cuba May Restore Diplomatic, Trade Ties

Washington, Havana, Moscow Gingerly Broach Subject; No Quick Action Expected

The Role of the Hijackings

HAVANA—The stage is suddenly and quietly being set here for a possible effort to restore diplomatic and trade relations between the U.S. and Cuba.

The initiative is coming partly from the Soviet Union, whose influence and prestige here have turned upward recently and upon whom the Cubans depend for their economic survival. Joining the Russians in the diplomatic maneuvering are some key Latin American leaders.

The sharp increase in airplane hijackings to Cuba has put pressure on the U.S. Government

This article was written by staff reporter Herbert G. Lawson and special correspondent Sidney T. Wise.

to seek discussions with Premier Fidel Castro. Some U.S. officials believe hijacking would end if Cuba agreed to return at least some hijackers to the U.S. to face criminal charges.

The attitudes of both Washington and Havana are still far from clear, though there have been recent signs that a breakthrough is possible. Diplomatic sources here and elsewhere stress that present efforts are only the first, tentative steps on what would be a long road toward any renewal of U.S.-Cuban trade and diplomatic contact. But, after a decade of bitterness stemming from expropriation of American-owned properties, a U.S. trade embargo, the Cuban missile crisis and the Bay of Pigs invasion, the new peace feelers are viewed here with high interest.

Some Recent Developments

Among the recent tangible moves:

—A secret message from the Soviet Union to a Western nation that might mediate any U.S.-Cuban settlement, noting that the Russians "would look favorably on anything" the mediating country "could do to normalize relations between Cuba and the U.S."

—The temperate tone of Fidel Castro's 10th anniversary speech Jan. 2, which, in marked contrast to previous speeches, avoided heavy criticism of the U.S. and dwelt on internal Cuban affairs rather than on exporting communism throughout the Western Hemisphere.

—Senate majority leader Mike Mansfield's comment earlier this month that U.S. diplomatic relations with Cuba are "a possibility" in view of the need to curtail plane hijackings followed by State Department testimony to a House committee that Cuba views the hijackings as "a serious problem" and doesn't condone them.

—The arrangement worked out by the Swiss embassy in Havana this week under which Cuba will allow at least some hijacked American planes to return immediately with their passengers to the U.S. Until now, passengers arriving in Cuba on U.S. jetliners have been detained overnight and sent back on chartered propeller-driven planes; the Cubans have been claiming that loaded jets couldn't take off safely from the Havana airport's runways.

—Numerous hints by Cuban government officials to visiting reporters that Cuba might be willing, under the right conditions, to seek a rapprochement with the U.S.

—A public statement by the head of the Organization of American States, Ecuadorian Galo Plaza, suggesting that Cuba might be welcomed back into the OAS, from which it was expelled in 1962. President Eduardo Frei of Chile made a similar statement recently. Chile, like every hemispheric nation except Canada and Mexico, has broken diplomatic relations with Cuba.

"Nothing Is Foolish"

These signs, tentative though they are, represent a dramatic switch from the pessimistic outlook that prevailed as recently as last August, when Premier Castro told an audience: "The revolutionary government has at no time shown the slightest interest in bettering its relations with the imperialist government of the United States. . . . We are not interested in economic relations, and we are even less interested in diplomatic relations of any kind."

Now, however, when a reporter asks a Cuban foreign ministry source if it is foolish to expect any improvement in U.S.-Cuban relations, the source replies that "nothing is foolish in international relations." Other government people here seek out a U.S. visitor's impression of whether the Nixon Administration is ready for a new Cuba policy.

One State Department source characterizes this recent activity as "intriguing straws in the wind." But he adds that "nothing well-formed has appeared yet." A Western diplomat in Cuba says "it is too early" for any real change in the hemisphere's policy of isolating Cuba, although he, too, is intrigued by the many trial balloons going up.

But some U.S. officials deeply involved in U.S. policy toward Cuba remain skeptical that any improvement in relations is likely.

Cuban officials stress two conditions to be met before any dialog with the U.S. can begin: An end to the Vietnam war and an indication that the U.S. Navy will withdraw from Cuban soil at Guantanamo.

The U.S. also has publicized two conditions: An end to Castro's often-proclaimed effort to foment revolution in the rest of Latin America and an end to the Soviet military presence in Cuba.

There's no certainty that either the U.S. or Cuba is willing to meet the other's conditions. But diplomats note that if the Paris peace talks are successful in "disengaging" the U.S. from the Vietnam war the source of Cuba's most persistent criticism of the U.S. would be removed. Other U.S. officials say that meeting the second condition, giving up the base at Guantanamo, would be more of a diplomatic than a military problem. They say the base is useful but not essential to U.S. military operations.

Cuba tacitly may be meeting the two U.S. conditions, observers say. Soviet military men

aren't significant evidence in Cuba now, intelligence sources report. One U.S. analyst says, "I don't think we're going to see (Soviet) missiles going in there again."

Premier Castro's enthusiasm for exporting guerrilla actions to neighboring countries dimmed considerably after the capture and execution of Che Guevara in Bolivia in 1967, some sources assert. These intelligence analysts view the Cuban expedition to Bolivia as a disaster for Mr. Castro because it exposed a serious lack of planning and support from Havana, dissension between Cuba and the Bolivian Communist Party and a lack of spontaneous support from the Bolivian peasantry.

A top Western diplomat, taking note of all these facts, remarks: "It is possible that Castro, either voluntarily, through Soviet pressure or because he has no alternative, may see hope in offering internal remedies to his people instead of exporting revolution."

President Nixon has refrained from any major Cuban policy statement during his campaign and since taking office. Many U.S. advisers oppose any relaxation of the tough U.S. stance. "Fidel is beyond the pale and has to go," says one. But even if Mr. Nixon saw some gain for the U.S. in friendlier relations with Mr. Castro, much still depends on the mercurial personality of the Cuban leader.

There's some question whether, despite Russian pressure for an easing of tension, Premier Castro wants the U.S. to lift its trade embargo. The embargo, more than eight years old, has become one of Mr. Castro's most useful tools in rallying the country behind him.

"We love the State Department," jokes a propaganda official here. "Please tell Washington not to lift the economic blockade." An official of a West European embassy here adds, "The embargo is the cement that holds together a political system under increasingly heavy pressure."

A Blockade, Not an Embargo

Mr. Castro himself said in his Jan. 2 speech, "The blockade makes us want to laugh." Though severe consumer shortages are no laughing matter now to Cubans, they are easier to accept when they are blamed on the U.S. embargo (which Cubans prefer to call a "blockade" with its connotation of a military encirclement of the island). The premier constantly instills a feeling of heroism among Cubans by picturing them as a tiny band of patriots standing up against a bullying Yankee colossus of 200 million people just 90 miles away.

The propaganda use of the embargo is seen in cardboard posters that fill otherwise empty glass merchandise cases in a department store here. They tell a disappointed shopper that he must not forget "the enemy exists." If a car breaks down for lack of repair parts or if there's no medicine in the pharmacy, Cubans tend to see their misfortune as caused by the embargo.

The fact is, Western analysts assert, shortages exist here not because of the U.S. embargo but because of the way Premier Castro is managing the economy. He has declared on numerous occasions that Cuba must sacrifice consumer goods so that it can pay for its heavy investment to modernize agriculture.

The embargo is blithely ignored not only by the Socialist camp but also by some of the closest allies of the U.S. Many West European nations ship a variety of goods to Cuba, though the exports are limited by a shortage of hard currency here. Among Cuba's active trading partners are anti-Communist Spain as well as Canada, Britain, Italy and France.

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posed problems for Cuba. There is much Amer-

ican goods for which Mr. Castro would like to buy spare parts in the U.S. He is also blocked by the U.S. from such sources of international credit as the World Bank.

Cuba's desire for easier credit and access to the U.S. market, along with Russia's desire to avoid open conflict over Cuba, ultimately may outweigh Premier Castro's desire to keep the embargo for its propaganda value, Cuban observers say.

Castro Today

Whatever happens, it's a good bet that Fidel Castro will continue to play the quixotic, single-handed role in shaping events that he has assigned himself. It's a role he has played since leading his guerrilla band from the mountains 10 years ago to overthrow the Batista government. Today, at 41, the husky, six-foot-two-inch bearded leader is slightly heavier around the waist, wears contact lenses and has developed into a studious economist and agronomist.

He still dresses in olive-green army fatigues. Instead of a sumptuous premier's suite, he uses modest offices. He is almost constantly on the move throughout Cuba. He dodges interviews with non-Communist newsmen, and even to his close associates he often is unpredictable. "We don't know what his schedule is from one day to the next," remarks a government worker.

Some Cuba-watchers in the U.S. claim to see a major change in the premier's personality in recent years. "Assassination concerns him greatly and extraordinary security surroundings his movements," says one. "There's every reason to think Fidel is becoming isolated, physically and mentally, within his regime."

That characterization appears overdrawn to those who observe the premier here. They say he retains much of his old impetuosity and still mingles with the people, dedicating major projects with lengthy speeches and playing volleyball or Ping-Pong with friends. One thing is undisputed: Premier Castro commands nearly absolute power within the government.

Fidel The Maverick

His maverick nature is still evident, too, in his chiding of the rest of the Socialist camp for not adopting his vision of the Marxist state. He insulted President Tito in a speech last August, calling him "an agent of imperialism." The Yugoslav president merely lodged a mild protest with the Cuban embassy in Belgrade.

As for the Russians, despite unusual praise last month for Soviet aid, Mr. Castro repeatedly displays his differences with them over such issues as "creeping capitalism" in Eastern Europe. In his view, the "vulgar use of material incentives" such as extra pay to highly skilled technicians is corrupting communism there.

The Red Chinese have fallen into almost total disgrace here. Premier Castro's differences with the Maoist line, coupled with China's failure several years ago to deliver promised rice shipments, have led to bitter argument. Che Guevara's death also deprived the Chinese of their best ally here. The result is that the Chinese embassy here has been reduced to a handful of men led by a charge d'affaires. Its former staff of over 100 was headed by an ambassador.

But Cuba's biggest diplomatic problem may turn out to be how to handle the Russians, many analysts agree. One U.S. official says the Soviets deeply resent Premier Castro's criticism of Russian monetary incentives and Cuba's utopian schemes. "The suggestion that anyone is going to get to the promised land plans," he says.