

DRAFT - MDC - 11/7/78 and 11/8/78  
Betsy Palmer

Box 23  
Folder 24  
# 26

MOVIMIENTO DEMOCRATA CRISTIANO  
(MDC)

After Castro's assumption of power in 1959, it became evident to many Cubans that political parties were being suppressed and the 26th of July Movement was being infiltrated by Communists. This political atmosphere gave rise to the creation of underground organizations such as the Christian Democratic Movement of Cuba (MDC). <sup>①</sup> (CIA/DDO, MDC Volume 3, Objectives of MDC) <sup>(Proclaiming)</sup> Using the doctrine of Christianity as its foundation, the MDC published a manifesto in March, 1960, <sup>②</sup> (Ibid) denouncing Communism, and strongly advocating the free enterprise system. <sup>③</sup> (HSCA #009538, Item 4, p. 2, FBI #105-87909-5, 1/30/61) One of the founders of the MDC, 35-year-old law professor, Dr. Jose Ignacio Rasco, was elected head of the organization <sup>④</sup> (Ibid) and <sup>(immediately)</sup> publicly criticized the violence prevalent in the Castro regime. <sup>⑤</sup> (CIA/DDO, MDC Volume 3) This <sup>(public)</sup> open criticism <sup>(produced pressure on him to leave)</sup> necessitated his ~~exfiltration from~~ Cuba and he ~~was granted safe conduct to the U.S.,~~ <sup>(all)</sup> arriving in Miami on April 22, 1960. <sup>⑥</sup> (HSCA #009538, Item 4, p. 2, FIB #105-87909-5, 1/30/61) <sup>(By)</sup> ~~In~~ June, Rasco had allied himself and the MDC with the Frente Revolucionario Democratico (FRD) <sup>⑦</sup> (Ibid) and <sup>(thus)</sup> served ~~as~~ <sup>(brought together)</sup> ~~one of the five original exile Cuban leaders~~ <sup>(recommended)</sup> by the State Department and the ~~Havana CIA station~~ to form the nucleus of a Cuban government-in-exile. <sup>⑧</sup> (Give Us This Day by E. Howard Hunt, Popular Library Edition, pp. 43-44.

After the Bay of Pigs invasion, the MDC split into factions. <sup>⑨</sup> (CIA/DCD document, Jose Ignacio Rasco, Information Report 00-K-3,233,366, 8/16/62) Rasco remained head of the

**DO NOT REPRODUCE  
RETURN TO CIA**

largest faction and ~~had~~ organized delegations in Miami, New York, Chicago, Venezuela and Cuba. <sup>(10)</sup> (Ibid) The clandestine faction operating in Cuba was lead by Pepin Fernandez Badue who used the alias "Lucas". <sup>(11)</sup> (Ibid) When Fernandez arrived in the U.S. in October, 1961, he presented his credentials to the Cuban Revolutionary Council, (CRC), claiming he was the representative of the MDC movement in Cuba. <sup>(12) (Ibid)</sup> ~~and~~ Council president, Dr. Miro Cardona, accepted him into the CRC hierarchy. <sup>(13)</sup> (Ibid) The "Lucas" faction remained with the Council but ~~declined in importance~~ <sup>its role was</sup> because Fernandez ~~failed to consult with the executive committee of his faction nor did he make any effort to~~ <sup>eventually failed</sup> hold the group together. <sup>(14)</sup> (HSCA Security File 092, Senstudy Document, Volume 32, Item 1, #97-4110-72)

The Rasco faction of MDC had as its Military Chief an ~~independently~~ <sup>(15)</sup> wealthy young Cuban, Laureano Batista Falla. (Ibid, Item 2, #97-4110-123) Free-spirited and under no financial pressures, Batista ~~was able to~~ organized and partially financed the infiltration attempts of the MDC. <sup>(16)</sup> (HSCA #009303, FBI #97-4623-149, Section V) ~~which made this~~ <sup>it was</sup> one of the most active and effective underground groups in Cuba during the early 1960's. <sup>(17)</sup> (HSCA Security File 092, Senstudy Document, Volume 37, Item 4, #105-95461-15, page 4)

From (1960 - 1962) <sup>(18)</sup> (HSCA #009303, p. 6, FBI #97-4623-149, Section V) Batista <sup>Falla</sup> was

[redacted] (CIA/Office of Security, Laureano Batista Falla, [redacted] He trained at the (CIA-sponsored) camp for the MDC near Perrine, Florida, prior to the April 1961 invasion, <sup>(20)</sup> (HSCA #009303, p. 4, FBI #97-4623-149, Sec.

and made many trips from this camp to deliver explosives, guns and ammunition to the Cuban underground. <sup>(21)</sup> (Ibid)

At ~~this~~ <sup>that</sup> time, ~~all~~ <sup>most</sup> underground groups worked together, sharing supplies and information. <sup>(22)</sup> (HSCA Security File 092, Senstudy Document, Volume 37, Item 4, #105-95461-15, p. 4) However, the repressive measures of the Castro regime after the April 1961 invasion, caused members of the Cuban underground to live in fear of discovery and made inter-group liaison extremely risky. <sup>(23)</sup> (Ibid. p. 2) Despite the inherent dangers, the underground movements of the MDC and Movimiento Revolucionario del Pueblo (MRP) worked jointly for an all-out sabotage effort in the fall of 1961. <sup>(24)</sup> (Ibid)

The "Batista" faction of the MDC, (so named after the youthful military chief rose to the position of president in 1962) <sup>(25)</sup> (HSCA #009303, p. 8, Item 4, FBI #105-183815) entered into ~~a number of~~ similar cooperative alliances with other exile groups for the purposes of propaganda, sabotage and supplying the Cuban underground. Many MDC members joined the Cuba Committee in 1962 which was formed to counteract the <sup>Propaganda of</sup> Fair Play for Cuba Committee, a pro-Castro organization in the U. S. <sup>(26)</sup> (CIA/DDO, MDC Volume 3, Cable to Director from JMWAVE, 6/21/62, #14986) The MDC and the Directorio Revolucionario Estudiantil (DRE) worked together to formulate plans for an underground organization to infiltrate Oriente Province. <sup>(27)</sup> (CIA/DDO, Laureano Batista Falla, Information Cable TDCS DB 3/660-090, 3/14/64)

*Insert: One involved the MDC, the Movimiento Insurreccional de Recuperaçion Revolucionaria and the Movimiento Revolucionario (MIRR) and the Movimiento Recuperaçion Revolucionaria (MRR)*

The ~~the~~ active operations between the MDC and other anti-Castro groups peaked in the year 1963. <sup>Insert</sup> In April, Frank Sturgis, Miami-based soldier of fortune, supplied information that Batista, Orlando Bosch Avila, Manuel Artime and Alexander Rorke were jointly planning an air strike over Havana on April 25. <sup>(28)</sup> (HSCA #009303, page 1, FBI #97-4623, Section I) According to Sturgis, the strike was to originate from an airstrip in Puerto Rico and the target <sup>(29)</sup> a sugar refinery. (Ibid) The bombs were ~~of the~~ homemade, <sup>(30)</sup> ~~variety, and put together~~ <sup>assembled</sup> by Batista. (Ibid, p. 5, Item 2) Rorke publically <sup>(31)</sup> announced that the strike had taken place as scheduled, which took the other planners by surprise. (Ibid) Sturgis claimed the strike was still in the planning stage and financial backing had not been completed. <sup>(32)</sup> (Ibid) This incident created a stir and resulted in an intensive FBI investigation of Rorke's allegation. <sup>(33)</sup> (HSCA #009303, p. 3, FBI #97-4623, Sections II through VI) Since Radio Havana, contrary to usual policy, made no immediate protest over the bombing, <sup>(34)</sup> (Ibid, p. 3, FBI #97-4623, Section IV) <sup>de FBI</sup> ~~it was~~ concluded that Rorke's story was probably untrue <sup>(35)</sup> (Ibid, p. 2, #97-4623-35) and, according to Sturgis, merely a publicity stunt. <sup>(36)</sup> (Ibid, p. 2, Item 1 (9), FBI #97-4623)

In early June, 1963, the MDC made a unity pact with Commandos L in which the latter group was to provide training and assistance in military intelligence and the MDC to provide <sup>(37)</sup> ~~a~~ <sup>three</sup> small boats and a team of men to infiltrate Cuba. (CIA/DDO, MDC Volume 5, Information Cable (UFG) 3536, 9/3/63) The MDC also made a pact with Dr. Carlos Prio Socarras, former President of

Cuba, who donated \$50,000 ~~of his own money~~ to the group for military aid in return for its promise of political support.

(38) (Ibid)

Ricard Rudolph Davis, a Cuban alien, (39) (HSCA #012981) had a peripheral association with the MDC through his contact with Batista in the summer of 1963. This association was ~~mentioned~~ <sup>noted</sup> in Book V, Final Report of the Senate Select Committee to Study Governmental Operations, page 12. (40) (Footnote to discuss discrepancy)

Davis was residing in New Orleans and, although not an MDC member, claimed to have, ~~at an earlier time~~ <sup>once</sup>, been a "coordinator" for the group and the New York Police Department. (41) (HSCA #012981) He was a friend of Batista and contacted him because, <sup>he said,</sup> ~~he knew~~ Batista was in a position to recommend men in the Miami area who needed work. (42) (Ibid) Davis claimed he could provide employment for a small group of Cuban emigres. <sup>said he</sup> ~~He~~ had entered into a business deal with geologist David L. Raggio and a wealthy, right-wing New Orleanian, Gus de LaBarre, forming the Guatemala Lumber and Mineral Corporation. (43) (Ibid) It was their intention to train the Cubans on some land in Lacombe, Louisiana to which de LaBarre had access through his nephew, Frank de LaBarre. (44) (Ibid) After a necessary training period, the group was to be sent to Guatemala to cut mahogany trees, <sup>he said,</sup>

<sup>in New Orleans in the summer of 1965</sup>  
A group of about 18 Cubans did arrive ~~under the leader~~ <sup>leading them was</sup> ~~ship of~~ a well-known Cuban exile, Victor Paneque (45) (Ibid) who used the military code name of "Comandante Diego." (46) (HSCA #092 Security File, Senstudy Vol 32, Item 2. #97-4110-123, p. 2) <sup>Paneque was closely associated with Batista in the military activities of the MDC. (47) (Ibid)</sup> ~~(47) (Ibid)~~

*Davis later admitted to the FBI that*

According to Davis, the men <sup>HAD</sup> arrived dressed in khakis (HSCA <sup>48</sup> FBI, Richard Rudolph Davis, Volume 1, Report from N.O. #006716, p. 4 /with the idea that they were to receive military 7/3/64) <sup>49</sup> *(AND THOUGHT* training. (Ibid, p. 2)

In the latter part of July, 1963, the FBI conducted a raid on property near that of the "lumber company" training camp, *The Bureau* where they seized a cache of dynamite and other explosives.

<sup>50</sup> (Ibid) This raid, according to Davis, unnerved his trainees, and they elected to return to Miami. <sup>51</sup> (Ibid)

A somewhat different version of this episode comes from Gus de LaBarre's nephew and attorney, Frank <sup>de LaBarre,</sup> who first related his story in 1966 to his former law school classmate, Jim Garrison. <sup>52</sup> (HSCA #012981, Fonzi memo 9/6/78)

De LaBarre said his "Uncle Gus" had introduced him to Davis, whom De LaBarre described as a "floater." They came to see De LaBarre about drawing up Articles of Incorporation for the Guatemalan Lumber Company and that is when <sup>saw he</sup> he learned of their plans to bring unemployed Cubans from Miami to train as lumberjacks. Uncle Gus sent provisions to the exiles on a daily basis and solicited money for food and clothing from friends and relatives. <sup>53</sup> (Ibid)

*Although he suspected that military training was being conducted at the camp,* <sup>FRANK</sup> de LaBarre said he didn't pay much attention to the activities of the group. <sup>However,</sup> when he heard on his car radio that the FBI had seized a cache of ammunition at a house in Lacombe, he immediately called his uncle. Although receiving assurances that the lumber group was not involved, De LaBarre called the officers of the corporation together and insisted that the Cubans be taken out of there. Davis, <sup>however, told him</sup> ~~claimed, according to de LaBarre's~~ ~~version,~~ that the Cubans did not want to leave, whereupon

<sup>D/</sup> <sup>said he</sup> deLaBarre had to do some real "brainstorming." He rented a Hertz ton-and-a-half truck and instructed Davis to take it to the camp and tell the Cubans "that the invasion is on." Davis complied, and the Cubans loaded their gear, jumped in the truck and were brought to the Greyhound bus terminal in New Orleans. Each was given a one-way ticket to Miami plus a small amount of cash and told they would get their orders when they reached Miami. Looking as though ready for war, with knapsacks and guns bulging from under their clothes, they boarded the bus, ~~and~~ <sup>that was the last, DeLaBarre said, he saw of them.</sup> de LaBarre had no more contact with them. ~~The last he heard~~ <sup>he said,</sup> of Davis was in 1964 when one of ~~de~~ <sup>D/</sup> LaBarre's friends reported he had gone into business with Davis and was left with a lot of bills. (54) (Ibid)

Other than providing the manpower for the training camp, Batista was not <sup>(involved)</sup> ~~implicated~~ in this episode nor was the MDC as an organization.

Concurrent with his involvement with leaders of other exile organizations, Batista was dealing with foreign governments in an effort to gain support for his faction of the MDC. After the World Congress of Christian Democrats in Strasburg, France, two West German officials of the Christian Democratic Party conferred with the MDC in Miami. (55) (CIA/DDO, MDC Volume V, Information Cable (UFG)-4531, 1/29/64) According to one of the officials, the West Germans, after months of study, had decided to help finance the MDC, not because they were particularly fond of them but felt once Cuba was liberated, the Cubans would have a moral superiority over the rest of Latin America. (56) (Ibid)

Another offer of help came from Luis Somoza, former President of Nicaragua, who <sup>provided</sup> offered the MDC a base for operations in that country, ~~which was accepted.~~ <sup>(57)</sup> (CIA/DDO, Laureano Batista Falla, Volume 1, Information Report CSDB-3-655,718, 7/26/63) Venezuelan President, Romulo Betancourt, allegedly <sup>also</sup> offered to make a base available for the MDC and provide it with personnel and supplies. <sup>(58)</sup> (CIA/DDO, Laureano Batista Falla, Volume 1, Information Cable TDCS-DB-3/658,177, 11/14/63) Recognizing that these Latin American bases of operation were important to the MDC, Batista nonetheless preferred to work out of the Miami area. Its proximity to Cuba, good facilities for operating boats, and the availability of a large number of Cubans to serve as mechanics and do other necessary labor made Miami more desirable than the Latin American facilities. <sup>(59)</sup> (HSCA Security File 092, Senstudy Document 33, Item 1, #97-4110-86, p. 13) The <sup>MAJOR</sup> ~~big~~ drawback in Miami was the presence of U.S. government officials determined to strictly enforce the Neutrality Act *and other federal statutes.*

U. S. Customs raided MDC headquarters in Miami on April 21, 1964 and confiscated a large cache of arms and ammunition. <sup>(60)</sup> (*Ibid.*, Vol. 32, Item 2, #97-4110-123, p. 1) Undeterred, the MDC simply relocated the military section in separate headquarters, ~~and~~ continued to store materials for infiltration and attack missions against Cuba, <sup>(61)</sup> (*Ibid.*, Volume 32, ~~Item 2, #97-4110-123, p. 1~~ <sup>and conducted</sup> Study courses in military training and theory, ~~were also conducted at the new location.~~ <sup>(62)</sup> (*Ibid.*, Volume 33, Item 2, #97-4110-132, p. 2) In July, Batista

and Victor Paneque infiltrated men and equipment into Cuba to form a nucleus of guerrilla bands who, <sup>once they got</sup> ~~upon receipt of~~ adequate arms and ammunition, planned to go into the mountains of Cuba. <sup>(b)</sup> (Ibid)

The MDC <sup>eventually</sup> suffered the fate of other anti-Castro organizations -- finding it increasingly difficult to finance infiltration and sabotage missions, and experiencing increased surveillance by U. S. authorities determined to limit their activities. The organization's <sup>ACTIVITIES</sup> gradually declined, ~~in importance~~. Batista eventually gave up his anti-Castro activities, moved to Washington, D. C. and received a <sup>(64)</sup> Doctoral degree in political science. (HSCA #009303, p. 7, Item 3, FBI #97-4110-207, Report from Miami, 1/28/70. In the spring of 1970, he moved to Venezuela.