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Chief, Contact Division

23 Jan 63

Attn : Support Branch  
Chief, New York Field Office

A 5-7743

Press Conference of the Cuban Invasion Leaders at the Overseas Press Club in New York/Off-the-Record Remarks of Manuel Artins Concerning the Cuban Underground

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1. On 18 January 1963, the Overseas Press Club of America (OPC), 54 West 40th Street, New York City, held a reception and press conference in honor of the "Cuban Invasion Brigade". The OPC heralded the event, arranged by its Inter-American Affairs Committee, as the first press conference and public appearance of the ex-prisoners since they were released from Castro's prison.

2. An active member of the OPC, a cleared source of the New York Office, attended the event and reported the following to C/S Balog:

a. Manuel Artins and four other top commanders of the Bay of Pigs invasion attempt answered the questions of the working newsmen and other participants of the reception in a dignified but somewhat cautious manner. They seemed to be anxious to avoid the discussion of any controversial point concerning mistakes made prior and during the invasion. In a diplomatic manner they thanked "the American people for the generous support given to us and to countless Cuban refugees who found a haven here."

b. The speakers were equally careful in their apparent determination not to be drawn into talking about controversy among the various Cuban refugee factions. When a newsmen raised the question of unifying the various anti-Castro groups under the leadership of a "strong man" such as Dr. Manuel Ray, Artins remarked that it would be a great mistake to rally around one man. Without referring to any Cuban refugee leader, Artins added that "the battle for a free Cuba will be fought on Cuban soil and not in Miami." Another newsmen wanted to know if the Cuban exiles expected US Government help for another possible invasion of Cuba. Again, Artins left no doubt about his determination to follow his diplomatic approach. He stated that the Cuban refugees "hope to arouse the anti-Castro, anti-Communist forces in the US and in the entire free world". With the moral help of these forces, he and his comrades are ready to go back to Cuba and fight for the elimination of the Communist beachhead there, even if they have to use razor blades.

Source: [William Foster] (A 73805) #  
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6. Another participant of the press conference wanted to know what happened to the drugs supplied by the US in exchange for the prisoners. Artimo stated that some of the drugs were distributed among the Cuban people, but a large amount went to the USSR. He did not elaborate.

3. After the press conference, the Cuban invasion leaders remained in the main dining room of the OPC and made some off-the-record remarks. Our source and perhaps three or four others, including a newspaperman from Haiti, surrounded Artimo and asked him additional questions concerning the future of Cuba and the present status of the underground. With the microphone turned off so that only the source and a few others could hear the answers, Artimo stated that since Castro becomes very powerful, "having MIG's, many missiles and enjoying the support of 30,000 Soviet soldiers", he can only be defeated by a strong economic blockade and by a large-scale invasion staged by the Free World forces. The journalist from Haiti wanted to know the strength of the underground in Cuba. Artimo stated that as a result of the lost battle in which many peasants joined him and his comrades, the rural underground movement was almost completely infiltrated and crushed by Castro. He added that he had just received information to that effect. He did not elaborate. Finally, Artimo remarked that some of the underground organizations are still able to function in the cities and that "efforts are being made to rebuild the rural underground."

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