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November 8, 1963

MEMORANDUM FOR AMBASSADOR STEPHANSKY

I have prepared this memorandum in accordance with your suggestion, during our conversation of the other day, that I set down my thoughts on your operation and the way in which various resources available inside the Department, and elsewhere in and outside the Government, can be used.

The main reason I welcome this job is because it presents an opportunity for what I feel is an anti-Communist activist approach and method. That is, we would not simply try to handle the routine paper work and problems arising out of narrowly prescribed areas and functions, and merely react to moves made by the Communists and others. Rather, we would look for possibilities in every field and country for reducing Communist power and influence and for strengthening democratic forces and traditions in Latin America. There are many things which can be done with this overall activist approach. First, there are possibilities and opportunities which do not come within anyone's purview at this time. Secondly, our side is not always alert in taking the offensive in day to day political warfare against the Communists, and we should be able to help there, as well. And thirdly, there is not enough correlation in our efforts in one country and area and another.

Now, as regards methods, I would vote against another large scale, bureaucratic exercise, with big formal meetings, policy papers, staff papers, etc. The Department already has more than enough of that. An activist approach is much more modest, simple and direct, and consists to a large extent in talking quietly, informally, alone and individually, with the people closest to the scene (frequently the desk officers in State, AID, INR, USIA and CIA, as well as officers in the field who are passing through

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through Washington), and listening, discussing, suggesting, advising, helping, etc. This would be a plodding, persistent, pragmatic, hard-nosed, activist approach to specific, concrete, often quite limited, problems and opportunities. Obviously, we would lean over backwards to avoid irritating or offending anyone, and certainly we would avoid trying to usurp any prerogatives. But a great deal can be accomplished quietly over the long run by walking up and down the halls and slowly nursing along one project after another with tender, loving care, until actual implementation in the field has been completed. The results may not be spectacular (in fact, it probably would be better if they were not) but they should accumulate into a quite significant record as time goes on. This is the sort of activity that pays off so well for the Communists. And, as you know, I have specialized in the Communist field.

There are many excellent people in the Department and elsewhere who would welcome an opportunity to be more effective and who know things which need to be done in their areas of specialization, but who are either in no position to do anything about it or do not want to stick out their necks. These things never do, and never will, come up at big formal meetings, for obvious reasons. When I talk with a specialist about his area he can tell me many things which need to be done and which worry him about our performance. Lenin was right when he said "cadres are everything". When we find someone who is really informed about his area, and who is genuinely concerned about improving our performance against the Communists, he will collaborate enthusiastically and we can make good use of him. There are many of this type who have resigned themselves to the thought that the bureaucracy is just too cumbersome to operate effectively. If given a chance they will cooperate. Otherwise they are wasted. And of course, this is true of persons outside the Government as well.

On the other hand, there is also plenty of frustration and impatience at the top, and the New Frontier is none too happy with its attempts to move the Departmental machinery in the direction it desires. This is not because of anti-New Frontier feeling in the Department, but rather because the machinery is

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just too complicated and sluggish, and any stimulus given at the top has to travel through so many layers and levels of bureaucracy that it is never felt. In that case, is it not useful to have someone down inside the machinery greasing the wheels? It seems to me that this is precisely what is needed.

In conclusion, let me emphasize once more that this would be a low key, common sense operation, putting effectiveness against the Communists before everything else. And there is nothing visionary in what I am proposing. It has paid off already. I believe Arthur Schlessinger will tell you how effective these tactics have been in Italian affairs, and Miss Carlisle (x 4481) in INR will be glad to talk to you about our collaboration on Chile.

I believe this fits in entirely with Governor Harriman's conception of your operation, which was first described to me as one of "making revolutions in Latin America", that is, assisting the peaceful, democratic revolutions desired by this Administration.

The foregoing are my own personal views and suggestions, and of course, I will be entirely under your direction in carrying out my part of the operation. I am very much looking forward to working under you.

George Lister

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