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15 September 1960

MEMORANDUM FOR: The Record

SUBJECT : Meeting with Mr. Fayliss Manning and Mr. Horacio Hi Godoy

1. Mr. Jacob Esterline and the undersigned met with Mr. Manning and Mr. Godoy from 1500 to 1720 at the Shoreham hotel (Room 305 P) on 14 September 1960. Mr. Manning is a professor at Yale Law School. Mr. Godoy, an Argentinian citizen, is a student at the same school. According to Mr. Manning, Mr. Godoy is devoting his life to the struggle against totalitarianism, including Peronism and Communism. At Yale he has set up the "Inter American Legal Study Group" to interest students in this fight. Mr. Manning became interested (his father was in Latin America for long periods in the 1920's) and with Mr. Godoy took a group of six or seven American law students to the recent meeting in Havana of the International Academy of Law. Mr. Manning has had numerous contacts with the Agency. He knows Mr. Eissell and Mr. Tracy Barnes and has met Mr. Schafer, Colonel J. C. King, and a Mr. Marvin O'Connell (he was not sure of this last name). Both he and Mr. Godoy plan extensive travels in Latin America beginning next year. Mr. Manning is concerned at the number of persons from CIA who have debriefed him and requested that in the future he have one constant contact. He says he has given the same report to five different people. Mr. Esterline told him that we would try to see to it that the same person would see him in the future. Near the end of the meeting Mr. Manning said he wished to make it clear that although he and Mr. Godoy will gladly cooperate with the Agency neither of them has any intention of becoming a CIA agent.

2. Information and comments from Mr. Manning and Mr. Godoy included the following:

a. International Academy of Law Meeting. The meeting was almost "hermetically sealed," sessions were held in a room that would accommodate only thirty, and the leader of the meeting, Supreme Court Justice Ernesto Dillgo (?) gave evidence of being "a beaten, defeated man" who has given up the fight. Mario Lazo was invited but made many excuses and did not attend. The Cuban delegates reply to questions on abuses of press freedom, illegal seizures of property, and Communist influence took the stand that these things just did not exist. The Cuban judges are seeking refuge in technicalities. If certain surface compliance with legal requirements are met they do not look beneath that surface to find the realities. Thus justice is being subverted under a legal framework or facade. They are out of touch with political processes.

b. Agrarian Reform and Property Seizures. On the surface, again, the ordinary processes of law obtain. Havana is surprisingly orderly and disciplined. Ordinary criminal cases go through the courts much as before.

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The missing piece is that where the Government is a party the courts wear blinders. All they ask is pro forma observance. The INRA people know this and take care to follow legal or quasi-legal procedures in their seizures. They file a paper that such and such a property is "under evaluation." Then if a court case is brought the judge rules it out as sub judice since the matter is still in administrative process. Some INRA evaluations have been litigated, however, and in a few cases the Supreme Court Chief Justice Menéndez has raised the INRA set price, knowing that such action is political suicide.

c. Appeal of the Revolution to Students. While none of the first class professional people any longer have any use for Castro he retains considerable student support. This is partly the radicalism natural to youth and partly the appeal that a centralized structure which can act swiftly has in a country where the free democratic system has failed to work. We (the U.S.) have an opportunity to win some of the youth and others if we will act in such a way as will inspire confidence that with our cooperation things will be better for the common man. We need the sort of confidence that President Franklin Roosevelt was able to convey. At Bogota we have regained the initiative—the problem will be to keep it.

d. Comments on Personalities.

1) Fernando de la Riva: Lawyer and owner of sugar fields, refineries, etc. A very wealthy man who started with nothing. Now fighting hard to keep what he can. Not suitable for high political office but perhaps good prospect for support of anti-Castro forces. Able to travel legally and to meet, outside of Cuba, anyone interested in battling Fidel. Forced by Che Guevara to turn over to the Government 51% of his stock in certain of his interests. His son at Yale and contact can be arranged via Mr. Manning.

2) Raul Roa: Have the feeling he is not long for his job. Very nervous, twitchy, voluble, excitable—a nervous wreck. His son, "Raulito", may be useful if father is kicked out. The son is sharp, able, ambitious, totally untrustworthy. Attended Columbia University, is married to Italian girl. Mr. Manning will keep in contact for whatever can be gleaned.

3) Supreme Court Chief Justice Menéndez: With a change of government might be useful. Has shown some guts on the INRA cases.

4) Che Guevara: Che made a mistake when he put his name on new ten-peso notes simply as Che. There is much criticism of this "lack of dignity" in Cuba. Che has an attractive personality and a good mind. Has been in revolutionary activities since he was fifteen. Quite frank in telling people what he intends to do—trouble has been no one believed him.

5) (FNU) Cordoba: Attorney of the Foreign Ministry. Getting fed up with the revolution, is obviously in trouble. May have some future use.

6) Armando Chardiet: Cuban teaching at Yale Law School. Not very bright but has all the gossip about Cuban personalities. Attended Dartmouth.

7) Foris Kowalsky (?): Cuban on exchange professorship at SMU, teaching law. Professes to be violently anti-Castro. Assisted Americans at the conference. Gave the impression of being a secret agent.

8) Luis Conte Aguero: Conte made the mistake of underestimating Castro. He thought the revolution could be stopped at a certain stage, not realizing that while he lives Castro must keep driving straight ahead.

3. June Cobbe. As we were about to leave Mr. Manning said there was one other person we should know about—June Cobbe. Miss Cobbe is an American working for the Cuban Government, at times with INRA and at other times with the office promoting tourism. They met her on the advice of Doctors Fla, woman cultural delegate in UNEFA. She was staying at the Caribe Hilton and was very helpful to them while they were in Havana. They gathered that she served at one time as one of Castro's secretaries, working with or under Celia Sanchez, a Communist. She is 35 or 33, reportedly once had a love affair with a Major in the revolutionary army who either got killed or left her. She also is reportedly a good friend of Luis Conte Aguero. Miss Cobbe returned to the U.S. on the same plane with Mr. Godoy. Perhaps because she felt she could talk more freely to an Argentinian, and perhaps because she felt attracted to Mr. Godoy, she told him that she was very worried because there are Communists among the Americans at the U.S. Embassy in Cuba and these Communists are giving Ambassador Bonser advice which leads him to make mistakes in his dealings with Cuba. She also said something to the effect that she has been warned by CIA (or the FBI?) about her activities in Cuba.

4. Mr. Manning can be reached by mail addressed to him at the Yale Law School, as can Mr. Godoy. Mr. Manning is leaving today for Yale and Mr. Godoy tomorrow. While here Mr. Godoy is at the YMCA.

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