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ARA/CCA - Mr. Stevenson

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ARA - George Lister

Visit of Cuban Exile Victor Espinosa

In accordance with our conversation yesterday I have set forth below a report on the visit of Victor Espinosa.

A Venezuelan Christian Democratic friend of mine, Valmore Acevedo, called me from New York City yesterday morning to ask as a personal favor that I receive a Cuban exile living there who had something "amazing" to tell me. When I expressed mild skepticism, Acevedo urgently repeated his request and I agreed. Within a surprisingly short time the Cuban, Victor Espinosa, arrived at my office (he said he had taken the plane immediately). Espinosa gave his address and telephone number as follows: 415 East 52nd Street, HA 1-7875. A summary of his statements follows.

Espinosa has been involved in Cuban liberation activities for many years. He opposed Batista and opposes Castro. He is not a member of the March 13 Movement, but has long been very close to many of its leaders, including Cubelas. Espinosa was trained by CIA, in both Louisiana and Guatemala, and was one of those who was sent into Cuba prior to the Bay of Pigs. He plans to become an American citizen in August of this year. He admires the United States and American strength and competence in many fields. He asked a New York acquaintance of his for the name of someone in the Department involved in Latin American affairs. He was told Acevedo knew such an official. Espinosa asked Acevedo (without, he claims, revealing his story), and the latter called me.

A little earlier this year Espinosa received a request from one of his reliable Cuban contacts in Europe, asking that he come there quickly. Espinosa went to Miami, obtained false Cuban papers, and went to Paris. There, apparently in the presence of the Cuban Ambassador to France, he met one of the "top security" men of the Castro regime, who had come to Paris for that purpose. During various meetings, both in France and

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in Spain (which Espinosa entered illegally), Espinosa was informed that there is a plan to overthrow the Castro regime and to kill Castro and some of his main leaders. The plot is led by Cubela and some of the March 13 Movement, plus (I believe) some military officers. They must move very quickly because more and more people are learning of the plot and there is growing risk of exposure. They are anxious to have some coordination, or at least consultation, with responsible Americans. They are not confident that they could win an all-out fight against the Castro forces, and are thinking more in terms of taking control for a short time (perhaps only a few hours), killing Castro and his most effective men (thus ruining the Castro movement forever), and then trying to hold out for as long as feasible. It is essential that they know what, if anything, the Americans might do to help, now and/or later, when the coup is attempted. Also, they wished to alert the United States Government to what was being planned.

The Cubans might have turned to Earl Williamson, the CIA man in Madrid. However, they believe Williamson is completely unreliable. A Cuban girl was sent to Madrid some time ago by the Castro people. Williamson was fooled by her and, being very fond of women, set her up in an apartment in Madrid. He also arranged for her to work with the International Rescue Committee. When the proper moment came, four months ago, she flew back to Havana with some very useful files. In these circumstances the Cuban plotters have no confidence whatever in Williamson. They urgently asked Espinosa to be their go-between with reliable American officials. The "top security" man returned to Havana, while one representative of the plotters waited in Spain for an answer.

Espinosa hurriedly returned to New York City. He called O'Brien of the New York FBI to ask that the latter arrange for him to talk with some serious and reliable man from CIA. O'Brien did so. Espinosa then told the foregoing story, and more, to a CIA man named "Hal". Hal impressed Espinosa as being intelligent and reliable. Espinosa understands that Hal or someone else went to Spain to check on his story. At all events, Espinosa was assured CIA understood the urgency of the matter and that he would be called within a few days. A week has passed. However, no call has come and time is rapidly

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running out. Espinosa's friends in Paris keep calling him, cautiously asking whether there has been some "response", but Espinosa has had to keep putting them off. Meanwhile, the Cuban who was waiting in Spain for the answer has had to return. Espinosa keeps waiting to hear whether the Americans will play ball with the Cubelas group. The plot has lasted for over 18 months, and the plotters plan to go ahead very soon no matter whether the Americans "play ball" or not. One reason is that they almost have to go ahead now, for the plot will soon be discovered and then it will be entirely hopeless.

Espinosa also referred to a jeweler by the name of Teppellino (spelling?), located at 47th Street, in New York City. Teppellino works for CIA and has frequent contact with the Cuban Ambassador, in Paris. The Ambassador regularly disposes of jewelry and other valuables made available from Cuba. He does this through Teppellino. However, the latter fools CIA. For example, the Ambassador agrees to sell for \$80,000. Teppellino informs CIA the price is \$110,000, and quietly pockets the difference. On the other hand, Teppellino and CIA think the Cuban Ambassador does not know he is working for CIA, but the Ambassador does know.

Espinosa is determined to bring the very dangerous situation of the Cuban plot to the attention of some top level official in the United States Government unless he receives at least some reply from CIA.

Comment:

Espinosa was not overly tense and did not indulge in histrionics, but I felt he was quite determined to push this matter further if he did not get some response within the very near future. I cannot, and do not have to, judge his reliability on the basis of this one conversation. However, if I had to guess at this point I would be inclined to accept most of what he said about actual events. But of course there are all sorts of obvious possibilities, including provocation.

In accordance with what we agreed on, while Espinosa was

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waiting, I returned and told him at some length that of course this was not the sort of thing we got into. However, I added that I would see to it that someone called him. I further said that, unofficially, I had enjoyed talking with him. Espinosa seemed somewhat mollified and temporarily reassured by this. However, I doubt very much that he will wait longer than two or three days more before making another attempt to bring this situation to a head.

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