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November 25, 1963

MEMORANDUM FOR MR. BUNDY

SUBJECT: Cuba -- Item of Presidential Interest

1. I assume you will want to brief the President on Bill Attwood's Cuban exercise which is presumably still in train (see attached).
2. My own thinking on this one, vis a vis the events of November 22, is still very fluid; but here it is. Basically, the events of November 22 would appear to make accomodation with Castro an even more doubtful issue than it was. While I think that President Kennedy could have accomodated with Castro and gotten away with it with a minimum of domestic heat, I'm not sure about President Johnson. For one thing, a new President who has no background of being successfully nasty to Castro and the Communists (e. g. President Kennedy in October, 1962) would probably run a greater risk of being accused, by the American people, of "going soft". In addition, the fact that Lee Oswald has been heralded as a pro-Castro type may make rapprochement with Cuba more difficult -- although it is hard to say how much more difficult.
3. If one concludes that the prospects for accomodation with Castro are much dimmer than they were before November 22, then Bill Attwood's present effort loses much of its meaning. We would appear to have three alternative courses of action in handling the present status of the Attwood-Lechuga tie-line.
 - (a) We can tell Attwood that if Lechuga calls, Attwood should tell Lechuga that in view of recent events, he is not now prepared to talk about an agenda with Lechuga.
 - (b) We can tell Attwood that if Lechuga does not call over the next couple weeks (the Cubans may feel that November 22 has stopped all bets), he should take the initiative and get a message across to the Cubans, that despite recent events, we are still prepared to hear what is on Castro's mind.
 - (c) We can tell Attwood that if Lechuga calls about setting up an appointment between Attwood and Lechuga, that Attwood should schedule such a meeting for a few days later and call us immediately. However, if Lechuga does not call him, Attwood should take no initiative until and if he hears from us.

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State, CIA and NCF Review

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4. I choose 3(c) above. While November 22 events probably make accomodation an even tougher issue for President Johnson than it was for President Kennedy, a preliminary Attwood-Lechuga talk still seems worthwhile from our point of view -- if the Cubans initiate it. We have little or nothing to lose and there will be some benefits; at a minimum, we should get a valuable reading as to what Castro regards as negotiable (e.g. the Soviet tie-line?) and a hint as to how he views the effect of November 22 on Cuban/U.S. relations. At the same time, if the Cubans, who have the ball, feel that all bets are off, we should take no initiative until we have thought the problem through carefully.

If we decide that course 3(c) is the right one, the sooner we call Attwood, the better. In view of his and Stevenson's activist tendencies in this matter, it seems conceivable to me that, not hearing from Lechuga in the near future, they will approach him and assure him that we feel the same way and that we are still prepared to hear what Castro has on his mind.

GC
Gordon Chase

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