

Approved by White House
5/23/61

DEPARTMENT OF STATE

Memorandum of Conversation

DATE: May 17, 1961
10:00 A.M.
Prime Minister's Office -
East Block

SUBJECT: Conversation between President Kennedy
and Prime Minister Diefenbaker - Cuba
and Latin America.

PARTICIPANTS: The President of the United States
John Diefenbaker, Prime Minister of Canada
Livingston T. Merchant, U. S. Ambassador to Canada
Arnold E.P. Heeney, Canadian Ambassador to the U.S.
Robert B. Bryce, Clerk to the Privy Council and
Secretary to the Cabinet
~~CONFIDENTIAL~~
Henry Basil Robinson, Special Assistant to the
Prime Minister
Walt W. Rostow, Deputy Special Assistant to the
President
Ivan B. White, Deputy Assistant Secretary for
European Affairs

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After an exchange of pleasantries, the Prime Minister said that unless the President desired to take up immediate specific problems, he thought it would be valuable if Mr. Kennedy could give him a review of world conditions as he saw them.

The President replied that Cuba and the Western Hemisphere constituted one of the foremost problems. The recent Cuban episode raised the question whether it is possible to conduct covert operations in an open society. The United States had placed limitations on the use of its own planes and this had impeded operations. The dilemma posed had been whether the 1300 well-trained Cubans in Guatemala, who had been there some time, would either have to be broken up as a group or permitted to return to the homeland. The operation had begun well but the air control by Cuban planes had been disastrous and the invasion group had run out of ammunition.

As far as the future of Cuba was concerned, the United States had been trying to persuade as many countries as possible to face up to the true character of the regime and to take collective action, but a number of them were reluctant to do so. Mexico, as an example, is almost neutral and when the Prime Minister inquired as to how Mr. Kennedy explained the situation in Mexico, the President replied that it was due to the influence of President Cardenas and the leftward pull exercised by his faction in the National
/Revolutionary

TOP SECRET - EYES ONLY

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