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COMMUNIST INFLUENCE IN CUBA

Submitted by the
DIRECTOR OF CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE

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Concurred in by the
UNITED STATES INTELLIGENCE BOARD

on 22 March 1960. Concurring were the Director of Intelligence and Research, Department of State; the Assistant Chief of Staff for Intelligence, Department of the Army; the Assistant Chief of Naval Operations for Intelligence, Department of the Navy; the Assistant Chief of Staff, Intelligence, USAF; the Director for Intelligence, The Joint Staff; the Assistant to the Secretary of Defense, Special Operations; and the Director of the National Security Agency. The Atomic Energy Commission Representative to the USIB, and the Assistant Director, Federal Bureau of Investigation, abstained, the subject being outside of their jurisdiction.

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COMMUNIST INFLUENCE IN CUBA

THE PROBLEM

To estimate present and probable future Communist control or influence over the leadership and policies of the Castro regime in Cuba.

THE ESTIMATE

1. The trend of events in Cuba is a source of deep satisfaction to the leaders of international communism. Fidel Castro is embarked on a bitter and virulent anti-US campaign directed not only at the Cuban population but also at public opinion throughout Latin America. In the domestic field, Castro is pursuing an increasingly radical program employing techniques used by the Communists themselves in other countries. The government has expropriated without adequate arrangements for compensation or has otherwise assumed control over a wide range of business enterprises, ranging from sugar plantations and cattle ranches to mines, factories, airlines, and hotels, in many of which US investors have had a considerable stake.¹ Castro has declared that his goal is the elimination of private enterprise, foreign or domestic, from all major sectors of the economy. He recently stated that private foreign capital will henceforth be accepted for investment in Cuba only if delivered to the government to be used as it sees fit. Economic power has become centralized in the recently established Central Planning Board, the National Bank, and the National Institute for Agrarian Reform

(INRA). The Central Planning Board is headed by Fidel Castro himself. The Bank is directed by "Che" Guevara, a staunch pro-Communist, the INRA by Núñez Jiménez, a known Communist. The INRA is a virtual state within a state and has sweeping powers over agriculture, industry, and commerce.

2. Local Communists have been readily accepted by the regime as participants in the process of remaking Cuba. At the same time, the administration has been purged of anti-Communist elements, including not only professional personnel who had served under Batista, but also even those adherents of the 26th of July Movement who have sought to moderate the pace of change and to curb Communist influence. Under the direction of Fidel Castro's brother Raúl, and under the influence of "Che" Guevara, the armed services, police, and investigative agencies have been brought under unified control, purged of Batista professionals as well as other outspoken anti-Communist elements, and subjected to Communist-slanted political indoctrination courses; a civilian militia composed of students, workers, and peasants is being trained and armed. At least nine of the most prominent anti-Communist leaders of the Confederation of Cuban Workers (CTC) have been eliminated from the labor organization and others effectively silenced. Although Communists probably constitute a small propor-

¹ Private US direct capital investment in Cuba amounts to about \$900 million, of which a considerable proportion is already under some form of control by the Cuban Government. The entire US investment is threatened. There is also a considerable amount of commercial debt due to US firms.

tion of the CTC membership, at least five active pro-Communists have been elevated to the 13-man CTC Executive Committee, some in key positions. Although CTC Secretary General David Salvador was "expelled" from the Popular Socialist (Communist) Party (PSP) in 1951, he has been active in promoting Communist influence in the labor movement and has become a prominent spokesman for the government's policies.

3. All the old-line, non-Communist political parties have been disrupted or cowed. The PSP now is the only effective political body in Cuba except for Castro's own 26th of July Movement, a loosely organized vehicle of popular support for Castro which lacks most of the characteristics of a political party. Re-legalized in effect by Castro on his assumption of power, the PSP occupies no official role in the government and has deliberately avoided the appearance of seeking power for itself. Although the party has openly sought to develop its base in labor, education, and the entertainment industry, its overt apparatus, press, and front organizations have generally concentrated on drumming up support for Castro and his policies; top PSP leaders have generally remained in the background, and party strength has probably not risen significantly above its estimated June 1959 total of 17,000.² However, the PSP has had considerable success in penetrating the military, INRA and other parts of the government, and the 26th of July Movement—and in utilizing the government's tendency to equate anticommunism with counterrevolution and treason. Fidel Castro's chief lieutenants, Raúl Castro and "Che" Guevara, have long records of association with Communists and a marked affinity for Communist economic and political concepts; they are strong pro-Communists if not actual Communists.

4. Meanwhile, the Castro regime has also developed significant contacts with the Bloc. Although formal diplomatic relations have yet to be established with any of the Communist powers, a \$100 million Soviet credit to Cuba and a five-year trade agreement were

² The PSP claim of 27,000 members probably includes the Communist youth organization.

concluded during Soviet Deputy Premier Mikoyan's visit to Cuba to open the Soviet expedition in February 1960. The agreement calls for Soviet purchases of one million tons of Cuban sugar annually, at world prices, of which 20 percent is payable in hard currency and the rest in merchandise and services. Early in March banking arrangements for the exchange of over \$4 million in commodities with East Germany were concluded. Czechoslovakia has also expressed interest in a trade deal. The joint Cuban-Soviet statement issued upon Mikoyan's departure from Cuba called for close collaboration by the two countries in the UN. Cuba is currently seeking a seat in the Security Council and will probably receive considerable support from the Soviet Bloc as well as from the Afro-Asian countries. The Cuban-sponsored Latin American news agency, *Prensa Latina*, which is a major vehicle of anti-US propaganda, has working relations with news agencies from the Sino-Soviet Bloc as well as from neutralist countries and is using Bloc materials in its output. The Chinese Communist news agency has established a branch in Havana. In contrast to Cuban fulminations against the US, official statements in the press have been generally favorable to the Bloc.

5. These developments obviously raise serious questions as to the degree to which Cuba may now be or may become subject to international Communist control. Certainly the local Communists have taken advantage of the opportunities afforded them to influence the course of government policy and to develop their own position within the armed forces, INRA, and other key elements of the Cuban political structure. Prolongation of the present situation will result in even greater Communist influence in Cuba and will further encourage Communists and other anti-US elements throughout Latin America.

6. However, Fidel Castro remains the dominant element in the regime and we believe that he is not disposed to accept actual direction from any foreign source. His susceptibility to Communist influence and suggestion and his willing adoption of Communist patterns of action springs from the paral-

lelism of his revolutionary views with the current Communist line in Latin America, from his conviction that communism offers no threat to his regime, and from his need for external support. He almost certainly has no intention of sharing his power or of abandoning his announced objective of developing a neutralist "third force" position for Cuba and other nations of Latin America in association with the Afro-Asian world. Moreover, his fanatic determination to direct the course of the revolution and the preponderant popular support he commands would make it difficult at this time for the Cuban Communists or their Bloc supporters to force Fidel Castro in a direction contrary to that of his choice. We consider it extremely unlikely that the PSP, which has little broad support among the Cuban people, could soon develop sufficient strength to make openly an effective bid for power on its own. Although development of pro-Communist strength in the armed forces and elsewhere may eventually give them such a capability, we believe that Fidel Castro's appeal to the Cuban masses, rather than the coercive power of the armed forces, represents the present mainstay of the regime. In the event of Fidel Castro's death, Raúl Castro and "Che" Guevara would assume the leadership of the regime. Under these two, the Communists would be given an even greater opportunity to perfect their organization and to influence the policy of the government. Raúl Castro and "Che" Guevara, however, would not command the popular support which Fidel Castro now inspires.

7. We believe that for some time Communist leaders will continue to concentrate on influencing the formulation and implementation of policy and on covert infiltration of the government—and that they will avoid any challenge to Fidel Castro's authority or any claim to formal PSP participation in the government. Particularly in the light of Soviet experiences with Kassim and Nasser, the Soviet leaders are well aware of the need for caution in dealing with messianic nationalist leaders. They probably believe that the present state of affairs is weakening the US position and advancing their interests, not only

in Cuba, but throughout Latin America. The Communists probably also believe that the US will lose in influence and prestige so long as Castro's successful defiance of the US (including his acceptance of Bloc assistance) continues, and that the US is faced with the dilemma of tolerating an increasingly Communist-oriented Cuba or of arousing widespread Latin American opposition by intervening. Above all, the Soviets probably wish to avoid a situation in which the US could secure broad Latin American support for action to curb Castro. While Castro's regime has lost prestige in Latin America, particularly among government officials and the upper and middle classes, few popular leaders in the area are prepared to dismiss Castro as merely a pro-Communist demagogue. For many Latin Americans, especially the masses, Castro remains an important symbol as a destroyer of the old order and as a champion of social revolution and of anti-US and anticapitalist feeling.

8. We believe that Fidel Castro and his government are not now demonstrably under the domination or control of the international Communist movement. Moreover, we believe that they will not soon come under such demonstrable domination or control. We reach this conclusion in part because we feel that under present circumstances International Communism does not desire to see a situation arise in which it could be clearly demonstrated that the regime in Cuba was under its domination. Yet, we believe that the Cuban regime is in practice following the line set for Latin American Communist parties at the time of the 21st Party Congress in Moscow in February 1959 and that it will continue to pursue policies advantageous to the Communists and to accept Communist assistance and advice in carrying them out. Cuba may give increasing appearances of becoming a Communist society. Although Castro may for tactical reasons seem at times to moderate his relations with the US, he appears intent on pressing ahead with his anti-US campaign, which might come to involve attempted expulsion of the US from its Guantánamo Base, abandonment of Cuba's privileged position in the US sugar market, a

complete diplomatic rupture, and danger to the lives of American citizens. The more he becomes embroiled with the US, the more he will look to the Bloc for support, including provision of military equipment, although both the Bloc and the Cubans would probably seek to avoid any accusation that Cuba was being made into a Soviet base. Should the Castro

regime be threatened, the USSR would probably do what it could to support it. However, the USSR would not hesitate to write off the Castro regime before involving itself in a direct military confrontation with the US over Cuba, or, at least during the present state of Soviet policy, in a major diplomatic crisis with the US.