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15 November 1962

MEMORANDUM FOR THE RECORD

SUBJECT: Mr. Helms' Conversation with Luis Fernandez Rocha and Jose Maria Lasa of the DRE Regarding their Organization's Relationship with the Agency

TIME AND PLACE: 1500 hours, 13 November 1962, Mr. Helms' Office

PERSONS PRESENT: Mr. Helms, Luis Fernandez Rocha, Jose Maria Lasa, Nestor Sanchez (alias

[Redacted]

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1. Mr. Rocha stated he wanted to mention two things before starting the conversation with Mr. Helms:

a. He was very sorry about the difficulties which may have been caused by the ~~Alburt~~-Miami Herald Newspaper incident.

b. He desired to thank Mr. Helms for his "deference" and expressed his greatest appreciation for being given the opportunity to discuss their problem with Mr. Helms. Mr. Helms replied that he fully understood and accepted the explanation about the newspaper article and he was happy to have the opportunity to discuss the Agency's relationship with Mr. Rocha's group.

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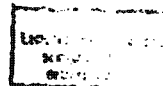
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2. Mr. Helms stated he was familiar with the DRE situation and desired to work out a slightly different way of doing business. He realized there have been ups and downs in the relationship and that the Agency was not lily white in abiding by many of its commitments, but that many of the changes were due to factors beyond the Agency's control. He continued there were no decisions as yet made by the U.S. Government regarding the future handling of the Castro problem. The primary items being considered at the present time both in New York and Washington were the removal of the missiles and bombers from Cuba and on-site inspection. Mr. Helms fully realized that the decisions which may come about at the conclusion of these negotiations will not be decisions acceptable to the DRE. If a time comes when the DRE feels their course of action is no longer compatible with U.S. policy, Mr. Helms wanted to make this point clear, "the DRE should be frank and honest and so state it." He did not want to be devious about our relationship, and he wanted to develop the relationship "as a reasonable collaboration".

3. Mr. Helms informed Rocha he was changing the Agency contact for the DRE in Miami. He also stated the new contact would be able to come to Mr. Helms for any clarification

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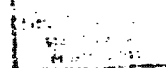
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needed regarding the relationship. As for a future operational program for the DRE, Mr. Helms stated he presently did not know what this would be. Mr. Rocha stated that in all honesty he could not guarantee that under all circumstances the DRE would be able to continue the relationship, for a change in U.S. policy toward coexistence would differ from what the DRE believes is a duty to their country and he as the Secretary General to his men this would mean a break in our relationship as they felt they must continue fighting Castro in any form possible. He did give Mr. Helms his word of honor he would inform his contact or Mr. Helms when the DRE felt they could no longer cooperate with the Agency because of the difference in what they believed in and U.S. policy. Rocha claimed they were anxious to cooperate with the Agency, and it was foolish to think that without Agency support they could continue their present level of activity. He in fact stated that 80 to 90 per cent of their activity would cease if Agency funds were discontinued. This would be suicide, and according to Rocha this he did not want provided a satisfactory arrangement could be reached.

4. Mr. Lasa asked what they could expect regarding their future orientation and plans. Rocha chimed in and stated that this was one of the difficulties under which

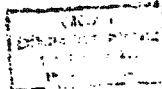
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they had been operating; i.e., not knowing what the plans were or what was expected of them. He added that in order to direct his own organization, he must be aware of the direction in which we were moving before he could make the proper decisions in his organization. Mr. Helms answered "We will tell you the truth and what the score is when we know it ourselves". He also warned them that when this information is divulged, it would be in strictest confidence on a "FYI" basis and not for the press or the rest of the exile community. Mr. Helms added that on this question he would be very honest with them and either tell them: a. I don't know; b. I won't tell you; c. I'll tell you, and give them the information they required for proper orientation. Mr. Helms reiterated that regarding this type of information they must keep "zipped up." According to Mr. Helms the things get around in the Cuban exile community was, needless to say, a matter of some concern to him.

5. Regarding the new contact Mr. Helms stated he wanted to select a man who would and could maintain the collaboration he had outlined, and would be helpful and of assistance to the DRE. He also stated that this contact would be responsible to him for the relationship. Mr. Rocha stated he wanted to be the point of contact in the

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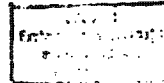
DRE and in his absence either Manuel Salvat or Jose Lasa would be the alternate points of contact.

6. Mr. Helms stated there were two elements he would like to clarify:

a. The system of kickbacks used by the DRE. Rocha was not familiar with the term "kickback" but after a short explanation explained that the DRE did ask their members to give a certain percentage of their salary depending on what they can afford for a general fund from which the organization pays for such items as the Agency does not finance. One of these items is publication of "The Cuban Report", certain work in Latin America (not specified) for which the Agency will not pay, and a very important item--the support of some of their people and families coming out of Cuba. Rocha claimed this was voluntary.

b. Finances--Mr. Helms desired to know if they kept some system of books, including ^{operating} expenses and salaries for their Latin American operations, and if so who kept their books. Rocha answered they did keep books and added they had a full time member of the DRE who was a trained accountant in charge of this department of their organization. Mr. Helms

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suggested that as finances are a technical and difficult matter to keep close tabs on, the Agency could, if Rocha so desired, help by providing a finance technician^{to help} set up a set of books for the DRE. Rocha fully agreed with the merit of this suggestion.

7. Mr. Helms again assured Rocha and Lasa that with regard to the future, he would let them know as soon as he himself knew what it would be. Rocha asked how long Mr. Helms thought this would be. Mr. Helms stated this was somewhat of a hypothetical question but estimated that the present meetings, conversations, and negotiations would possibly take as long as a month. Mr. Helms stated he realized that military operations and possibly some of their propaganda would depend on our future course, but he wanted them to understand that there will always be need for good, specific, detailed information which the DRE can contribute. According to Mr. Helms, "We need it; you can contribute it; we'll use it." Mr. Helms added he realized there were risks involved in collecting information, but he did not want Rocha to misunderstand the value of it. Mr. Helms also cautioned Rocha and Lasa not to get impatient over what may appear to be lack of use of their information, but to give the Agency a chance to check it out.

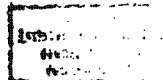
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8. Mr. Helms added there was one other point of utmost importance, and that was, that if in the future the DRE desired or wanted to have a press conference or desired to appear on TV, "Let us know about it". Mr. Helms stated he didn't want to tie their hands, and he intended to deal with them as responsible men, but, "Give us a fair warning". Mr. Helms did not want the DRE to think we desired to tell them what they can or can not do, but he felt it was in their interest to get our reaction on such matters. Mr. Helms added, "You, Mr. Rocha, are a responsible man. I am a responsible man. Let's do business in a mature manner." Mr. Rocha fully agreed.

9. Mr. Rocha then introduced the subject of "The Cuban Report", the DRE weekly newsletter. He said the newsletter was sent to the press, senators, congressmen, the White House, and other people in the U.S. He wanted to know how Mr. Helms felt about this publication. Mr. Helms wanted to know if the Agency received the intell before it was printed in the newsletter. Mr. Rocha answered that all political and military information was passed to the Agency before it was printed in the newsletter. Mr. Helms admitted he had not read the newsletter and that in the meantime the DRE could continue it. Once the matter is studied in more detail, Mr. Helms added we may have some

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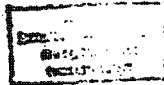


suggestions we may wish to discuss. Rocha frankly admitted that the DRE felt they needed the newsletter for their organization to be able to influence public opinion in the U.S. To satisfy his own curiosity, Mr. Helms asked if Senator Keating's figures were based on "The Cuban Report". Rocha answered in the affirmative.

10. Rocha then asked what the DRE could expect regarding execution of military operations. Mr. Helms informed Rocha that when they had a military plan to submit it. The Agency would study it and give them an answer. Mr. Helms added that if an answer was not forthcoming in a reasonable length of time, they should again ask for the answer from their contact. Mr. Helms assured Rocha of his continuing personal interest in this relationship and he wanted Rocha to deal with his Agency contact in Miami with this in mind, but he warned Rocha that although this is the case, he did not want the DRE running end runs on their contact on matters they can deal with in Miami. Rocha understood.

11. As he (Rocha) feared there may have been certain misunderstandings regarding a request by the man in charge in Miami on either the 23rd or 24th of October, he felt it necessary to set forth his position. The "man in charge"

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met with Rocha on one of the above dates and asked for five men from the DRE including Rocha and Salvat to be infiltrated into Cuba for intelligence purposes. Considering the militia in Cuba was on full alert by this date therefore greatly reducing the chances of success of such an attempt, Rocha tried to get further details regarding the operations, but was only told they would probably be used to direct artillery fire. Unable to get more details on what he considered a dangerous and very risky mission he declined the request. He added he found it difficult to understand the seriousness of such a request. He felt that he and Salvat as leaders of their organization were not available for such missions and that as head of his organization, he did not feel he could send his men to their death on such a vaguely defined mission. Rocha continued that he had informed his men that although the DRE, as an organization, would not take the responsibility for sending them in, they were free to go if they desired to go on their own. Mr. Helms stated that, needless to say, proposals and requests from both parties had to be made in all seriousness.

12. Mr. Helms asked if there was anything else Rocha desired to discuss. Rocha answered negatively and leave was taken.

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