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Meeting

Date: 14 January 1961  
1000 - 1200 hours

Place: [01] Residence

Persons Present: ASCHAM, [01]  
and CURTIS (as interpreter)

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[01] stated that he had been looking forward to meeting ASCHAM for many months. He then said he would have known ASCHAM (in any place they might have met) to be related to his brother because of their physical resemblance. He talked of his two hour meeting with ASCHAM's brother in December 1958; he said he found ASCHAM's brother to be exactly the opposite of the way he was depicted in newspapers. ASCHAM's brother had an excellent sense of humor; they had several good jokes during the two hour conversation. [01] said he knew in December 1958 that ASCHAM's brother was a very sick man.

[01] also said he had known ASCHAM's nephew well for a five-year period when [01] handled labor. He said this young man was so modest that he [01] had not realized until after the five years that he was the son of ASCHAM's brother. He found ASCHAM's nephew discreet, intelligent and an honest person whom he [01] enjoyed dealing with.

ASCHAM told [01] that he too had looked forward for many months to this meeting. ASCHAM said he had anticipated having a discussion of mutual problems with [01].

Subjects discussed were:

A. Cuba

ASCHAM said Cuba, which is now definitely Communist, is a problem for all Latin America as well as for the U.S.A. He said we in the U.S. Government are anxious to get the opinions of Latin American Governments concerning possible solutions to the Cuban problem--and we would hope that a majority of Latin American countries would join us in solving this problem.

[01] said Cuba was not just a hemispheric problem but was a world problem.

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ASCHAM expressed doubt about the wisdom of bringing European countries into this Western Hemisphere problem; and with this make it very difficult to deny that Russia, Communist China and Czechoslovakia had rights to help solve this Cuban problem. [ 01 ] then backed off his point and agreed that Europe should not be brought in. He said Mexico from events of the nineteenth century has very good historical reasons for wishing to keep Europe out of Latin American internal (to the Western hemisphere) problems.

[ 01 ] said Mexico had a strict policy based upon a principle which forbade their interference in the internal affairs of any other country. For this reason he hoped the Cubans could get rid of CASTRO and Communism and settle their problems themselves.

ASCHAM said that with CASTRO's dictatorship and the Soviets, Communist Chinese and Czechoslovakians help it would be very hard for the Cuban people to establish a good government.

[ 01 ] said he would like to know the truth about the feelings of the (majority of) Cuban people on the subjects of CASTRO and Communism. He added that he did not feel the Cuban people were people who could endure hardships and be disciplined as could the Chinese. He said Mexicans could live ten years off herbs and still fight for their revolution--but he believes the Cuban people lack fiber of this kind. He said he believed that whether or not CASTRO lasts for three years more will depend upon whether or not Cubans get sufficient food. He believes this constant parading by the Cuban militia and these expressions of fear of an invasion by the U.S.A. are crazy.

ASCHAM told him that these militia had to work during the day and parade at night; as a result the work is certain to suffer, these workers will be too tired to do much.

[ 01 ] said the U. S. A. could look upon the Cuban Communist problem as one of an "international character" since there was absolutely no chance of Castroism having any real internal effect in the U. S. A. and its government. He said Mexico, on the

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other hand, and he [ OI ] had to consider the possibility of internal security problems in Mexico because of Castroism.

[ OI ] said there is a large body of sympathy for CASTRO and his Revolution in Mexico.

[ OI ] said this factor (of Mexican sympathy for CASTRO) had to be weighed by [ OI ] in all actions concerning Cuba. For this reason, he added, no overt action to overthrow CASTRO could be taken by Mexico. He said he personally wanted to get rid of CASTRO and to have Cuba become a democracy; he offered to consider any recommended action by Mexico which ASCHAM wanted. He said that if ASCHAM would send CURTIS any such recommendation he and CURTIS would "analyze" it and he [ OI ] would then determine whether or not he could take the action. He said there are many things we should be able to do "beneath the table".

ASCHAM agreed.

[ OI ] said that he personally was surprised when CASTRO adopted Communism. He said that when CASTRO was in Mexico he did not agree with Communism; [ OI ] said he knew this from several reliable Mexicans who knew CASTRO at this time. ASCHAM said there was no doubt now but that Cuba was in the hands of the Communists.

[ OI ] said he attributed the failure of the Cuban Revolution to achieve its original (worthy) objectives to the youth, inexperience and lack of ability of leaders--including CASTRO.

ASCHAM said that CASTRO is not content to have Communism in Cuba; he is ambitious; he wishes to spread his philosophy to other Latin American countries. ASCHAM spoke of the precarious position of Venezuela and said that Peru, Colombia and some other Latin American countries were having troubles as well.

[ OI ] said that in many Latin American countries the Communists and CASTRO find fertile ground for their subversion because the land in some of these countries (he did not specify any country) is held by a very few individuals while the masses live lives of misery and have no hopes under the present systems.

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He said that in Venezuela the problem is different; there the "fertile soil" for Communist subversion is found in Caracas in the large number of unemployed. [ OI ] said that Mexico because of the success of her revolution and because of the agrarian reform program which has been carried out could resist Communism. He added that there were some thirty (leading) Communists whose names and sayings appear over and over again and who hope to establish Communism there; but he indicated that they would not succeed.

[ OI ] then named some Communist leaders he now has in jail: He named Demetrio VALLEJO, Dionisio ENCINA, Valentin CAMPA, David ALFARO Siqueiros, and others. He said he felt sure that the great majority of Mexicans are in favor of his jailing these Communist leaders.

ASCHAM said President BETANCOURT was a capable man but Venezuela was in a dangerous position. [ OI ] agreed that BETANCOURT was "un hombre muy capaz"--but said BETANCOURT was in great difficulty.

[ OI ] said that Latin America's great need was for long term, low interest loans for social development and housing.

ASCHAM told [ OI ] that private enterprise in the U. S. A. had become frightened or concerned by the loss of near one billion dollars (which they would probably never recover) in Cuba. ASCHAM also said that, speaking frankly, U. S. businessmen had become wary over certain statements and actions even in Mexico.

[ OI ] said his remark of 1960 that the Mexican Government was "of the extreme left within the Constitution" had been misrepresented by the press. He said they had frequently left out "within the Constitution" and had made it appear that he had meant merely "of the extreme left" and, hence, Communistically inclined.

[ OI ] himself brought up the Latin American Peace Congress which is to be held in Mexico City in March 1961. He said the Communists have chosen (for them) a very propitious time to have this Congress in Mexico. He said: The railway workers'

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union in Mexico will be re-negotiating a contract (and he did not add Demetrio VALLEJO Martinez, their Communist leader, is in jail); the professional schools in Mexico will be opening a new term; a new Rector will just have been chosen for the National (Autonomous) University of Mexico (and he did not add that the Communists will either have had a man acceptable to them chosen or will be causing troubles over whomever else is selected).

ASCHAM asked why [ 01 ] could not prevent this Latin American Peace Congress being held in Mexico. [ 01 ] said that he could not prevent its being held because of guarantees of the Mexican Constitution. (He failed to mention not giving visas to foreign Communists). [ 01 ] said he preferred to have the Congress held in Mexico to having it held in certain other Latin American countries. He said "we have better facilities for coverage and control" in Mexico.

[ 01 ] said the Congress would be unpleasant for him personally because he would be vigorously attacked on the subject of political prisoners. He added that, despite the high-sounding and noble cause of peace which this Congress would pretend to advocate, it was a Communist tool. He said the high-sounding "Peace" objectives had caused a number of well-meaning non-Communists to get themselves involved in the World Peace Council.

At ASCHAM's suggestion, [ 01 ] agreed to assist in whatever he possibly could to disrupt and hamper this Peace Congress. ASCHAM said we (KUBARK) would send some ideas and suggestions on actions which might be taken to disrupt this Congress. ASCHAM told [ 01 ] that our new Government in Washington and U. S. Businessmen would find it hard to understand why Mexico could allow these Communists to assemble in Mexico and attack the U. S. A.

[ 01 ] said he understood this; but reiterated that Constitutional guarantees of free speech and freedom of thought made it impossible to prevent this meeting.

[ 01 ] told ASCHAM that he had complete confidence in LIERGO and LIELEGANT and that they too would help in any way they could (along with him) in the fight against Communism.

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[01 I] said that he would give CURTIS all information Mexico had on Communism. He said he wished CURTIS to send ASCHAM all information available in Mexico on subversion. He said that he was very happy with the present arrangements where we have complete exchange of information between himself and ASCHAM's organization.

Both [01 I] and ASCHAM expressed confidence in having CURTIS as the channel between them.

Finally, [01 I] said he wished ASCHAM to know that he was "with us". He said there is a Mexican saying: "Each person has his own method of killing fleas," and said that sometimes his method of "killing fleas" might be different from that which we would use.

ASCHAM said "Just so we both kill them!"

[01 I] then said he had asked the Mexican Ambassador in Washington to tell Secretary Herter, and he would like ASCHAM to do the same, that although at times Mexico took a different road from that taken by the U. S. A. the aim was to arrive at the same place (in this fight against Communism).

[01 I] was well pleased with the model pistol given to him by ASCHAM. He called it "Preciosa" and said he had a "passion for firearms". He said it would occupy the principal spot in his collection.

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Summary

It is believed that the following represent the main achievements of this meeting:

a) [ 01 ] attained his objective of meeting ASCHAM and he hopes he has now "a friend in court" in high U. S. government circles.

b) [ 01 ] promised to consider (analyze with CURTIS) any proposal for Mexico by ASCHAM and to do whatever he could.

c) [ 01 ] explained that his actions against Communism and in conjunction with the USA would be limited to things he could do covertly.

d) From the Mexico City Station point of view ASCHAM'S visit, his conversations with [ 01 ] , LIERGO, [ 01 ] and LIELEGANT added to the stature of the Station more in this two day period than the Station could ever have achieved without ASCHAM'S personal help.

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