

Inside Report . . . By Rowland Evans and Robert Novak

Castro vs. His Army?

Post 11/2/64

SOMEWHERE tonight in a barracks of Fidel Castro's army, a rebellious officer is furtively reading an anti-Castro flyer addressed to "Fellow members of the revolutionary armed forces:"

About 1000 copies of the flyer have been slipped into Cuba by an exile group known as the "Army of Liberation of Cuba" (the same name used by Castro's rebel army). Hopefully, these exiles soon will begin mass distribution of their propaganda by airplane drop.

More important than the means of distribution, however, is the content of the flyer, summed up by its first paragraph:

"The revolution is facing a crisis . . . The time has come to ask ourselves if the revolution and the fatherland are really being served by maintaining the present regime in power. The answer is a resounding no!"

THIS IS an appeal to the soldiers of the revolution to recognize that Castro has betrayed the revolution. There is nothing counter revolutionary about it. Rather, it pledges no return to prerevolutionary Cuba.

Moreover, this attempt to undermine the loyalty of Castro's army supports the thesis (long held by U.S. officials) that, short of invasion by the U.S. Marines, Castro can be toppled only from within.

No red-tag band of exile troops will defeat the biggest army in Latin America. No guerrilla force can hope to survive in the hemisphere's most repressive police state. Only massive defections within the army itself can drive out the Communists.

Even Manuel Artime, a leader of the Bay of Pigs invasion, is talking about the anti-Castro thrust originating inside Castro's own army. But Castro army officers regard Artime as a right-wing counter revolu-

tionary. They are far more apt to follow the "Army of Liberation of Cuba."

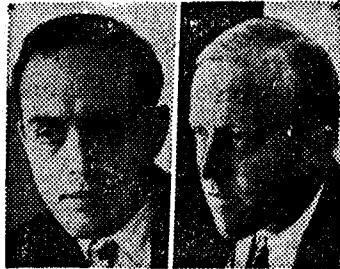
Though the "Army of Liberation" is only a paper army, it contains some old anti-Batista comrades of Castro's. Its Washington coordinator is Ernesto Betancourt, who did the same job for Castro in the anti-Batista days. Its leaders are the lieutenants of Maj. Hubert Matos (who is still imprisoned on the Isle of Pines).

After helping overthrow Batista, Matos and his men were arrested by Castro in October, 1959. His officers, who later escaped from Morro Castle in Havana, are plotting the fight against Castro from Miami, Puerto Rico and New York.

Their propaganda slipped into Cuba promises a left-of-center reformist regime after Castro. It promises clemency to Castroites. It promises to abolish capital punishment. It even pledges a safe trip to Moscow for any Communist who wants to go.

NO COUP D'ETAT is about to be attempted tomorrow morning. But for the first time, U.S. Cuba experts believe there is a chance. The fact that Castro has publicly purged old guard Communist Joaquin Ordoqui is a hard sign of turbulence—induced partly by Uncle Sam's tightening economic vise on Cuba.

As long as Fidel Castro lives, massive defection in his army is unlikely. But a small group of conspiratorial officers might well plot his assassination, triggering the regime's fall (the method employed so well in the Dominican



Novak

Evans

Republic against Trujillo). Cuba experts doubt that Raul Castro, Fidel's heir apparent, could hold the regime together.

Nobody knows whether this will ever happen. But an army coup is the one prospect that gives realists some real hope.

By contrast, activities of most anti-Castro Cuban exiles seem quixotic. One guerrilla group (whose plans to torment Castro were reported last June) never got any closer to Cuba than

the Dominican Republic, where local authorities promptly disarmed them. Right-wing exiles are undergoing military training (presumably without U.S. help) at secret camps in Central America, but chances for an invasion are virtually nil.

Actually, the alternative to an army revolt inside Cuba is neither invasion nor guerrilla war, but eventual peaceful co-existence between Havana and Washington. It is an alternative that on moral grounds alone is unthinkable.

That is why attempts to foster unrest inside Castro's army are so important.

© 1964, Publishers Newspaper Syndicate