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13 April 1963

MEMORANDUM FOR: Director of Central Intelligence

SUBJECT: Donovan Cuban Negotiations

1. James B. Donovan, accompanied by his son, John Donovan, and Washington attorney John E. Nolan, on the latest negotiation trip to Cuba, 5-9 April, secured the release of nine skin divers, an American missionary from Cuban prisons, and arranged for the release of twenty-two Americans on the 22d of April. During the period in Cuba, they were treated very well and spent considerable time with Fidel Castro and Dr. Vallejo.

2. In order to better evaluate Donovan's discussions with Castro and Vallejo, I have thoroughly discussed the events of the visit with John Nolan, who is a careful observer and commentator. He was present at most of the discussions, and is convinced that Donovan's discussions which led to the agreement for the release of the Americans were well thought out and handled very skilfully. Donovan time and again made sure that Castro understood his status as a private citizen and, in discussing relationships between Cuba and the United States, tried to draw Castro out to the maximum extent. Also, Nolan confirms Donovan's observation that Castro is a most intelligent, shrewd and relatively stable political leader with a great amount of drive and dedicated to making Cuba a leading Latin American force. In his discussions with Donovan, Castro apparently wanted to determine how relationships could be established with the United States. There is also no question that Donovan knew this and fostered these discussions in order to obtain the American prisoners' release and because he believed that such discussions were serving the national interest. Donovan is very aware of his responsibility to his Government and the fact that, in terms of political relationships with Cuba, he is not representing the United States Government. In my judgment Donovan has an acute awareness of the

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CIA REVIEW
By *AT* NARA, Date *6/16*

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limitations of his authority. His relationship with Castro and Vallejo is firm, he is trusted and respected, even though he has made it abundantly clear that he is not sympathetic, nor does he agree with Castro's affairs with the Soviet Union and Communist China, nor with many of Castro's methods in maintaining power within Cuba.

3. Dr. Vallejo, a physician, graduate of Harvard Medical School, is described by Donovan and Nolan as a close personal adviser to Castro. While he does not have a direct official connection with the Cuban government, he is an aide de camp and is concerned with many of the administrative details surrounding Castro's movements. Donovan and Nolan consider him oriented toward the United States. Vallejo translated when necessary.

4. In determining how to attain his objective, the release of the American prisoners, Donovan decided to talk about the prisoners as almost an incidental matter. After talking to Dr. Vallejo on Saturday about the release of the skin divers, the status of the Red Cross shipments, and the assurance of the American Red Cross that the food and drugs under the agreement would be delivered, no mention of the remaining American prisoners was made until the next day, early Sunday morning, when Donovan had his first meeting with Castro.

5. Castro arrived with Vallejo at Donovan's quarters at about 1 a.m., Sunday the seventh. Castro immediately launched into a discussion of the Cuban flyers' mistake in firing on the Florida, which led into the discussion of the difficulties between the United States and Cuba. Donovan talked about recent articles in LIFE and LOOK magazines, commenting that they did not appear to be unfavorable to Cuba. Donovan then showed and read to Castro galley proofs of an article in THE NATION. The article is about Donovan's negotiations in Cuba and points out that Donovan does not consider things all bad in Cuba and decries elements among the Cuban exiles urging a return to the good old days. In the article, Donovan is quoted as saying that this is unrealistic and a look at Cuba today must take into consideration the existence of the Castro government. Castro seemed impressed with THE NATION article and said that the article showed great "wisdom." Castro wondered about the emerging policy in the United States toward Cuba. Donovan said that he had no information on U. S. policy toward Cuba, emphasizing his private status,

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but he said in his judgment public sentiment toward Castro may be changing, pointing out as indications of the United States feeling toward Cuba the limitations being put on the exile groups, the Costa Rican statements and the public feeling that the United States should not become involved in a shooting war over Cuba. After his return, Donovan said that he planned to overstate this public sentiment in order to set the stage for asking for the release of the Americans.

6. In this vein, Donovan suggested that American prisoners in Cuba probably were a stumbling block to any possibility of future political relations between the United States and Cuba. Castro agreed that the American prisoners in Cuba constituted a minor irritant and talked in terms of Donovan's and Castro's discussions entering a new phase concerning political relationships between the two countries. Castro then said that Vallejo had told him of the Red Cross documents brought to Havana by Donovan and said, based on these, that he was now assured that the deliveries under the Cuban prisoner agreement would be completed. He further said that while the American prisoners constituted a bargaining point in his favor, he was willing to bank on Donovan's prophecies of better relations between the two countries and the good faith of the Red Cross, so he decided to release the skin divers on 9 April and the remaining twenty-two American prisoners to Donovan on 22 April. Donovan pressed him for release of all the Americans, not only the skin divers, but Castro said he was unwilling to do this because of his own public relations. Castro said that while the release of nine skin divers would be relatively easy to explain, without more Red Cross shipments he felt that there would be too much criticism directed toward him. With the schedule of Red Cross shipments indicating at least one more ship docking in Havana before the 22d, he felt that under those circumstances the remaining Americans could be released on the 22d. That ended the negotiations on the prisoners.

7. Castro then continued political discussions with Donovan explaining that his relations with the Soviet Union had to be fluid and adapted to Cuba's needs. He said that Cuba did not have an ideal government but he had that hope. His ideal government, he emphasized, was not to be Soviet oriented. Castro said that he could not tolerate any thought of war because obviously war was the end of Cuba. Later, Vallejo told Donovan that Castro wanted it explained to Donovan that there was absolutely no chance that Cuba

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would become a Soviet satellite. In this connection, Vallejo said, apparently quoting Castro, that the building of Cuba economically was the only way to influence other Latin American countries and that Cuba was not exporting subversion to other Latin American countries.

8. Castro wanted Donovan's views on how political relationships could be developed between Cuba and the United States. Donovan was vague on this but said that at a minimum he thought there must be adequate assurances that the revolutionary government would be dedicated to the betterment of the Cuban people and that Cuba would respect governments in other Latin American countries, that is, would foment no internal conflicts in other Latin American countries.

9. Castro wanted Donovan's opinion on how political relationships between the two countries could be inaugurated. Donovan was noncommittal but made it clear that this could not happen quickly, if at all. He said that this would have to be done very carefully and eventually on a diplomatic level between the countries. In this connection, later Donovan emphasized again to Castro that he was only a private citizen and with the release of the American prisoners he felt that he could not continue political discussions with Castro as a private citizen. He mentioned legal barriers to this. Apparently there was discussed the possibility that Donovan could have some status with the Department of State, which would enable him to continue these discussions in Havana.

10. In discussing the policy of the United States Government toward Cuba, Castro mentioned that if the people of the United States felt that Cuba could not continue to be a thorn in the United States' side and a peaceful means of settling differences were established, the Kennedy administration, being close and sensitive to the American people, would formulate Government policy toward Cuba which would include better political relations.

11. The first discussion with Castro lasted until about 6:30 a.m. Sunday, and as he left, Castro invited Donovan, his son, and Nolan to Varadero later in the day. After some mixup in communications, Donovan, his son, and Nolan arrived at Varadero at 12:30 a.m. Monday. They were greeted by Castro and, after a short discussion, everybody retired and were awakened at 5:30 a.m.

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From then until 12:30 a. m. the next morning, Castro, Vallejo, Donovan, Donovan's son, and Nolan went fishing, skin diving, and touring during a very complete day. They drove from Varadero across the island, through Matanzas Province, to the Bay of Pigs. They fished in the Bay of Pigs, and Castro gave an on-site explanation of the Bay of Pigs invasion.

12. During discussions Castro suggested that he was impressed with Red China, and Donovan asked whether he had discussed this recently with the Indian Ambassador, the significance of which Castro understood.

13. Castro said that there were about 15,000 to 20,000 people who had waivers to leave Cuba for the United States and that he had no objection to their leaving. He recognized the difficulties facing the United States with the arrival of large numbers of Cubans, particularly in Miami. He mentioned that in his opinion the United States ought not put these people on the dole, but rather break up the Cuban colony in Miami so they could find work in other areas. Donovan mentioned that on some of the flights there appeared to be an overly large number of mental and physical disability cases. Castro had no knowledge of this but did say that many of these people that were sent were ill but that these people did go to the United States at the request of relatives, who felt that they could get better treatment in the United States.

14. Donovan raised the question of allowing other Cubans to leave, saying that he had received a great many requests from people describing the plight of their relatives. Donovan said that while he understood that not everybody should be given permission to leave, he felt that some of these cases may have some merit. Castro said that he was agreeable to allowing people out if Donovan could furnish a list with reasons for their wanting to leave.

15. Donovan and Nolan observed that during their trip through Matanzas Province, Castro appeared to have more bodyguards than usual. As they traveled, the convoy consisted of Castro's personal car, a late 1950's model Oldsmobile, always driven between two cars full of uniformed and armed bodyguards. At one point in discussing Fidel's whereabouts, Vallejo mentioned that he keeps in constant touch with Fidel by mobile microwave telephone.

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16. In debriefing Donovan, I attempted to get any ideas on Soviet troops and equipment and the use by Cubans of Soviet missiles. Donovan had no knowledge on these subjects. In his discussions with Castro, Donovan's plan was not to get too involved in military intelligence, feeling that this would not be consistent with his mission of seeking the release of the Americans, and the extremely friendly tone of the discussions between Donovan and Castro. On Donovan's next trip to Havana, probably on the 19th of April, Donovan could attempt to obtain such information.

17. A steady conversation between Donovan and Castro took place over several hours in Castro's car during the return trip from the Bay of Pigs to Havana. Nolan and Vallejo listened. Nolan confirms that Donovan gave long explanations of American history and constitutional philosophy, including an explanation of the role of the military in the United States and the reasons for the military establishment having a civilian head. Castro made a great deal of the inability of the formal military mind to cope with present day crises, giving as an example the use of guerrilla warfare in his movement. He said that the CIA made the mistake of being too concerned with technique and not understanding the value of political beliefs. Castro said that he had acquired CIA manuals which he thinks are excellent for their techniques. All Castro's thoughts eventually came around to the great task of making Cuba a viable economy, improving the lot of his people, and a country which would be respected in Latin America.

18. In his talks Donovan believes that the most important point was made to him by Vallejo when the rest of the party had gone fishing. According to Donovan, Vallejo wished this for Donovan alone and cautioned him not to even suggest to Fidel that this conversation had taken place. In effect, Vallejo said that Fidel understood the necessity of relations with the United States--in context diplomatic as well as economic--and wanted to officially establish such relationships. Vallejo then said that the establishment of relations between the United States and Cuba could be worked out by Donovan and Castro, even though certain Communist officials in the Cuban government were unalterably opposed. Donovan gave this to me in private and asked that I give it only to you. He specifically asked that it not be given to the State Department. Nolan knows nothing of this conversation with me and was not present when the conversation took place between Vallejo and Donovan.

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19. In evaluating Donovan's discussions with Castro, I believe we must keep in mind the fact that Donovan has achieved the results asked of him--the release of the Cuban prisoners and at least an agreement on the release of the twenty-two Americans--and, as Nolan observes, Donovan may embellish but he never overstates the facts.

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M. C. MISKOVSKY
Assistant General Counsel

Attachments:

Galley Proof of NATION Article
Transcript of Miskovsky's
Debriefing of Donovan

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Orig & 1 - Addressee

✓ Subject - Cuban File

MCM Signer