

Inside Report . . . By Rowland Evans and Robert Novak

Plotting Against Castro

PK 4/14/76
LEFT-WING Cuban exiles have quietly begun a Hemisphere-wide campaign to encourage veterans of Fidel Castro's 26th of July Movement still wielding power in Communist Cuba to topple Castro and establish a socialist democracy.

To even contemplate so hazardous an undertaking, potential dissidents inside the army and government need reassurance that they, in turn, would not be swept away by a right-wing counterrevolution. Indeed, the 26th of July Movement has remained faithful to Castro partly out of fear that a conservative, Batista-type regime would return.

Accordingly, Cuban exiles from the anti-Castro left are seeking public and private statements of support for a leftist non-Communist Cuba from key governments in the Hemisphere. Officials in Venezuela and Chile, Latin America's two most prestigious governments on the democratic left, have been approached. It is hoped that, in time, the United States also would join.

The potential Cuban rebels would have to privately commit themselves to these steps: Castro's ouster; an end of the Moscow-Havana alliance; a return of civil liberties (including free elections); application for Cuba's re-admission to the Organization of American States.

ON THE other hand, Cuba would remain neutralist and socialist. Properties expropriated from U.S. businessmen by Castro would remain nationalized—probably without compensation to the old owners. Nevertheless, this kind of Cuba would be infinitely preferable to the present Communist police state and would constitute a major defeat for communism in Latin America.

Cuban experts in official Washington tend to be most skeptical about such grandiose plans. While acknowledging the political and economic problems afflicting Castro today, they believe he can weather the storm.

Yet, there are reasons justifying at least some hope. One is that the power of the old 26th of July Movement is greater than at any time



Novak

Evans

since the first years of Castro's power.

Here is the reason. The break between Castro and Peking means Cuba's Chinese-style Communists are totally removed from power. But Castro's closer ties with Moscow have not resulted in new domestic power for Soviet-style Cuban Communists.

Rather, as Castro becomes more dependent on Russian subsidies, he relies more on the 26th of July Movement to counter indigenous pro-Russian Communists in Havana. For instance, Lazaro Pena, the Moscow-oriented labor leader who has survived purge after purge, is now believed to be on his way out this summer.

Thus, it is the hope of the left-wing exiles that if the 26th of July Movement can get outside encouragement from democratic governments throughout the Hemisphere, it can use its increased power to move against Castro within a year or two.

ONE SIGN of anti-Castro turbulence is the apparent

resumption of the "assassination season" in Havana. Although no announcement was made, Castro's own airplane was "accidentally" shot down by a Cuban gun crew on a recent flight from Santiago to Havana. Castro was saved by debarking at the beach resort of Varadero before the final leg to Havana.

There is even belated realization by right-wing Cuban exiles that only a coup d'etat or revolt inside Cuba can oust Castro.

Emilio Nunez Portuando, a key Batista diplomat and now a leading conservative exile, is calling for an army revolt. Perhaps it is no coincidence that Nunez has worked closely in the past with the Central Intelligence Agency and that the CIA has come around to the same position.

The covert CIA operations aimed at armed overthrow of Castro through the exile movement, which continued long after the Bay of Pigs fiasco, are finished. The CIA's operation in Cuba is now restricted to intelligence-gathering.

However remote it may seem, then, the only hope of freeing Cuba resides with the left-wing soldiers and politicians who fought beside Castro in Oriente Province. If that hope can be fanned by encouragement from Washington and other capitals of the Hemisphere, it is an effort worth pursuing.

© 1966, Publishers Newspaper Syndicate