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Manuel Ray

21 November 1960

CONTACT REPORT

SUBJECT: Meeting with Manuel RAY, 15 November 1960, at a Motel in Homestead, Florida

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1. The meeting was held in the above-named place because, at that particular time, Manuel Ray was still "under wraps" and we did not want to take any chances of having him spotted in Miami. Manuel Ray and his wife had been driven from Tampa by "Ray Adams" (Ray Dubois) to the above-named motel; I had previously called Ray on the telephone from New York at his Tampa residence and told him that I would meet him on 15 November. The meeting began at 2100 hours and lasted until about 0130 the next day.

2. The highlights of this meeting were reported in MASH-169A, 17 November, copy of which is attached. The following paragraphs are in elaboration of this message.

3. During this first meeting, my intent was to establish rapport, probe into Ray's political thinking, and, by reiterating previously made statements on the Bender group's willingness to support the MRP, to establish the Bender group as a private contacto definitivo for anti-Castro activities. In line with this, I kept the meeting purposely as an "exchange of views" session, avoiding any controversy, but at the same time, indicating some surprise and some bewilderment over some of Ray's statements.

4. Throughout the conversation, Ray clearly stressed his great belief in civil liberties, individual freedom, and his position as a Cuban, and also hemispheric, nationalist. On a number of occasions, he stressed the point that most likely some of the solutions he proposed for the post-Castro period, might be viewed by me with some misgivings. Don't you believe, he asked, that what is important to the economy of the U. S. is not necessarily important to the economy of Cuba? Don't you think that the American brand of democracy, which works admirably in your country, is not necessarily applicable in its totality in Cuba?

5. Ray reiterated, on a number of occasions, that he wanted to go back to 1 January 1959. He was quite firm -- as reported in the above-mentioned cable -- on the need of the nationalizing of public utilities; when asked about the agrarian reform and, in this connection, what would happen to Castro-seized American ranches, he said that land distribution and ownership by individual firms of land so parcelled out, would be a goal of his government; the criteria on whether or not American-owned ranches would be returned to their owners, were currently being worked

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out by Felipe Pazos. (COMMENT: I gained the impression that these ranches might not be returned.)

6. I really showed some surprise when Ray said that he would not make the 1940 Constitution the basis for his future government. This issue came up in the following manner: I asked Ray whether or not he could work -- either by joining or by affiliating -- with the FRD, and when his answer was in the negative, I posed the question of what were the areas of agreement and of disagreement between him and the FRD. Ray said that he had not as yet talked to Tony Varona but that he would feel that there could be agreement on a number of points: first, to get rid of Castro; second, that there should be civil liberties and individual freedom. He said that perhaps the area of disagreement was considerably greater: he could not accept the 1940 Constitution as the basis for Cuba's political life in the future. Obviously, some provisions of the Constitution would be retained but especially provisions for electoral procedures would have to be changed radically: the current provisions are fostering corruption and feather-bedding, and are not responsive to the will of the people. Questions of nationalization and other economic matters would have to be dealt with more thoroughly in the Constitution. Another point of disagreement with the FRD is the fact that it was linked too much with the past. The FRD, Ray said, is really Tony Varona. Of the five, he is the only one of any true importance amongst the current Executive Committee members; Carrillo has always been very close to the MRP political posture, and Artime is a young fire-brand without too much brains; the rest of the FRD Executive Committee members are nice people individually, but Varona is the man to reckon with. Now, there is nothing wrong with Varona personally; he is a sincere, patriotic Cuban who has and deserves respect. However, Varona is inseparably linked with the corruptness of the Frio regime although he, Varona, is undoubtedly a completely honest man. In addition, Varona, whether he wants to or not, is a symbol of the past and outdated political and economic philosophy of the Frio regime. It is impossible for the MRP to have any dealings with or any links to that past.

7. I asked Ray what his position to the Soviet/ChiCom block would be after Castro's demise. One of our basic concepts, Ray said, is to trade wherever it will be beneficial for us; beneficial does not mean to tie our economy to that of the Soviet block. We are quite aware that our future is linked to our great North American neighbor. However, such link can not mean domination or should imply any exclusiveness. We must build up our hard currency position so that we can trade wherever we want to. You Americans underestimate the strong feeling of nationalism throughout Latin America: Don't use the Marines! Don't invade! This revolution has to be generated from the inside. We need American help but this help must be without strings attached. Ambassador Bonsal and Jim Noel promised us this help, and your, Bender's, dealings with MRP representatives here made us very hopeful, but if we can not get this aid, we will proceed on our own. We are certain that we will win, but if we

have to die in failure -- so be it! It was at this point when Ray complained bitterly about our handling of the Sinesio Walsh affair; Sinesio Walsh was looking for arms. He, Ray, was eager to build up his organization and therefore to draw people like Walsh into his circle. One of the means to do this was, of course, to make Walsh dependent on his, Ray's, ability to furnish military equipment. Walsh made a request for arms to Ray; Ray channeled this request to his American contacts in Havana in the anticipation that he, Ray, would be given the credit by Walsh of having delivered the goods. What happened, however, was that Plinio Prieto, who had been trained in America, made contact with Walsh and assured him that support would be forthcoming from a source other than Ray. This, Ray continued, was indication that the Americans wanted to split away the Walsh group from Ray's influence. I indicated no knowledge about this affair but ~~poopooed~~^h the conclusion drawn from it by Ray.

8. After this political discussion, Ray elucidated on psychological aspects of the MRP work: we are revolutionaries, and thus we must retain, at all times, a lean and hungry look. Each one of us, regardless of the level of our activities, must have a feeling of personal responsibility; from me down to the plain cook, we must have specific tasks assigned to us to do and each of us must recognize that we will be held responsible for the success or failure of the specific mission assigned to us. Thus, for instance, we can not be satisfied just to accept money; we must engage in fund-raising drives here and in Cuba. These drives might not bring in much and hopefully, Bender will make up the difference, but the individual fund-raisers will have a feeling of accomplishment and will not get fat and opulent and lazy.

9. Above concluded the over-all discussion and some detailed questions were asked by Ray. Could he have \$25,000 by next week? (I committed \$10,000.) Could he engage in a fund-raising activity in the U. S.? (I temporized.) Could he have press conferences? (I said, why not?) Could he have radio time? (I said, perhaps.) Could he get military aid? (I said yes, provided our criteria for furnishing such aid would be met, and I repeated, at that point, my view that there could be no duplication of effort.) Ray told me that the chief of the MRP in Cuba was a chap by the name of (fnu) [Cisneros]. He told me a who is currently in ⁰⁶ Spain, would play a considerable role in the MRP psych warfare activities.

10. The meeting closed with our understanding that we would meet again within the next two weeks.

WALLACE A. PARLETT

WAP/pfg (19 Nov 60)

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