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MEMORANDUM FOR THE ACTING SECRETARY

Subject: Cuban Sugar

From: L - Mr. Chayes

A night's reflection on the problem of the Cuban sugar cargo now at San Juan has intensified my concern, rather than abated it. I think the following points should be brought to the attention of the President:

1. The potential gain from the operation is negligible. Even if it results, as Mr. Johnson suggested, in spoilage of \$500,000 of sugar, this is peripheral in terms of the bloc economic capacity.

2. The fact that the sugar has been treated will almost certainly be discovered, at the time of ultimate consumption, if not before. At that time, chemical analysis will be employed, and will, in all likelihood identify the method that was used. Even if the matter cannot be tied to any particular cargo, I think the USSR could and would accuse the U.S. and with considerable plausibility in world forums. After all, the technology involved is quite complicated and is not likely to be available to stevedores, crewmen and the like, unless made available to them from outside. The only alternative we could suggest as the source of the action is the Cuban resistance movement. Even if we were able to make this suggestion stick, the only result would be to discredit further the responsibility and bona fides of that movement.

3. I have no confidence in the scientific judgment that the substance is harmless. We know from recent experience that drugs which have been extensively tested for human consumption turn out to have side effects when widely administered. I cannot believe that this substance has had such extensive testing. The described effects are such as to suggest that the impact would not be uniform across a wide sample of the population. A good way to put this issue in perspective is to ask how you would feel about the same thing happening to yourself or your family, if the action had been taken by the other side.

4. It is wrong to contaminate food supplies.

I would very much like to be present when this matter is discussed with the President, unless you feel it would detract from the presentation.

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