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SECRET/NODIS/EYES ONLY

From Rogers

February 13, 1975

Summary:

1. Baseball Commissioner Kuhn called. He met with a Cuban group of four, including the second in the sports chain of command, in Mexico on Tuesday. The Cubans would very much like to have a squad of major league players fly <sup>to Havana</sup> on Friday, March 28, conduct some clinics for Cuban players, play an exhibition game on Saturday, March 29, and leave that evening. Kuhn assumes that the game would be broadcast in the U.S.

2. Beyond that, he came to the view that the Cubans are thinking about their relationship with U.S. professional baseball. They have done their best to develop their talent, but being shut out of professional ball here hurts. They would now like Cuban players to be able to look forward to the opportunity to play some day in our major leagues.

3. As to style, Kuhn found the meetings marked by friendliness and keen interest in being constructive, as he put it.

4. Kuhn replied that he would have to go back home to reflect on the matter, and as he put it to the Cubans, to see if he could give them a yes answer.

5. To me, he said that he would like to respond affirmatively, but that he is of course bound by whatever guidance we give him. He feels that U.S. major league baseball has a "magic value in projecting a positive image of the U.S." wherever the sport is played. He has promised the Cubans that he would call them in Mexico before they leave at 11:00 am tomorrow morning.

COMMENT: In the United States, the announcement that a major league squad was to play in Cuba in late March would have a symbolic significance not limited to the sports pages. In the event that we go forward, we should contemplate whether the President, or you might make the announcement, or let it come from ~~my~~ <sup>my</sup> office and Havana.

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IS/FPC/CDR *JL* Date: 8/18/93

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Reviewed by: *E. Kelly*  
Date: 8/18/93

In Latin America, the move would also reawaken memories of your China moves. I would, therefore, propose that we send a message to the Foreign Ministries 24 hours beforehand, if we are to give Kuhn the green light.

As to Cuba, I am frank to say that I have seen nothing on the Cuban side so far which could be taken as a move to which the baseball trip might be considered a responsive gesture. This may be due to the stickiness of our communications techniques. It may be that the Cubans just have not been able to bring themselves to decide to do anything. It may be that the sports effort is a somewhat discoordinated step by a ministry not entirely related to political objectives and strategies.

Recommendation: