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DRAFT SECRET

7 July 1959

MEMORANDUM OF CONVERSATION

SUBJECT:

PARTICIPANTS: Mitchell L. Wer Bell and

1. I met Subject at the National Airport when he arrived from Atlanta at about 2115 and took him to the Statler Hotel. He told me that in late January or early February he had begun acting as broker for some exchange transactions involving Cuban pesos in the ~~participation~~ possession of former Batista followers in the Miami area. During the course of these transactions he became acquainted with a number of Cubans, most of them former followers of Batista who are engaged in plotting against the CASTRO Government in Cuba.

2. Together with Manuel Firestone, aka Manuel Fuego, (a US citizen of Cuban origin who served in the KCAF during World War II and one of the US armed forces during the Korean War) Wer Bell went to the Dominican Republic about 6 weeks ago. The purpose of the trip was to see Batista and sell him on a public relations campaign which might help him reestablish his reputation in the United States. Wer Bell did not see Batista personally, but ~~at~~ Firestone did. Wer Bell met with a number of Cuban exiles on various occasions and became convinced that it was not possible to deal with Batista since the latter insisted on postponing everything "until he comes to the States". Firestone arranged to bring Wer Bell into contact with Gen Jose Pedraza and separately Eduardo Rodriguez, Manuel De Mora's nephew, and through him <sup>Manuel De Moya</sup> Manuel De Moya. He discussed only a public relations campaign on behalf of the Dominican Republic with De Moya.

3. Pedraza, on the basis of Wer Bell's OSS background, asked him for assistance in setting up a ~~guerrilla~~ guerrilla operation against CASTRO.

(Comment: Wer Bell's OSS records show no combat experience although last

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night he implied to me that he had had combat experience. My personal assessment of Wer Bell follows at the end of this memorandum.) Wer Bell said he asked Pedraza if he was in touch with CIA. Pedraza said he was not in contact but that the others, meaning the Dominicans, were. Wer Bell said the Cubans are training a minimum of 2,000 troops in the Dominican Republic. There are also about a 1,000 Spaniards sent by FRANCO. Wer Bell said he recommended to Pedraza a typical <sup>unilateral</sup> ~~arrangement~~ operation to organize a <sup>coordinated</sup> ~~petrol~~ guerrilla area, with supply drops, and the organization of extensive communication facilities.

4. Batista has refused to cooperate with Pedraza and he is refusing to provide any funds for the operation. He says that he expects to be in the United States within two weeks and will then negotiate provisions of support. Rolando Mansferreg is collecting funds in the US for the revolt. In addition to this, the Dominicans are buying arms wherever they can get their hands on them. The plan is to make Munez Portuondo Provisional President as soon as CASTRO is overthrown.

5. Wer Bell said that an <sup>American</sup> ~~xxxxxx~~ businessman named Jones <sup>fnu</sup>, who ~~xxxxxx~~ does business in Europe and <sup>was</sup> ~~xxxx~~ in Miami buying real estate, had mentioned to him the possibility of obtaining the services of 1,000 experienced German combat troops who are organized, officered, and equipped, at the rate of \$100 a day per man. An individual named <sup>Loosfnu,</sup> ~~Loos~~, believed to be a Swiss staying at the Waldorf Astoria Hotel, is the contact for getting the services of these Germans. <sup>Loos</sup> ~~Loos~~ is merely an intermediary and Frei (fnu), whose nationality is unknown, but believed to be a German, is the principal of this group. (Comment: When <sup>I</sup> ~~KK~~ questioned Wer Bell about this he was very reluctant to go into details, and as the story developed it appeared to me that he was taking for granted a typical night club story resulting from loose talk by himself and the individual called Jones.)

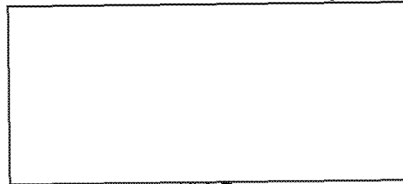
6. Wer Bell said he had been virtually offered command of the Cuban counter revolutionary force. He said that he will engage in this only if CIA backs him up. He wants to organize a para-military force and needs 15 to 20 FM experts including communicators to train the force. He also wants some specialized equipment such as fire bombs, radios, and even mentioned 24-F84 aircraft. (Comment: I believe the Dominicans have been trying to buy such aircraft for some time ~~for~~ from the Canadian Government. The Canadians, however, have refused at the United States' request to grant export licenses for the planes.)

7. Wer Bell wants to see Gen. Cabell or Allen Dulles on this matter. He says he is willing to act as our agent and believes he can gain the complete confidence of Pedraza and De Moya. He said that it is rumored in Miami that the United States has offered <sup>a</sup> 76 hours ~~of~~ hands off <sup>Be...</sup> in the event of an attempt against CASTRO and will close its eyes to a number of gun shipments.

8. Wer Bell admitted to me that he had had some business difficulties in the recent past and was now working his way out of them. We have his record through 1945 and he appears to be a responsible citizen as of that time. The impression that I got of him last night is that he is now a typical promoter type of the <sup>best</sup> ~~last~~ successful variety found in Latin America, prone to exaggerated ideas and somewhat naive, as evidenced by his story of the 1,000 Germans. I carefully avoided the question of what he stands to gain by all of this, but as the story developed it becomes rather obvious that he is seeking to act as a broker <sup>for</sup> of CIA support <sup>to</sup> for Pedraza and probably anticipates collecting his brokerage fees in terms of public relations contracts ~~and~~ from the Dominicans and the new Cuban Government. It is also obvious that Subject has good access to intelligence which may be of considerable value, particularly if it becomes necessary to initiate political action operations against the CASTRO Government. 1.2?

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9. I recommend that we consider utilizing him as an FI Agent with a very clear understanding that we are <sup>dubious</sup> of his motives at this time; that we will not support Pedraza and his group; nor will the United States fail to observe its international obligations on behalf of Pedraza, and with a clear understanding of the limits of our relationships with Subject. I believe this man will require firm handling ~~xxxxx~~ if we propose to use him, or we may have considerable trouble with him. We have had information already on the Pedraza affair, much of which confirms the information supplied by Subject, so that we are not without other assets on this matter.



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