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SECRETARY'S DELEGATION
TO THE
TWENTIETH SESSION OF
UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY
New York, September-October 1965

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By ms, NARA, Date 3-24-04

MEMORANDUM OF CONVERSATION

(Part 2 of 9)

Date: 9/28/65

Time: 10:00 a.m.

Place: USUN New York

Subject: CUBA

Participants:

Secretary of State Dean Rusk Foreign Minister Leitao da Cunha (Brazil)
Mr. J. M. Cates, Jr. (USUN) Mr. Castro Alves

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The Foreign Minister asked whether there was anything new from Cuba and whether the Secretary thought there was any chance of defeating Fidel Castro in the near future. The Secretary replied that we considered that an invasion would be necessary to bring him down. We have reports from Cuban Embassies in various parts of the world that "Fidel wants to come home to the hemisphere". However, we have seen no action so far to support this view. Castro knows what to do if he "wants to come home". Furthermore we have the strong impression that the Cuban diplomatic service is far from a monolithic organization.

The Foreign Minister then asked whether the Secretary thought it was acceptable to have a communist government in the hemisphere if such government did not deal in subversion. The Secretary replied that if a nation were organized internally on the basis of socialism that this would be acceptable, but if it were a part of the international communist organization

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obvious difficulties were presented. The Foreign Minister agreed. The Secretary then recalled that Mikoyan, on returning through Washington after his post-missile crisis to Cuba, commented to State Department officials that Cuba was the first country to become communist by peaceful means. Mikoyan said that all the old line communists had been waiting for years for such a situation to come about adding "you do not know what it means to us." The Foreign Minister noted that nevertheless the Soviet system was not a success either in Cuba or in Russia. The Secretary gave the opinion that if we concentrated on what happens within a country, we are better off than indulging in wishful thinking. He noted that the downfall of Ben Bella had had quite an effect in Cuba. The Foreign Minister said he certainly hoped so and that a change brought about in such ways was much better than invasion.

The Secretary noted that our consideration of the problem at the time of the missile crisis led us to the opinion that if it became essential to invade Cuba in order to get rid of the missiles, we should count on 30,000 to 40,000 Cuban casualties and a minimum of 10,000 U.S. casualties. Such an event would leave serious and long-lasting scars which even our most anti-Castro friends considered not worthwhile.

The Foreign Minister asked whether we thought we could bring about the overthrow of Fidel Castro through economic blockade. He was concerned that new generations of Cubans raised by and under Fidel and knowing no other system would pose great difficulties for any future changes in the system. The Secretary concurred but commented that a barrage of political indoctrination often creates its own antidote as had happened in China, and which we feel is happening in Cuba. The Foreign Minister noted in this connection that the standard of living in Cuba had dropped seriously and that what had begun as a revolution based on moral and political grounds had been transformed into an economic and social revolution which made it look odd in the light of the initial circumstances.

The Foreign Minister asked if another attack on a friendly country was launched by the Cubans or another plot such as that involved in the Venezuelan arms cache were discovered, what would happen particularly in view of Argentine reservations with regard to Article 51 of the U.N. Charter. The Secretary replied that all members of the OAS should be prepared to act quickly if there were any sign of Cuban intervention in other countries. The Foreign Minister stated it was important to be alert and endeavor to catch Fidel red-handed intervening in the affairs of other countries. Castro continued to be a danger particularly to the Dominican Republic and Haiti.

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