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CIA/DNE/STAFF MEMO/ 9-65

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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

OFFICE OF NATIONAL ESTIMATES

19 February 1965

STAFF MEMORANDUM NO. 9-65 (Internal ONE Working Paper --  
CIA Distribution Only)

SUBJECT: The Old-Line Grows Thinner in Havana

SUMMARY

The recent sacking of Carlos Rafael Rodriguez, head of INRA and one of the most important old-line Cuban Communists, is but the latest reflection of Castro's increasing concern over Cuba's failure to gain momentum and of his willingness to purge his subordinates. In our view, Castro is trying not only to put his economic house in order, but to remove any possible old-line Communist threat to his dominance. In so doing, he doubtless wishes to impress on Moscow that he -- and he alone -- is Cuba's master. Castro will almost certainly continue to purge additional personnel, and we believe that he will remain in charge of the situation.

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1. Things did not go well for Castro during 1964. Cuban economic conditions and prospects remained poor, and popular enthusiasm for the regime remained low. The fall of

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Khrushchev introduced new uncertainties concerning the degree to which the USSR would support Cuba in the event of a new Cuban-US crisis.

2. Castro accordingly became increasingly concerned with means to restore momentum to the Cuban revolution. To this end, he made a number of dramatic changes in the regime's inept administrative system. In June he replaced his Minister of Foreign Trade. In July he created a new ministry to deal with sugar problems. Later that month he fired the Minister of Economy, who was also head of the Planning Board, and put President Dorticos in charge of both. In December Castro fired the Minister of Labor.

3. These shake-ups were accompanied by increased political jockeying between Fidelistas and old-line Communists. In March, the two groups squared off at one another during the Marcos Rodriguez trial. The personal intervention of Fidel himself saved the old-liners from a political drubbing on that occasion, but they clearly lost ground. Moreover, important old-line Communists, Joaquin Ordoqui and Edith Garcia Buchaca, his wife, were left vulnerable to charges of disloyalty to the regime. Garcia Buchaca was soon quietly eased

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out of her post as head of the Cultural Institute. And last November, Castro stripped Ordoqui of his high posts in the Armed Forces and in the revolutionary party. It appears that Ordoqui will be charged with betraying the revolution, and he may be tried publicly. If so, the old-line Communists will undoubtedly share the public disapprobation that will follow.

4. Now, Castro has cut down another leading old-liner: Carlos Rafael Rodriguez, head of INRA. Castro has assumed personal control of INRA, leaving Rodriguez in charge of "economic studies." It is not clear whether Castro chopped Rodriguez because of his old-line Communist background, or because of economic inefficiency, or both. What is clear is the downgrading of one of the most influential old Communists in Cuba. This fact will not be lost on the Fidelistas, who may now become even more vociferous in their opposition to the old-liners; or on the old-liners, who may read it as the final sign that Castro is out to crush them; or even on the Soviets, who must once again realize that Comrade Castro is a strong, nationalist leader over whom they have little leverage. Indeed Castro's ousting of Rodriguez is, to some extent, doubtless part of a larger scheme to remove any possible

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old-line Communist threat, and to impress on Moscow that he -- and he alone -- is Cuba's master.\*

5. In our view, Castro will almost certainly continue to purge additional personnel, for both political and administrative reasons. We think it unlikely, however, that there will be any sudden, widespread purge. Two likely purgees, both old-line Communists, are Lazaro Pena, head of the Cuban Workers Confederation; and Manuel Luzardo, Minister of Internal Trade. Castro may become somewhat more vulnerable to an assassination attempt as the number of those ousted or threatened increases. All things considered, however, we believe that the key elements in the military and security forces will continue to support Castro, and that he will thus remain in charge of the situation.

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\* Castro's sensitivity over this latter subject may, in part, explain his strong public remarks this January that, "what each party must do must be done in a specific concrete circumstance, and nobody anywhere must tell it to do so . . . if any party were to try that with us, it would meet with a decisive and complete rejection".

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