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21 November 1960

CONTACT REPORT

SUBJECT: Meeting with Manuel Ray and Paul G. Bhas in the latter's apartment (30 West 40th Street, New York City) on 22 November, 1960.

PART THREE OF THREE

1. This portion of my report on above meeting deals with miscellaneous information which came up during the meeting and which, perhaps, are significant as to the MRP's political posture.

2. Throughout the entire conversation it became quite clear that Manuel Ray and his advisers must have discussed amongst themselves the various probing questions which Bender had raised with individual MRPs on various occasions; as a result of these talks amongst themselves it appears to us that the MRP is beginning to 'come down' some of its more controversial positions: there was repeated reference to the MRP's desire and conviction to remain on the best of terms with the U.S. and to be fully committed to the free West; most emphatically, Ray rejected any implication that he and/or his group might have "neutralist" aspirations--he does not see himself in the role of a Latin American Nasser. Again and again, Manuel Ray emphasized the need to fight the Soviet Union's influence in Cuba to the utmost. When asked in this connection whether he would retain the Soviet/Cuban embassies in Cuba, he first tried to talk around the subject, saying that these relationships would have to be considered in the light of existing circumstances at any given time; he closed this topic by saying that these issues of international significance had not been fully considered as yet by himself or his staff and that they would be given full thought in the forthcoming weeks.

3. When asked to define his position vis a vis the Church, Ray pointed with pride to Valdes Pino and Reinel Guzman--the former an important lay Church leader, the latter an important figure in Cuba's Catholic labor element. According to Ray, some high-ranking priests are also closely affiliated with the MRP. In other words, Ray claims that he is working well with the Church and the Church is working well with his Movement. He, Ray, asked whether I had received the final copy of the MRP's program, which he said was quite different from the first draft that had been given to me. (Comment: this program was recently published in Avance and is currently being translated by us. A cursory examination shows that indeed this platform has been toned down a bit.)

4. Ray informed me that the Cuban Executive Committee of Rasco's MRC group has broken with Rasco and is now working closely with the MRP.

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5. Ray inquired whether or not a decision had been made on the training of certain MRP singlets. I said that this was a matter for discussion on the technical level. (Comment: unless this has been done already, I would suggest that WH/L/PN transmit pertinent instructions on this matter to NASH as soon as possible.)

6. Do we have explosives inside Cuba now which could be given to the MRP people at an early date, Ray asked? My answer to this was that I simply did not know. (Comment: I would suggest that WH/L/PN examine this matter and furnish pertinent instructions--whatever they may be--to NASH.)

7. While Ray never deviated during this meeting from his previous agreement to coordinate military plans with us, he continued to probe to find out whether or not we would be willing to simply furnish him the means with which this group could unilaterally mount operations. A case in point: "We need a boat," Ray said. It is realized that such a boat costs money and, later on, certain cover arrangements will have to be devised. Could we buy the boat; could we provide it with the necessary cover; and, after this is done, would we then turn the boat over to the MRP to be used as they see fit? My answer was that this would fall into the category of duplication, which had been explored fully previously during this meeting. (See parts one and two of this Contact Report.)

8. Ray informed me that he had sent word to Tony Varona and that a meeting with him would be arranged soon; we all must participate in establishing a system under which democratic institutions can be established and can be preserved, Ray remarked.

9. Ray told me that he and Chibas had an appointment with a Mr. Sam Kalpern(?) of Time magazine in the afternoon of 22 November.

10. Could I expedite a visa for [redacted] a Cuban currently working in Madrid for Guastella, a Cuban firm? [redacted] is to be utilized by the MRP in psychological warfare work. (I said that I would look into this matter.)

11. About three times during the meeting, Ray made a request for special maps which, he said, were prepared by the Aerial Service Company in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. This company was not selling these maps publicly. Could I use my influence with the Pentagon or other places to get these maps? Ray also stated that this problem had been raised previously in Miami with Jim Smith. (Comment: unless there are some strong objections, I would feel that these maps could be made available to the MRP through our military channel. It is suggested that WH/L/PN carry the ball on this, be it pro or con.)

12. Ray volunteered the information that Sori Marin has about 100 men under his command in Oriente Province. Ray felt that Sori had big influence in the Sierra Maestra and that his, Sori's, sympathies were with the MRP. However, after the Sinesio Walah Escambray debacle, Sori's enthusiasm had cooled somewhat and perhaps this would not be the time to make any approaches to Sori. (Comment: I seem to recall some previous NASH traffic on Sori; therefore, this item is called to WH/L/PN's attention for whatever use they intend to make of it.)

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13. Approximately five MRP people currently stationed in New York are in touch with Fidelistas in that area, Ray said. The MRP people are obtaining intelligence from these Castro followers and at the same time working on them to induce their defection. Ray did not want to give the names of these people to me and I did not pursue the matter further at this session.

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GD:smh

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