

Resource Sheet #8

Memorandum Prepared in the Central Intelligence Agency, Washington, January 19, 1961 (Planning an invasion of Cuba)

. . . At this point, Mr. Merchant noted that two distinctions should be made regarding possible Latin American support for action against Castro. First a distinction should be drawn between the attitudes of governments and the attitudes of peoples within Latin American countries. A second distinction should be made with regard to the difference between what governments would be willing to support publicly and what they would be willing to support only privately.

With reference to the distinction between governmental and public attitudes, the Secretary asked Mr. Mann whether we might be in some rather tight situations in a number of countries of the hemisphere if Moscow pushed the button, i.e., with respect to pro-Castro movements in a number of countries. Mr. Mann said this would definitely be the case and mentioned Venezuela and Colombia as examples. . .

The Secretary next asked at what point did we begin to consider that Castro had gone beyond the watershed in Cuba, adding that it seemed clear there was little hope now. Mr. Mann indicated it was difficult to name a specific point. There were a number of things that Castro had done that led to the conclusion that he had crossed the watershed [crossed the line]. One early action on his part was his initiative in seeking ties with the Sino-Soviet bloc [Chinese-Soviet bloc], which he had undertaken before we had acted on sugar quotas. Mr. Mann then listed other actions on Castro's part such as expropriation [nationalization] of land, setting up militia, etc. He summarized by saying that history may indicate that Cuba had been one of the most rapidly communized states—faster even than those in Eastern Europe. He pointed out that Castro has complete control, something totally different from the situation in the traditional dictatorship in Latin America.

The Secretary then called on General Lemnitzer to review the military situation in Cuba. After having emphasized the extreme sensitivity of some of the information he was about to give, General Lemnitzer estimated that the Revolutionary Army had 32,000 , the Revolutionary Nation Police 9,000, the Militia over 200,000. He said that Cuba was an armed camp. They had received more than 30,000 tons of arms and equipment over the past five or six months. This buildup had made a decided change in the U.S. contingency plans to deal with it. He said there was no evidence of jet aircraft, missiles, or nuclear weapons; on the other hand, about 100 Cuban pilots were being trained in jet aircraft in Czechoslovakia. Their return to Cuba would add a new dimension to the problem.

With respect to Guantanamo, the General identified the critical problem for us as being the water supply. In response to a question from the Secretary he said there was no evidence of a buildup of Cuban forces around Guantanamo. He also indicated that very precise rules of engagement had been worked out for our aircraft in the area of Cuba.

These included hot pursuit into Cuban airspace. The Secretary then asked whether the Cubans had any air-strike capability against Miami. The General replied they didn't have much now but when the pilots now training in Czechoslovakia return and if jet aircraft became available for them this would change the picture.

The Secretary asked what was the estimated strength of resistance in Cuba at the present time and Mr. Dulles said that he thought we could count on about 1,000, who were somewhat scattered. The Secretary then asked whether we have a capability to establish a going resistance movement without use of U.S. forces. Mr. Dulles said this would necessarily depend on how many came over to the dissident side. He said that our present Cuban force in training would reach 700 to 800. He then went on to mention the difficult problem of keeping them in Guatemala. At the best, we had six weeks to two months left before something would have to be done about them. . .

He said that at the moment what he needed was policy guidance on the following matter (1) continuance of training, (2) introduction of small teams into Cuba with sabotage and communications capability, and (3) drops of food and supplies to dissidents now in Cuba. Mr. Barnes added that guidance was also needed on infiltrating political leaders into Cuba.

Secretary McNamara asked what size Cuban forces was considered necessary to buildup enough strength to overthrow Castro. Mr. Dulles said he thought that our presently planned Cuban force could probably hold a beachhead long enough for us to recognize a provisional government and aid that government openly. Secretary McNamara then asked whether the estimate was that time was strengthening or weakening us. Mr. Dulles replied that it was now weakening us. This could change if people in Cuba got hungry, but this might be a long time off. Food was still being sent to Cuba from the United States. General Lemnitzer interjected to say that Castro's popularity might be going down but his grip was getting tighter daily.

Mr. Bowles asked whether we knew of any cliques in the Castro hierarchy. Mr. Dulles said we didn't think there were any; that it now seemed to be down to the hard core. Mr. Bowles recalled the division between Trotsky and Stalin [former Soviet leaders]. Mr. Dulles replied that they didn't see any such division in the Cuban picture. He said he believed the Castro regime had plans to export Castro's communism; that they already have power among the people in the Caribbean countries and elsewhere, particularly in Venezuela and Colombia.

The Secretary then commented on the enormous implications of putting U.S. forces ashore in Cuba and said we should consider everything short of this, including rough stuff, before doing so. He said he felt we might be confronted by serious uprisings all over Latin America if U.S. forces were to go in, not to mention the temptation that the commitment of such forces in Cuba would provide elsewhere in the world. In this connection he again mentioned the possibility of a physical base on the Isle of Pines for a provisional government which we could recognize. This he thought would be powerful step forward. What we needed was a "fig leaf." A Cuban provisional government on

the Isle of Pines, for example, could sin Soviet ships carrying supplies to Castro with less danger than would be the case with direct involvement of U.S. forces.

The Secretary then asked Mr. Dulles if he could say offhand how much money the Cuban operation had cost to date. Mr. Dulles said that it had cost about \$6 million last year and \$28 million was earmarked for the first six months of 1961. The Secretary asked him whether he could use a quarter of a billion dollars. . .The Secretary also mentioned that we should inquire into the possible usefulness of a pacific blockade with a carefully and publicly define demission. In elaboration the mentioned the possibility of “making some international law.” Should we, for example, announce that the introduction of jet aircraft into this hemisphere by the Bloc would be regarded as a violation of the Monroe Doctrine. It would then be the Bloc’s responsibility if they chose to “escalate” in the face of such an announcement.

Source:

U.S. Department of State, *FOREIGN RELATIONS OF THE UNITED STATES, 1961-1963*, Volume X, Cuba, 1961-1962