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*Mon & Tues.*

Review Staff: 1650/75  
23 July 1975

CIA HISTORICAL REVIEW PROGRAM  
RELEASE IN FULL 1998

MEMORANDUM FOR THE RECORD

SUBJECT: SSC Contact

Charlie Kirbow called in connection with a Harper's magazine article entitled, "The Kennedy Vendetta". Kirbow says Senators Schweiker and Goldwater have expressed interest in certain aspects as follows:

1. What are our comments on the number of case officers, principal agents, etc. which the article alleges were involved? (page 51)
2. Was one of the authors ever associated with the Agency? If so, under what circumstances did he leave? (These are specific questions from Senator Goldwater.)
3. Of four names cited to perform assassinations, one VECIANA may be an escapee with Mafia connections. What do we know? (page 61)
4. What other general comments do we care to make?

Kirbow suggested something like an off-the-record by the DCI to Schweiker and Goldwater. To hell with that, I'll drop a note to Charlie.

Walter Elder  
Assistant to the Director

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# THE KENNEDY VENDETTA

How the CIA waged a silent war against Cuba

by Taylor Branch and George Crile III

*During the last days of the Eisenhower Administration the assassination of Fidel Castro presented itself as an engaging possibility to various people in Washington who had reason to mistrust a successful revolution so close to the coast of Florida. Some of those people discussed the possibility with the CIA, which had arranged sudden changes of government in Guatemala and Iran, and it has been said that a few agents left for the Caribbean with instructions to bring about a coup d'etat. Little more was heard from them until the debacle at the Bay of Pigs.*

*The invasion, otherwise known as "the glorious march on Havana," had been sponsored by the Kennedy Administration, and the new President apparently perceived the defeat as an affront to his pride. Within a matter of weeks he committed the United States to a secret war against Cuba that eventually required the services of several thousand men and cost as much as \$100 million a year. The war continued for four years. Kennedy entrusted its direction to the CIA, which, depending on the testimony of the witness telling the story, conducted an operation that could be described either as a large-scale vendetta or a small crusade. The Agency launched a succession of commando raids on the Cuban coast and encouraged a number of assassins to make attempts on Castro's life. As late as 1964 the Agency was landing weapons in Cuba every week and sending up to fifty agents on missions to destroy oil refineries, railroad bridges, and sugar mills.*

*The secret war failed in all of its objectives. Instead of overthrowing Castro, it identified his revolution with the cause of Cuban nationalism and forced him into alliance with the Soviet Union. The way in which the war was conducted, of necessity by means of stealth and criminal violence, established unfortunate precedents. Always in the name of a higher truth (more often than not the defense of "free and democratic societies" against an alien tyranny), a great many people in the American government were persuaded to violate their own laws, to tell convenient lies, and to admire the methods of organized crime. It is impossible to say whether these precedents had anything to do with the history of the subsequent*

*monplace, as did the discovery of official conspiracy and concealment, and what began as another secret war in Vietnam also came to depend upon a hit man's body count.*

*This article derives from the year-long investigations of two contributing editors to Harper's. Their forthcoming book, which will contain the complete result of their investigations, and which will be published by Harper's Magazine Press, deals with the experience of the men recruited to fight the secret war in Cuba. Two of the principal figures in the book, Bernard Barker and Rolando Martinez, were employed by the CIA in 1961 as agents. When they were arrested at Watergate in 1972, they still thought of themselves as servants of the moral law.*

*The following narrative begins with the embarrassment of the Kennedy Administration after the Bay of Pigs. □*

**I**N WASHINGTON, President Kennedy struggled to comprehend how so total a disaster could have been produced by so many people who were supposed to know what they were doing, who had wrecked governments other than Castro's without mishap or detection. They had promised him a secret success but delivered a public fiasco. Communist rule in Cuba was to have been overthrown and Fidel Castro executed by Cuban citizens, all without evidence of American involvement; instead, Castro was heaping scorn on the "imperialist worms" he had defeated. Not only was the invasion an abject military failure, but the highest officials of the U.S. government were being subjected to worldwide ridicule for having tried to pass it off as the work of independent Cubans. The CIA's elaborate "cover story" had fallen into absurdity, and the President finally ended the charade by issuing a statement in which he assumed full responsibility for the invasion. With this admission, the Bay of Pigs became a virtual synonym for international humiliation, as well as the most egregious display of official American lying yet entered into the public record.

In the United States, the sense of crisis was so intense that it let loose the fear of war and rallied public opinion to the President's support. Kennedy had enough composure to take

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sive by rattling the sword of patriotism. In his first major speech after the Bay of Pigs, Kennedy defined the issue not as covert American intervention in the affairs of another country but as Soviet penetration into the free world. The United States had not struck against this foreign menace as forcefully as it might have with American troops, but, said Kennedy: "Let the record show that our restraint is not inexhaustible." The international principle of nonintervention would not prevent the United States from using military force—alone, if necessary—to safeguard its freedom. And "should that time ever come, we do not intend to be lectured on intervention by those whose character was stamped for all time on the bloody streets of Budapest." The President called attention to a new and subtler battle of global ideologies—one taking place by subversion and manipulation rather than by open clash of arms—and took up the challenge: "The complacent, the self-indulgent, the soft societies, are about to be swept away by the debris of history," he warned. "We dare not fail to see the insidious nature of this new and deeper struggle. We dare not fail to grasp the new concept, the new tools, the new sense of urgency we will need to combat it, whether in Cuba or in South Vietnam."

President Kennedy did in fact implement a new concept of the Cold War struggle, but he did so in a disingenuous way. After the Bay of Pigs, he summoned forth his much-admired charisma to present himself as a man who had learned the hard lessons of history and who was deeply suspicious of the CIA. Word seeped from the White House into the newspapers that Kennedy had inherited the CIA's Cuban plan from the Eisenhower Administration, that he never had put his heart in it, that he had been pressured into action by Agency officials with a personal interest in the scheme who coerced the young and inexperienced President before he even had time to redecorate the Oval Office. The President was said to have grave doubts about advancing the cause of free, democratic societies by secret and devious means. He was known to be seething with anger at his advisers and especially at the CIA, which he told his aides he would like to "splinter... into a thousand pieces and scatter to the winds." He demonstrated his displeasure by establishing a commission, which included his brother Robert, to investigate the Agency's performance. Not long afterward, CIA Director Allen Dulles and Richard Bissell, architect of the plan for the Bay of Pigs, resigned. The President was said to have "throttled" the CIA.

But instead of "splintering" the Agency, the President moved to control and strengthen it by assigning Robert Kennedy to supervise its clandestine operations. The Attorney General protected the President's interest by forcing the CIA to adhere to the chief political lesson of the Bay of Pigs—that clandestine operations should never expose American leaders to the risk of spectacular failure. Within this restriction, the Kennedys placed more, not less, of the free world's defense in the hands of the CIA. Rather than shriveling up in the disgrace of its Cuban failure, the covert action side of the Agency grew faster than it ever had before, receiving a new lease on life and a new infusion of confidence from the White House. And as far as Cuba was concerned, this new American stance took the form of a vast and unprecedented secret war against the Castro regime, devised and launched by the Kennedy Administration through the CIA.

**M**OST ANYTHING THAT MIGHT HURT Castro was proposed and considered by the White House, and a staggering variety of measures were commissioned. They ranged from an official economic embargo to covert commando raids and acts of economic sabotage mounted against Cuban targets by hundreds of agents throughout the world. The overall objectives of Kennedy's push against Cuba were given such a high priority that virtually all agencies of the federal government were enlisted. Representatives of the State Department, Treasury, FBI, Commerce, Immigration, Customs were brought together in interdepartmental committees to come up with measures that could damage Castro's Cuba.

Ray Cline, the deputy director of intelligence at the CIA during those years, recalled, "Both Jack and Bobby were deeply ashamed after the Bay of Pigs, and they became quite obsessed with the problem of Cuba. They were a couple of Irishmen who felt they had muffed it, and they vented their wrath on Castro for the next two years. And, being good fighting Irishmen, they vented their wrath in all ways that they could."

Although responsibility for the secret war rested with President Kennedy, it bore the stamp of his brother Robert, who entered into the Agency's world with the passion and commitment that led Joseph Kraft to describe the Robert Kennedy of the early 1960s as a "piano-wire hawk." Gen. Edward Lansdale,\* then the government's foremost expert on unconventional warfare, served for a time as his liaison man with the CIA. Lansdale says that both Kennedys wanted "to bring Castro down.... I feel certain that they had that emotion in them until they were both killed.... But Bobby felt even more strongly about it than Jack. He was protective of his brother, and he felt his brother had been insulted at the Bay of Pigs. He felt the insult needed to be redressed rather quickly."

While the impetus and the authority for the secret war came from the White House and the Justice Department, the day-to-day conduct of the operations was assigned to Theodore Shackley,\*\* then one of the Agency's most promising young men. Shortly after the Bay of Pigs, the CIA brought Shackley from Berlin to head a team charged with preparing a "vulnerability and feasibility study" of the Castro regime. He was just thirty-four years old at the time. Throughout the remainder of 1961, while the Agency conducted holding operations against Cuba and tried to rebuild its intelligence

\* Lansdale won great fame as the leader of the secret, and successful, U.S. effort to help put down the Huk rebellion in the Philippines during the 1950s, and his subsequent covert work in Vietnam made him legendary as the model for both *The Ugly American* and *The Quiet American*. One of Lansdale's protégés in the Philippine campaign, Napoleon D. Valeriano, later became the first head of the guerrilla instructors who trained anti-Castro Cubans for the Bay of Pigs invasion. In Vietnam Lansdale became the inspiration for a whole generation of counterinsurgency experts, including Daniel Ellsberg.

\*\* Today Shackley is one of the most powerful hierarchs in the CIA. He first made his mark with the Agency in the 1950s: in later years he was the station chief in Laos when the CIA was beginning its secret war there, then the station chief in Saigon. Later he was promoted to head the Western Hemisphere Division of Clandestine Services, and from that position he had overall responsibility for the Agency's efforts to overthrow the Allende regime in Chile. He was also responsible for the Miami station and indirectly responsible for Rolando Martinez on June 17, 1972, when the Hunt-Liddy team was found in the Watergate offices of the Democratic party. A longtime protégé of CIA Director William Colby's, Shackley is now chief of the Far Eastern Division of Clandestine Services.

network, Shackley and his colleagues shaped a plan to exploit Castro's weaknesses. And in February of 1962 he left for Miami to organize the secret war.

### The secret command

**A** SMALL CIA OFFICE had existed in Miami since the mid-1950s as a routine outpost where a few aging agents interviewed travelers returning from abroad. Scores of agents had descended on Miami during the preparation for the Bay of Pigs invasion, but they left soon after the debacle. With the beginning of the secret war, a new station sprang up to serve as the command post for all of the CIA's worldwide anti-Castro operations. Shackley's arrival amounted to a blank check from the Kennedy White House and the already large station quickly became the largest CIA station in the world.

The station, known by its CIA code name as JM WAVE,\* was unique in the Agency's history. "It was a real anomaly," said Ray Cline. "It was run as if it were in a foreign country, yet most of our agents were in the state of Florida. People just overlooked the fact that it was a domestic operation."

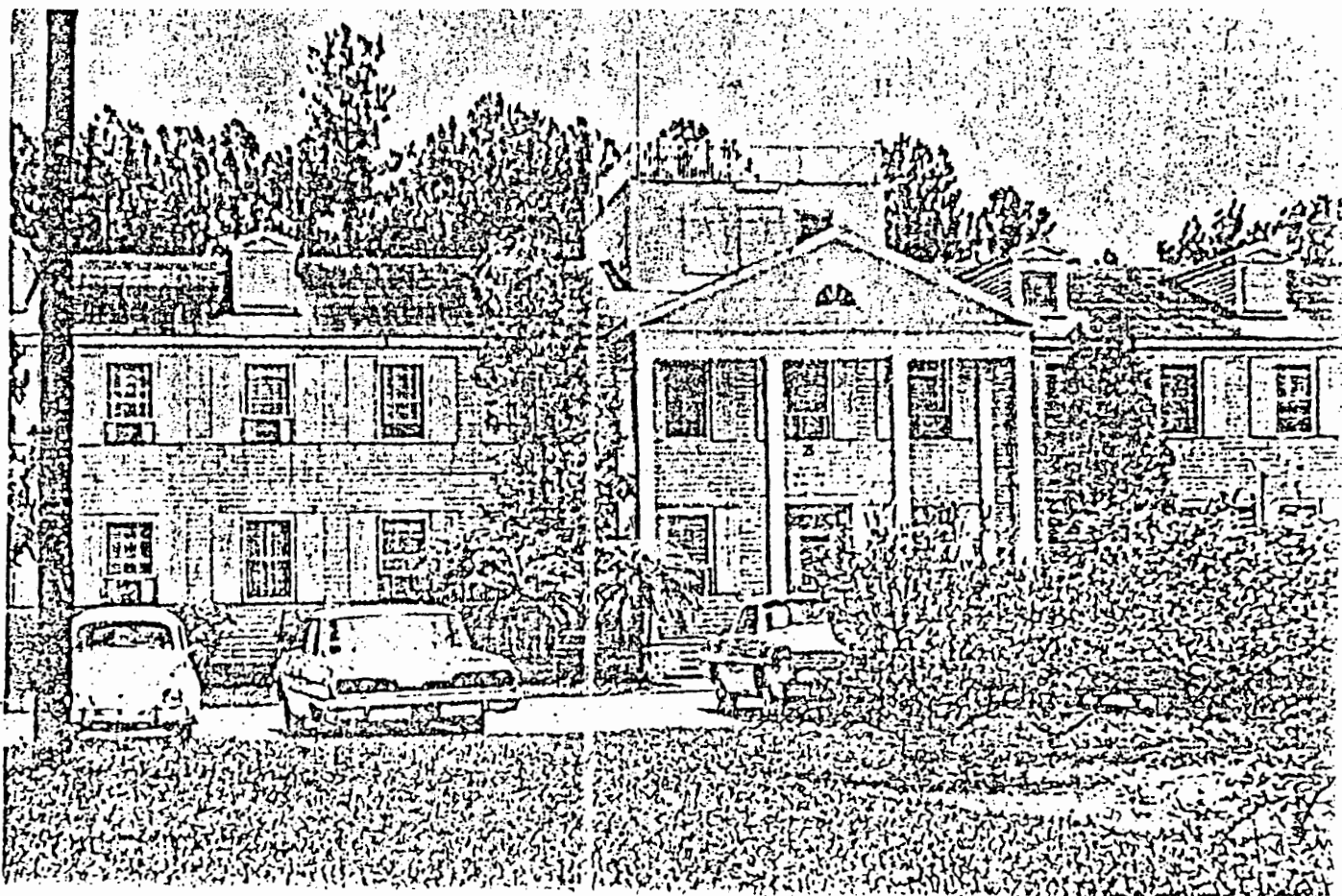
The station operated with an annual budget well in excess of \$50 million. It fielded a permanent staff of more than 300 American employees, mostly case officers, who, in turn,

\* To the best of anyone's knowledge, this, like all other CIA acronyms, is meaningless.

employed and controlled a few thousand more Cuban agents. The average JM WAVE case officer would be responsible for between four and ten Cuban agents of intermediate stature—known as "principal agents," or "PAs"—and each PA would be responsible for between ten and thirty regular agents. In addition to the case officer-agent network, there were hundreds of support people and American military officers under contract to the Agency. The headquarters for JM WAVE were located at the former Navy blimp center on the south campus of the University of Miami. The cover name given to the well-secured buildings was Zenith Technical Enterprises,\*\* a front corporation, or "proprietary," organized by the CIA to conceal its operations. In addition to Zenith the Agency operated another fifty-four dummy corporations: boat shops, real-estate firms, detective agencies, travel companies, gun shops—as proprietary fronts to give cover employment for the case officers and agents outside Zenith headquarters. A former high official in the JM WAVE command described the size of the CIA presence in Florida:

"We had more than 100 vehicles under permanent lease for the case officers. The lower-level types got Chevrolets and Plymouths, and the higher-ups got Pontiacs. Ted Shackley, the station chief, drove a Cadillac. We had our own goddam gas station to supply that fleet of cars. There was a tremendous logistics warehouse that included everything from machine guns to caskets. We had our own medical staff, our own polygraph teams, our own psychologists.

\*\* In later years newspaper reports alleged that Zenith was a CIA front. JM WAVE dealt with the inconvenience by changing the name to Melmar.





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"Then we had a couple of little airplanes, hundreds of boats, safe houses all over the area and paramilitary bases throughout the Florida Keys.

"There were several staffs in the station. One was subsidizing just about everything in the exile community. If an anti-Castro guy started up a weekly paper, we'd give him some money and help him get the rag on the street. The end result of this was that you had the whole community monitored. We had another staff, a big one, that was debriefing a couple of hundred Cuban refugees a day. There was a large staff of analysts, and a technical staff to read mail or send letters in secret writing to contacts in Cuba, with instructions for them to first spill lemon juice on them or run a hot iron over the letter to get the writing to come out."

Just as JM WAVE was the apex of a pyramid spreading out over South Florida, it was also the center for the international coordination of the secret war. Every major CIA station in the world had at least one case officer assigned to Cuban operations, reporting directly or indirectly to the Miami station. In Europe, for example, all Cuban matters were routed through a regional headquarters in the Frankfurt station, which reported to JM WAVE. All Latin-American stations had Cuban specialists, with standing orders to implement a three-pronged operational plan: (1) gather all possible intelligence on Castro's intentions and capabilities in the country; (2) influence the host country to break diplomatic and trade relations with Cuba; and (3) stimulate anti-Castro propaganda in the host country.

JM WAVE wanted to know in advance about all travelers in and out of Cuba so that the travelers could be asked for information about Cuba, or so that their conversations could be bugged if the person were knowledgeable enough. And if, say, the Tokyo station reported that a high official of the Castro government was preparing to visit Japan, JM WAVE might send a Spanish-speaking case officer to Tokyo to make a "recruitment pitch" to the official—i.e., to try to persuade, bribe, or blackmail the official to defect and provide JM WAVE with intelligence.

## A strategy of sabotage

**T**HE STRATEGY OF THE SECRET WAR was based on the conviction that the masses of the Cuban people didn't believe in Castro and would revolt if life became sufficiently sour. As in all previous Cuban revolutions, the chief tactical aim of the strategy was to promote disaffection by sabotaging the Cuban economy.

In the overt aspect of the campaign, the United States placed a total embargo on all trade with Cuba; it then moved to persuade and, when necessary, to blackmail its allies to join the embargo. For its part, the CIA worked to hasten the decline of the Cuban economy by initiating what Ray Cline described as "punitive economic sabotage operations." Years later the former CIA deputy director of intelligence seemed to have second thoughts about those operations: "Looking back on it, you might think all it accomplished was to make Castro beholden to the U.S.S.R., but the CIA actively pursued this [policy]. We were sending agents to Europe to get in touch with shippers to discourage them from going to Cuba, and there were some actions to

sabotage cargoes—to contaminate them, things like that."

One of the CIA officials who helped direct the worldwide sabotage efforts offered this description of the Agency's efforts:

"There was a special technical staff in Langley [Virginia] working on these problems. They were economically oriented and they would come up with all kinds of grand plans for disrupting the Cuban economy—everything from preventing the Cubans from getting credit to figuring out how to disrupt sugar sales. There was lots of sugar being sent out from Cuba, and we were putting a lot of contaminants in it. We would even open up boxes and chip off a gear lock on a machine.

"There were all kinds of sabotage acts. We would have our people pour invisible, untraceable chemicals into lubricating fluids that were being shipped to Cuba. It was all planned economic retrogression. Those fluids were going to be used for diesel engines, and that meant the parts would wear out faster than they could get replacements. Before we sabotaged a product like that we would go to the manufacturer and see if we could convince him to do it; if that wouldn't work, then we would just put the science-fiction crap in ourselves when the shipment was en route.

"We were really doing almost anything you could dream up. One of our more sophisticated operations was convincing a ball-bearing manufacturer in Frankfurt, Germany, to produce a shipment of ball bearings off center. Another was to get a manufacturer to do the same with some balanced wheel gears. You're talking about big money when you ask a manufacturer to go along with you on that kind of project because he has to reset his whole mold. And he is probably going to worry about the effect on future business. You might have to pay him several hundred thousand dollars or more.

"I know Jack Anderson wrote about us paying off a Japanese freighter captain to ram a shipload of buses in the Thames on its way to Cuba. Anderson claims it sunk them. But I'm rather skeptical about that story—I would have known about it if it were true. But it is true that we were sabotaging the Leland buses going to Cuba from England, and that was pretty sensitive business."

**S**OME OF THE SABOTAGE OPERATIONS were so minor that the case officers considered them nothing more than harassment. For example, the Agency helped wealthy Cuban exiles file suit to seize Cuban property in compensation for their property in Cuba that had been confiscated by Castro. As a result, a Cuban airplane landing in Mexico City or Toronto might be attached and tied up in legal proceedings. Such impoundments rarely worked, but they tied up some Cuban resources.

So did the commando raids. In the summer of 1961, JM WAVE began running paramilitary missions against targets inside Cuba—small ones at first, and then larger ones, such as sugar mills and oil refineries. These raids damaged the Cuban economy directly, and they also forced Castro to divert money and manpower into coastal defenses. In 1961 he had 200,000 men under arms, plus a large administrative bureaucracy and a whole industry at work on civil-defense installations. For JM WAVE, the commando raids required huge expenditures for boats, weapons, secret naval bases

along the Florida Keys, logistics support, training facilities, and salaries for the Cuban commandos and their commanders. The Agency had to maintain a clandestine navy—in which Rolando Martinez was one of its most efficient boat captains—as well as a paramilitary army.

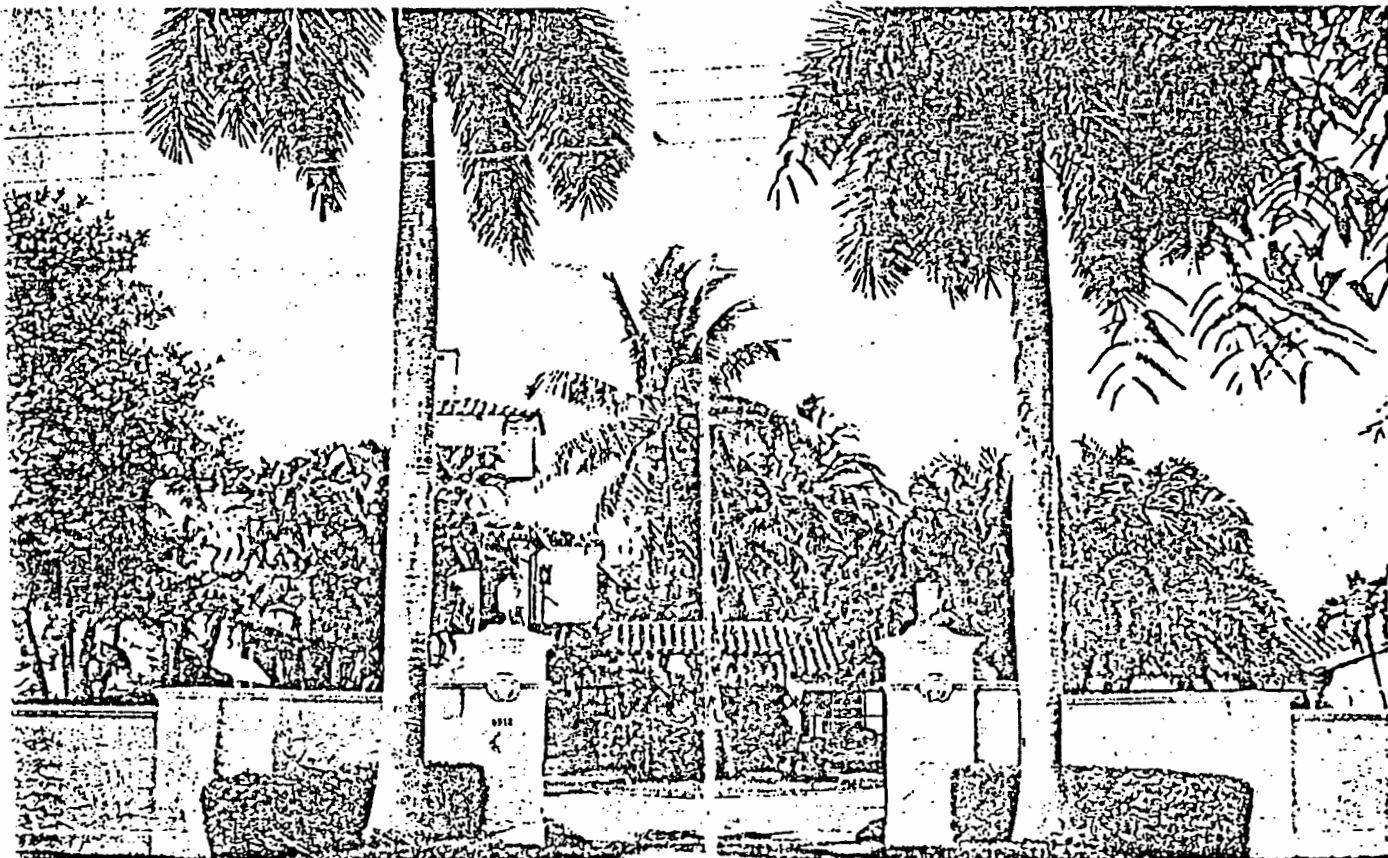
It was an enormous task for JM WAVE to hide its vast apparatus for the secret war. Since most of its agents and assets were in Florida, there was no American Embassy to provide the official cover or the diplomatic immunity under which the Agency normally works. One problem with running a secret war out of a CIA station in an American city is that the very nature of the work constantly forces violations of local, state, and federal laws. All the boat missions to Cuba were technically illegal under the Neutrality Act, the maritime laws, and immigration statutes, so the station had to work out special arrangements with Customs, Immigration, and the Coast Guard. It was illegal for agents to drive around with machine guns and plastic explosives in their cars, as they often did, and the station had to establish liaison with seventeen police jurisdictions down the Florida coast and into the Keys. The result was that any agent who was arrested for anything from drunken driving to illegal possession of firearms would be quickly released. It was often illegal for case officers and agents to file corporate papers, bank statements, and income-tax returns using cover names and false sources of income. This required the co-operation of judges, the Justice Department, the Internal Revenue Service, and numerous local institutions in Florida.

Perhaps only in a city like Miami could the clandestine empire of JM WAVE escape public attention. In the early years of the secret war, Miami already resembled wartime Casablanca. It swarmed with spies, counterspies, exiled dic-

tators, Mafia executives, refugees, entertainers, countesses, smugglers, gamblers, fortune-tellers, gun runners, soldiers of fortune, fugitives, and loudly dressed tourists—many pursuing possibly criminal ends against the garish backdrop of Miami Beach. Nothing seemed to stand out in the crowd, and that helped the CIA protect its cover. So did the bewildering variety of anti-Castro movements, most of which had been transplanted north to Florida—with names like Monticristi, the 4th of November, Alpha 66, the Revolutionary Student Directorate, the Movement of Revolutionary Recovery, the 30th of May—and dozens of small groups that consisted only of a leader and a few ardent followers.

But not even in Miami could JM WAVE have survived without the full-scale collaboration of virtually every significant sector of the city's community—with newspapers, civic organizations, and political leaders. In effect, they all had to join the conspiracy. For example, every time an agent went to get a driver's license or a passport, he would perjure himself; but as one former JM WAVE official observed: "We all were perjuring ourselves all the time. All of the Cubans regularly provided erroneous information to federal agencies at the CIA's direction. The same was true when they went to take out bank loans. We set up relations with the banks because we had to give them phony information."

The same relations applied to the news media. As the former agent went on to explain: "We didn't have any trouble with the Miami papers. A paper like the *Miami Herald* would have one or two reporters with jurisdiction for Cuba, and we would give them access to the station. So we would feed them information and give them a career out of handouts. The guys learn not to hurt you. Only occasionally do you give them a big lie, and then only for a good



Rolando Martinez's first CIA "safe house," at 6312 Riviera Drive in Miami.

reason. The paper was always willing to keep things quiet for us.

"The problems keeping a cover were endless, but you had to do all of this simply to clear the way for your operational officers to be able to work without interruption."

### Cuban recruits

**T**HE AGENCY HAD LITTLE TROUBLE recruiting Cubans to risk their lives in the secret war. For although the CIA had recently sent many of the exile community to death or imprisonment in the Bay of Pigs invasion, there were still numerous Cuban agents and new volunteers who believed that Castro could be overthrown only with the assistance of the United States. There were bankers, doctors, and businessmen among the Cuban agents of JM WAVE, as well as laborers and lifelong revolutionaries, and they all welcomed another chance to strike out at Castro. The Agency gave them the best training available, transporting them to its bases in Central America and elsewhere for lessons in explosives, weapons, survival, ambushes, logistics, and communications.

Although Rolando Martinez was in many ways typical of the Agency's Cuban volunteers, he was more accomplished and experienced than most. When he surfaced in 1972 as one of the Cuban-Americans captured in the Watergate break-in, Martinez was still on the CIA payroll and had 354 missions to Cuba recorded in Agency files. As a boat captain in the clandestine navy of JM WAVE, he completed fifty missions before the Bay of Pigs and would complete some seventy-five more during the first two years of the secret war.

The main difference in the paramilitary raids after the Bay of Pigs was that the American supervisors often accompanied their Cuban agents to Cuba. The men dressed in green fatigues, like those worn by Castro's militia, and they carried machine guns with silencers, recoilless rifles, and C-4, the plastic explosive. Their secret bases ranged from lavish estates with indoor swimming pools and tennis courts in Coral Gables to remote compounds in the Keys. In his early missions after the Bay of Pigs, Martinez's cargo usually consisted of weapons for the underground's caches or agents to be infiltrated into Cuba; a modest infiltration could involve as many as sixty CIA agents.

All of these operations were carried out with extraordinary attention to detail. Briefings covered everything from analyses of the latest U-2 photographs of the target area to weather reports giving the exact time the sun would rise and set on the Cuban coast. All operational plans were mapped out to account for every minute of the landings, and there were contingency plans for possible disasters. If captured, Martinez was instructed to say he was on a maritime research project and that the information he was gathering was of a privileged nature. Like the other Cuban agents, he carried Cuban money and false papers.

Sometimes Martinez captained his boat all the way from Florida to Cuba, but usually a large mother ship would tow him to within fifty miles of the coast. He would then take the commando team close to the shore in his "intermediary" craft, and from a distance of a few hundred yards the

agents landed in R-2 rubber lifeboats, which had special electric motors fitted with silencers. Once they had landed, Martinez communicated with them with a high-powered walkie-talkie. He carried his own recoilless rifle, and in some instances he provided fire support for the men when they met resistance on land or when a Castro gunboat pursued them. More than once, he was given personal charge of weapons drops, in which special rifles with silencers and telescopic sights were left in designated inland spots. As always, there were some special twists to CIA secrecy: some of the men being infiltrated into Cuba wore hoods on the whole trip so that the boat crews would not see their faces.

**T**HE MISSIONS BECAME more ambitious in the late summer months of 1961, and in the following years Martinez found himself working in large-scale raids aimed at blowing up oil refineries and chemical plants. Sometimes Martinez would drop off a team and come back several days later to pick them up; at other times the team would stay in Cuba for several weeks or months. The pickups—or, in Agency parlance, "exfiltration" missions—were the most nerve-racking assignments: there was always the chance that the agents had been captured and forced to reveal the time and place of their rendezvous, in which event a trap would be waiting for the boat crew. The worst moments came during the long waits for the agents who never arrived. Aboard ship on their way back to Florida, the commandos would clean their weapons and talk of the targets they had hit and the Castro militiamen they had killed.

There were missions to Cuba almost every week, and the Cuban agents had to trust entirely to the power and good intentions of the CIA. They didn't know the last names of their case officers; as a rule, they didn't even know if the agents' first names were noms de guerre. Everything about the Company was shrouded in mystery. The principle of "compartmentation," or keeping information in strictly limited compartments, was drilled into all employees. To make sure that no one talked or listened outside his compartment, the Agency employed hundreds of Cuban agents to watch other Cuban agents, and they, in turn, were checked, as was everyone else, including the American case officers, by periodic polygraph tests.

All these security precautions tended to leave the Cubans with little overall knowledge of what the Company was doing, although everyone knew that the JM WAVE station somehow could violate the laws of the land at will. There would be times when an agent would get drunk and be thrown in jail. Their case officers could always get them out without any questions. Agents could get divorces without having to go into open court, and they could carry all kinds of guns around. Many times the Coast Guard would stop their boats on the way to Cuba, and the captain merely had to say a code word to be waved on. The extralegal powers of the Company added to the agents' dependence on their case officers, which, as Martinez recalls, was a strong one:

"Let me tell you what it was really like. Your CO was for you like the priest. You had to rely on him, because he was the one who could solve your problems. You learned to tell him everything, your complete life. The important thing was that you knew they would take care of you, and you knew they would take care of your family if you were captured



or killed on a mission. They supported all the families of the Brigade members, and they did the same for the families of the men who were lost on our operations. They are still supporting them.

"Once a Castro gunboat came after my boat on a mission off the north coast of Cuba, and I radioed for help. Before we could even decode the return message from the base, I looked up, and there were two Phantom jets and a Neptune flying over us. It's a trademark of the American forces in general. You have seen how in Vietnam if a helicopter goes down, ten other helicopters will fly in to get the pilot out. That was the same spirit that prevailed in our operations. I still believe today that the Company might be able to do something for me about the Watergate someday."

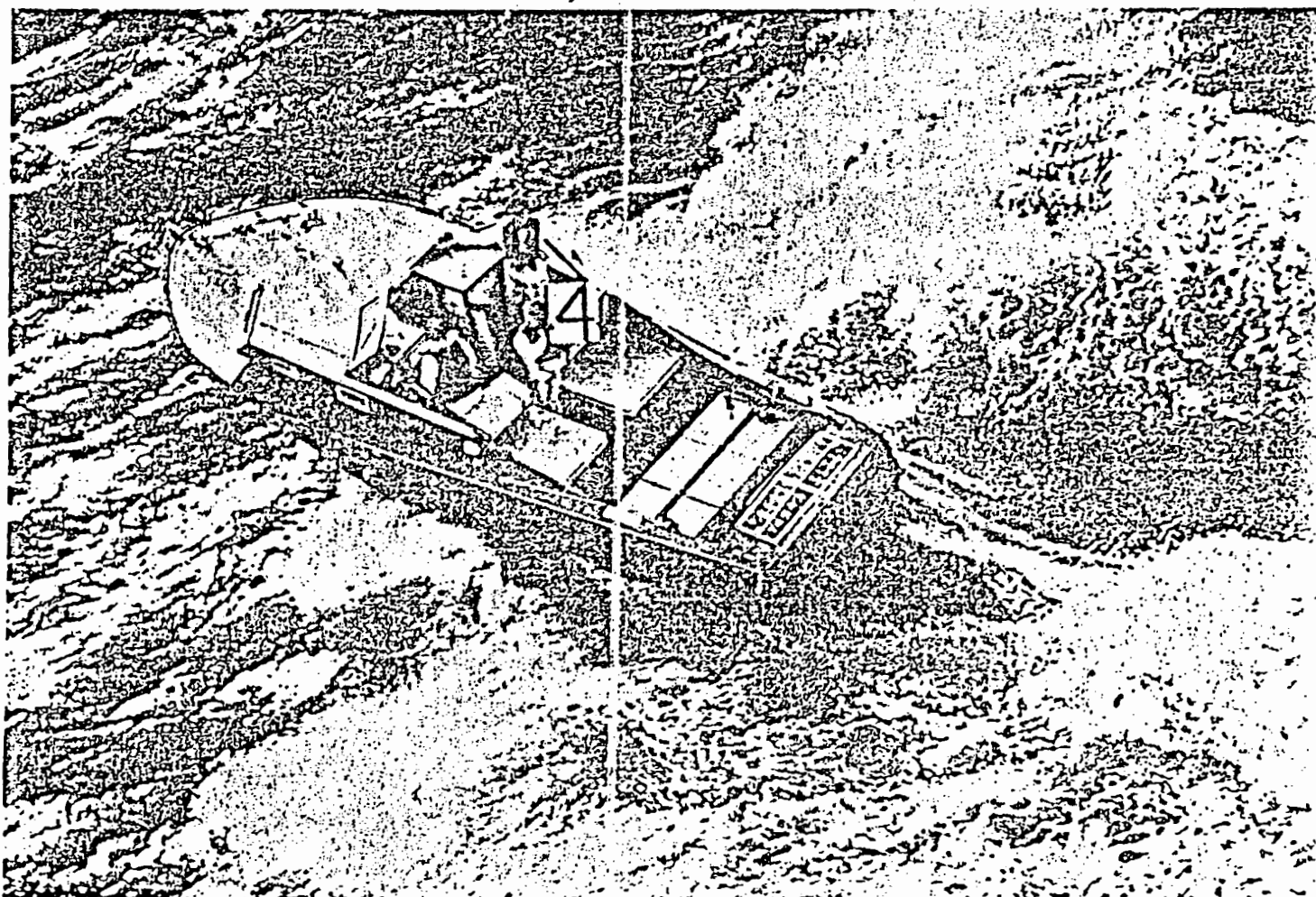
### The cowboys of JM WAVE

**A**NOTHER KIND OF VOLUNTEER prominent in the secret war was perhaps best exemplified by the late William (Rip) Robertson. Robertson represented a special breed of CIA operative—men with names like Boy Scout and Rudy and Mike—who led the military side of the secret war. They were not case officers—the bureaucrats and diplomats who comprise the Agency's permanent staff. Instead, they were independent specialists under renewable contract to the CIA, known as "paramilitaries," "PMs," or "cow-

boys." Ray Cline explained their role in the Agency's work: "You need to understand the national consensus of the 1950s and '60s, when we believed the world was a tough place filled with actual threats of subversion by other countries. The Russians had cowboys around everywhere, and that meant we had to get ourselves a lot of cowboys if we wanted to play the game. You've got to have cowboys—the only thing is you don't let them make policy. You keep them in the ranch house when you don't have a specific project for them."

At the time of his arrival in Miami in the summer of 1961, Robertson already had become a figure of romance. He had fought behind the lines in Korea for the CIA, and he had endeared himself to the CIA's Cuban agents by his performance at the Bay of Pigs. Despite President Kennedy's orders that no Americans land in the invasion, Robertson was the first man ashore on one of the beaches. Later, when Castro's forces started routing the invaders, he went back in voluntarily to rescue survivors. In Washington, during the investigation into the CIA's handling of the invasion, Robertson appeared as a witness and talked at length with Robert Kennedy. He told his Cuban-commandos that Kennedy was all right, which they took as a high compliment, since Robertson hated all politicians.

Rip Robertson was close to fifty by the time he started running paramilitary operations against Castro. He was a big man, about six foot two, with a perpetual slouch and wrinkled clothes. Everything about him was unconventional.



Robertson, a CIA operative, is shown here in the CIA's secret navy in 1959. Later, he supplied larger craft than this 26-footer.



He wore a baseball cap and glasses tied behind his head with a string, and always had a pulp novel stuffed in his back pocket. From the military point of view, nothing looked right about his appearance, but to the Cubans he was an idol who represented the best part of the American spirit and the hope of the secret war. Ramon Orozco, one of his commandos, remembers what the paramilitary operations were like:

"After the Bay of Pigs is when the great heroic deeds of Rip really began. I was on one of his teams, but he controlled many teams and many operations. And everything was good through 1963. Our team made more than seven big war missions. Some of them were huge: the attacks on the Texaco refinery, the Russian ships in Oriente Province, a big lumberyard, the Patrice Lumumba sulfuric acid plant at Santa Lucía, and the diesel plant at Casilda. But they never let us fight as much as we wanted to, and most of the operations were infiltrations and weapons drops.

"We would go on missions to Cuba almost every week. When we didn't go, Rip would feel sick and get very mad. He was always blowing off his steam, but then he would call us his boys, and he would hug us and hit us in the stomach. He was always trying to crank us up for the missions. Once he told me, 'I'll give you \$50 if you bring me back an ear.' I brought him two, and he laughed and said, 'You're crazy,' but he paid me \$100, and he took us to his house for a turkey dinner. Rip was a patriot, an American patriot. Really, I think he was a fanatic. He'd fight anything that came against democracy. He fought with the Company in Korea, in Cuba, and then he went to Vietnam. He never stopped, but he also went to church and he practiced democracy."

At the end of December, 1961, Orozco went on a ten-day operation with a seven-man team. The commandos blew up a railroad bridge and watched a train run off the ruptured tracks. Then they burned down a sugar warehouse, and on Christmas Day, with a detachment of militia apparently in pursuit, they sought to escape in their rubber boat to an intermediary ship on which Rip and Martinez waited for them. By this time, the American officers were not supposed to be going into Cuban waters, much less to the shore, and Rip had already been reprimanded for his previous adventures. Nevertheless, when his commandos missed their first rendezvous, Rip loaded a rubber boat with rockets and recoilless rifles, ordered another commando, Nestor Izquierdo, to get in with him, and then motored up and down the coast looking for signs of his men. He was back on Martinez's ship when Orozco called him from the shore.

"We had a problem with the motor when we finally got in the boat. I had just shot some guy with an M-3 silencer, and we had to get out, so we radioed Rip with the distress signal: 'Pittsburgh, Pittsburgh.' Well, Rip came right into the bay. When we saw him, we said, 'That is the old man for you.' We called him the old man. And then he called out, 'Come on, my boys!' Later he told me why he had to come in for us. 'I couldn't lose the crazy guy,' he said. He always called me the crazy guy."

Despite orders, Rip continued to go on operations with his commandos. His superiors became so angry that they resorted to ordering the Cuban boat captains not to allow him to board the intermediary ships that took the teams to the shore. One of the boat captains from those days, now a

Washington lawyer, recalled the futility of this restraint:

"Rip was not supposed to get on the intermediary boat 'not under any conditions.' One time, he was on my mother ship, and his boys were about to go on an operation. Rip said he felt sick, very sick, and then he goes down in the ship as if he is going to lie down. The next minute there is Rip with his face all black with charcoal, and he is wearing the uniform of the commandos—the hat and everything—and he is all slouched down in the boat in the middle of the men pretending he is not Rip. People knew it was him, but what could we do?"

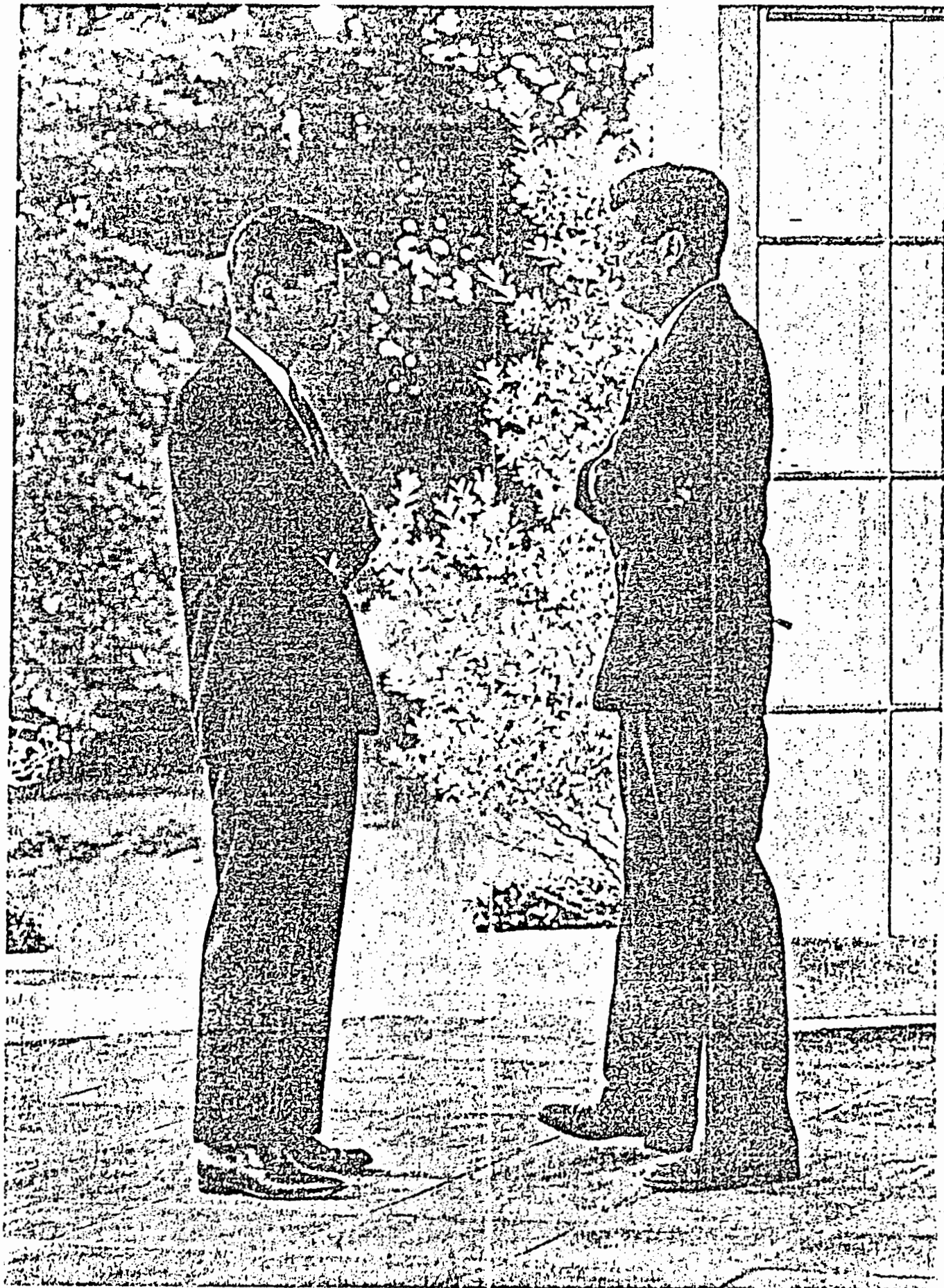
"I loved Rip, but oh, my God! He was not the kind of man you want as your enemy. If the United States had just 200 Rips, it wouldn't have any problems in the world. He loved war, but it was very difficult for him to adjust to the kind of warfare we were making. He wanted an open war, and we were waging a silent one."

**U**NDER THE BEST OF CIRCUMSTANCES, the paramilitaries were a hard group to control, but the problem was particularly intense during the secret war because they came to identify so closely with their Cuban agents and with the cause of wresting Cuba from Castro, whom they saw as a simple tool of the Russians. They were creatures of the Cold War, responding to the new call from the tough young President who was not about to tolerate a Communist menace just ninety miles from Florida. It was a time of high winds and strong feelings in politics. As the case officer who worked with Robertson remarked: "It's almost impossible today to put yourself back in those times when idealism ran so high, and we felt we were on a crusade against evil, but that was what we felt."

"People think of the CIA's paramilitary officers as thugs. But you would be amazed to meet them. In Miami there was every conceivable kind of person represented in the paramilitary units. Some had Ph.D.s, and some had gone to Ivy League schools. There were a few who had lots of money, and of course there were some adventurer types. All of them were very emotional about their work. I've seen lots of them cry at their failures, and there were many failures because of the high casualties on these operations."

The difficulties of control were so great that the Agency often didn't know which missions were leaving in which directions. The various Cuban movements often wanted independent raids to build their stature and reputation among the anti-Castro Cubans. Some wanted to impress the Company with their skills in the hope of obtaining jobs and financial support, while others went on their own in order to escape CIA restrictions and control. JM WAVE gave some of these raids the green light of encouragement, some the yellow light of toleration, and others the red light of disapproval—in which event the FBI or Immigration or the Coast Guard would be alerted to enforce the law.

The confused maze of anti-Castro activity in South Florida during the secret war included everything from officially organized, elaborate CIA teams to impromptu groups of zealous students seeking to make a name for themselves. This vagueness was well suited to the purposes of JM WAVE. To the extent that an attack on Cuba was independent, it cut down on the station's enormous budget. And the existence of the independent movements helped mask the station's own



activities: even an official CIA commando raid could be passed off as the work of uncontrollable Cuban groups. The Cuban agents themselves would not know the status of a raid carried out by people outside their compartment, and there would be endless speculation in Miami about how much support the Company had given a commando raid here or an offshore mortar shelling there. Newspaper reports—"Alpha 66 Hits Castro Sugar Mill"—settled nothing, of course, for the agents knew they could mean anything.

Perhaps the most famous of the quasi-independent attacks took place on August 24, 1962, when six young Cubans piloted a boat to within 200 yards of the shore near Havana and shelled the Blanquita Hotel. All six of the commandos had been trained by the Company and worked for both JM WAVE and for the Revolutionary Student Directorate. The boat they used, a thirty-one-foot Bertram named the *Juanin*, belonged to the Directorate, as did the weapons for the attack—a recoilless rifle, two fifty-caliber machine guns, and a twenty-millimeter cannon, all purchased from Mafia gun dealers in Miami. The idea for the Blanquita Hotel attack originated shortly after one of the commandos, Carlos ("Batea") Hernandez, returned from an official JM WAVE mission to disrupt that year's International Socialist Youth Conference in Helsinki. When Batea landed at Miami Airport, one of his friends in the Directorate met him with word that an underworld contact was offering a twenty-millimeter cannon for sale at a bargain price of \$300. Batea bought the cannon, and planned an attack based on intelligence that Czech and Russian military advisers, then coming into Cuba in large numbers, gathered for parties every Friday night at the Blanquita.

The *Juanin* sailed into the harbor at Miramar, a suburb of Havana, and got so close that Batea remembers seeing the lights in the ballroom and the uniforms of the soldiers. His companions opened up with a five-minute barrage at point-blank range, inflicting heavy damages on the hotel before returning to Miami at reckless speed.

Castro denounced the Blanquita attack so loudly that it was banner news in the world press. The Justice Department announced that the perpetrators of the attack had been identified, and that further acts of that nature would be prosecuted as violations of the Neutrality Act. JM WAVE announced nothing.

### The semantics of assassination

**D**URING THE EARLY YEARS of the secret war, the authorization for the overall policies and for potentially embarrassing operations emanated from the 303 Committee (now known as the 40 Committee), through which the President controlled missions related to national security. Many of the men who sat on those committees now acknowledge that the commando raids and sabotage operations were approved at the highest levels of the U.S. government, but it is hard to find anyone who remembers supporting them. Marine Gen. Victor ("Brute") Krulak and his assistant, Col. Jack L. Hawkins, were in charge of coordinating the Pentagon's counterinsurgency forces. Krulak sat on the committee that authorized the Cuban raids, and Hawkins represented him on a lower-level committee that

met to consider other acts of sabotage against Cuban gets. Both of them say they were skeptical of the tactic best. "The object in Cuba was not to put down an insurgency," said Hawkins, "but to develop one.... The war was done by the Agency. I remember them blowing up a refinery and making efforts to burn up sugar fields—things like that—but none of them was very successful. I don't know why they were doing it. What happens in these things is that the bureaucrats fall in love with their operations and rational thought just flies out the window."

Gen. Maxwell Taylor, President Kennedy's chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, offered the staunchest defense of the paramilitary side of the secret war. "Just bear in mind," he said recently, "that this was a period of general frustration after the Bay of Pigs over what to do about Castro. After all, Castro was setting up training facilities and inviting Latin-American Communists to come to Cuba to learn how to spread the revolution, and there were a host of a lot of those people. When you have an unpleasant neighbor who is kicking you in the shins, you ask yourself, 'Can't I just retaliate a bit and remind him that we're still around?' They [the raids] weren't completely rash, however. Otherwise we would have discouraged them. But in strategic sense they weren't anything more than just pinpricks."

CIA officials now admit disarmingly that the pinpricks were part of the general strategy of the secret war, but they point out that they were merely following the directive set forth by the White House. And insofar as Cuban operations were concerned, the White House tended to mean Robert F. Kennedy. Both Krulak and Hawkins saw him as the moving force behind the policy, as did Under Secretary of State George Ball. "Bobby was always for that kind of thing," Ball said. "He always used to go to the 303 Committee; he was fascinated by all that covert stuff, counterinsurgency and all the garbage that went with it."

**T**HERE WAS A CERTAIN CHARM about the way in which Robert Kennedy pursued his enemies. His infectious idealism transformed the dry world of government memos into a crusade against the devil, whether it were James Hoffa, organized crime, Fidel Castro, or the Vietnam war. Like Nixon, he was ruthless. But, unlike Nixon, he was convinced that the world would be on his side. The word most bandied about inside the Kennedy Administration was *tough*, while outside everyone spoke of Camelot.

Kennedy and the CIA waged a secret war against Castro partly out of the combatants' vindictiveness and partly out of a commitment to the democratic crusade. "I remember that period so vividly," said Ray Cline. "We were so wrapped up in what the President wanted. Bobby was as emotional as he could be [about Cuba], and he always talked like he was the President, and he really was in a way. He was always bugging the Agency about the Cubans. I don't doubt that talk of assassinating Castro was part of Bobby's discussion with some Agency people."

There were a number of high-level discussions about assassinating Castro, even before the Cuban missile crisis, mostly arising out of frustration with Castro's success as a Cold War adversary. It was an era when, as former national security adviser McGeorge Bundy recently remarked, "We



used to sit around the White House all the time thinking how nice it would be if such and such a leader did not exist." General Lansdale says that he chaired one meeting at which an assassination proposal was made. Richard Goodwin, who chaired a White House task force on Cuba, said that at one of the meetings Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara advocated killing Castro. "I was surprised and appalled to hear McNamara propose this," said Goodwin. "It was at the close of a Cuba task force session, and he said that Castro's assassination was the only productive way of dealing with Cuba." Goodwin believes that Robert Kennedy might have stimulated such methods only indirectly, perhaps unaware of the knight's compulsion to fulfill the king's every wish: "To the extent that Bobby was involved in anything, it would have been like Henry II asking rhetorically, 'Who will free me of this turbulent priest?' and then the zealots going out and doing it."

**W**HETHER OR NOT THE ZEALOTS received direct orders from the President or Attorney General, they did receive orders to eliminate Castro from power in Cuba. The secret war was the result of that policy, and Castro's assassination, if not specified, was a logical objective of that war. Acting on the President's authority, JM WAVE trained several thousand Cubans in guerrilla tactics, armed them with weapons and explosives, and sent them down to the Caribbean with hopes of glory. All of them sought to end Castro's hold on Cuba, and many of them made their own attempts on Castro's life, in the impromptu tradition of the attack on the Blanquita Hotel. By the end of 1961, several men affiliated with the CIA had already been foiled in attempts to kill him, among them Luis Toroella (executed), Eloy Gutierrez Menoyo (still imprisoned), William Morgan (executed), and Antonio Veciana (escaped to the United States). Had these men succeeded, their efforts would have been tied to the U.S. only indirectly, if at all. Certainly their failures did not cause the embarrassments of the Bay of Pigs, and even a successful assassination by any one of them would have been impossible to trace to the Oval Office.

To the CIA's Cuban agents who fought in the secret war the search for proof of officially sanctioned plots seems somewhat absurd. Martinez described it as largely a question of semantics: "There was an attempt by this country to overthrow Castro, and it was not to be by elections," he says. "It was to be by war. The papers now want to say there were plots. Well, I can tell you there were plots. I took a lot of weapons to Cuba. Some of them were very special weapons for special purposes. They were powerful rifles with sophisticated scopes—Springfields with bolt actions, rifles only used by snipers. They were not sent to shoot pigeons or kill rabbits. Everyone in the underground was plotting to kill Castro, and the CIA was helping the underground. I was with the underground, as well as with the CIA, so you could say I was involved in the plots, too, but that is all so obvious."

Ray Cline made a similar point: "I'm almost positive that there was no serious CIA-controlled effort to assassinate anybody," he said, "but I think the intention of some infiltration teams was to do it. It was the spirit of lots of Cubans and lots of the CIA case officers."

**I**N AUGUST OF 1961, just as the secret war was beginning to take shape, White House adviser Richard Goodwin found himself at a party in Uruguay with Ernesto (Che) Guevara. The chance encounter led to a conversation which seemed to sum up the contradictions inherent in all of the American efforts to overthrow Castro.

Guevara began by asking Goodwin to thank Kennedy for the Bay of Pigs invasion. Before then, he said, Castro had held a tenuous grip on the Cuban revolution, with the economy in chaos and numerous internal factions plotting against him. But the invasion, Guevara said jovially, had assured Castro's hold on the country. It had made him even more of a hero, as the man who had defended Cuba against the greatest power in the world. Goodwin, by his own account, acknowledged the backhanded compliment and asked Guevara to return the favor by invading the U.S. Naval Base at Guantanamo, Cuba. This would give Kennedy a pretext for openly using America's overwhelming military force, releasing him from the clandestine restrictions of the secret war. Guevara smiled and said that Castro would never be so stupid.

Neither Castro nor John Kennedy was politically stupid, but they acted against each other in an atmosphere of mutual paranoia and vengeance that eventually came to the world's attention as the Cuban missile crisis. To Fidel Castro, who was attempting to become the first Cuban leader in history with a power base independent of the United States, Kennedy was a necessary but dangerous enemy. In a sense, Castro needed both the Bay of Pigs and the secret war to help him turn Cuba's revolutionary tradition into a war of independence against the United States, and he made constant speeches to his people about the new American threat. "Imperialism was shocked by the Bay of Pigs," he said, "but now they are at it again. Their strategy includes forming mercenary groups, sabotage groups, fifth columnists, terrorists, and bands of counterrevolutionaries." While Castro found U.S. hostility helpful to the task of maintaining national unity within Cuba, he was uncertain of Kennedy's intentions, and he knew that the very survival of his regime depended upon his holding the balance between useful little wars and a fatal big one.

By the summer of 1962 the economic warfare had a real effect on Castro, more than offsetting the political gain he had achieved within Cuba. The Cuban economy was deteriorating and had become more dependent on the Soviet Union than it had been on the United States. In addition, the people were afraid that the commando raids and paramilitary missions prefigured a new invasion. Castro had triumphed at the Bay of Pigs, but, sooner or later, his luck would run out. Castro turned to the Soviet Union for military protection as well as for economic support, and he began receiving Russian missiles in the summer. For all practical purposes, it was an act tantamount to invading Guantanamo, and so Castro tried to do it secretly.

From President Kennedy's perspective, the events of mid-1962 were as alarming and fateful as they were to Castro. Signs of the Communist advance filled the news. Castro loudly proclaimed his goal of spreading the revolution across Latin America, and at the same time the number of new



## THE KENNEDY VENDETTA

refugees from Communist Cuba lined constant at about 3,000 a week. Some came on the Pan American flights from Havana, some on commandeered yachts, and others on homemade life rafts. All of them brought horror stories about life under the Cuban dictatorship and only those personal possessions they could carry in a single suitcase. When the refugees landed at Opa-Locka Air Force Base, where the CIA maintained a massive debriefing facility, at least one of them would bend down and kiss the earth. In the debriefing sessions, many of the refugees told of the growing Russian presence in Cuba, which was not difficult to see. By the fall, there were 20,000 Russian soldiers and teams of Russian laborers there, working secretly to assemble the nuclear missiles. This word filtered up through the CIA to President Kennedy, for whom the Russian presence carried the electric political meaning of the Berlin Wall.

ON OCTOBER 15, the day Kennedy was told that U-2 photographs confirmed the existence of Russian missiles in Cuba, Martinez and his boat crew were called to their base at Summer Land Key and told that they would leave immediately on a mission. For several months, they had been preparing for one of their biggest operations—the destruction of the Matalambre copper mines in Pinar del Río Province. The ore from the mines, which accounted for 1 percent of Cuba's gross national product, was carried to the port of Santa Lucía along a twelve-kilometer elevated cable-car system, supported by giant towers. CIA planners had determined that production could be halted for a full year if the towers were knocked out.

Twice before, JM WAVE had sent teams to Cuba to blow up the mines. The first time, in late 1961, two of the American paramilitary commanders had gone along to direct the operation. In preparation for the mission, CIA technicians constructed a full-scale model of one of the cable-car towers, and the commandos practiced their demolition tactics for weeks. Everything appeared to have been taken into account. But halfway to Cuba the ship's motor conked out, the radio battery went dead, and the team was left floating helplessly in the Caribbean.

The mission was typical of many CIA operations—everything would be planned down to the last second, and then some quirk or accident would throw the mission awry. In the summer of 1962 Martinez took the commandos back for a second try, but the team met a patrol of Castro militia and retreated to the ships.

As the agents listened to the October 15 briefing, they realized that there was a special urgency attached to the mission. "You do it," they were told, "or don't bother to come back alive." The next day, Martinez, his boat crew, and the eight commandos left base on the Agency's 150-foot mother ship. By the time they left the mother ship for Martinez's intermediary boat on the night of October 18, one of the largest amphibious invasion forces since World War II was beginning to assemble in Florida and neighboring states. The Army's 82nd and 101st Airborne Divisions were ordered ready for immediate deployment, and 40,000 Marines stood ready as part of an amphibious task force in the Caribbean, with another 5,000 Marines on alert at Guantanamo. In all, the Army gathered 100,000 troops in the southern United States.

WHEN THE COMMANDOS LANDED on the coast of Pinar del Río Province, they split up to set the C-4 charges around the cable-car towers. Before they could do so, some of them were seen by a Cuban patrol, and Martinez saw militia search flares light up the night skies. He waited in his boat near the shore, and six of the commandos made it out to him after a brief fire fight. Martinez waited an hour for the other two to return, and then went out to sea. He returned the next night, and again the night after that.

On October 22, Martinez took the boat in close to shore at dusk, with an infrared light serving as a beacon for the two lost commandos. The boat was within shouting range of the coast when the radio operator said that the President was about to make an address to the nation. The men turned the radio on low, expecting Kennedy to announce a new crisis in Berlin or a new stance on rising steel prices. Instead, the subject was Cuba, and the President was saying everything the Cubans wanted to hear about the Russians and the missiles and the need for the United States to act. It was all too much for the ship's navigator, who grabbed the radio and put it on full volume. "He was so happy," Martinez later recalled, "that he didn't care if anyone could hear the speech from the coast. We had to make him turn it down."

Back at the base, Martinez was approached by a high-ranking JM WAVE official who said the U.S. was about to invade Cuba and asked Martinez if he would be willing to parachute into Pinar del Río, his old province, in advance of the American troops. Hundreds of the CIA's other Cuban agents were ordered to stand by for landings in which they would mark the beaches and serve as guides for paratroop units.

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## A second wave

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WHEN THE CRISIS PASSED and most of the world felt relieved to have survived it, the Cuban agents were disappointed but not despairing. They believed that Kennedy, having stared "eyeball to eyeball" at Nikita Khrushchev and won, had acquired renewed confidence in his capacity to overthrow Castro. They felt the momentum swinging their way, and their spirits were buoyed still higher when they learned that Kennedy was pressing his advantage in the negotiations for the release of the 1,179 Bay of Pigs survivors still in Cuban jails. Castro's ransom price was \$53 million, in drugs, medical supplies, and cash. "Both of the Kennedys felt a real sense of obligation to get those people out of jail," said Ray Cline. "They felt guilty and ashamed in the face of the refugees still down there in Dade County; they couldn't stay away from them, but they also couldn't face them. Both of them, particularly Bobby, spent countless hours getting the drug manufacturers to get those guys out. There's kind of a historical parallel here. They must have felt like the Plumbers when they found out the Cubans were in jail over Watergate. The question was how to get them out. Who's going to do it, will John Mitchell do it? It was pure bribery, what they did with the drug manufacturers. They raised almost \$60 million from them, and it was simply a matter of twisting arms."

On December 29, 1962, exactly a week after the return



President Kennedy in Miami shaking hands with former Cuban invasion prisoners on December 29, 1962.

Wide World

of the soldiers, President Kennedy and his wife flew to Miami to welcome them back. Forty thousand Cubans—including virtually all of JM WAVE's Cuban agents—turned out for the ceremonies in the Orange Bowl, and there was a wild celebration of tears and shouts when the President inspected the troops. The brigade members stood proudly at attention even though several were still on crutches. In a gesture of gratitude, one of the commanders gave Kennedy the brigade's flag for his safekeeping, and Kennedy unfurled the flag as he stepped up to the microphone at the fifty-yard line. "I want to express my great appreciation to the brigade for making the United States the custodian of this flag," he said, in a voice rising with obvious emotion. "I can assure you that this flag will be returned to this brigade in a free Havana."

Sheer bedlam reigned for a few minutes before Kennedy could continue his speech: "Your conduct and valor are proof that although Castro and his fellow dictators may rule nations, they do not rule people; that they may imprison bodies, but they do not imprison spirits; that they may destroy the exercise of liberty, but they cannot eliminate the determination to be free."

The Cubans were overjoyed. The President of the United States had joined them not only with his presence and his authority but also with his feelings. Within two months the second and by far the most intense phase of the secret war against Castro had begun. Instead of calling previous Cuban policies into question, the missile crisis seemed to provide

further justification for the conduct of the secret war. Hardly anybody in Washington allowed for the possibility that the secret war may have persuaded Castro to welcome Russian nuclear weapons in Cuba as a means of guaranteeing his own survival. The lesson drawn was that Communist influence must be snuffed out quickly—preferably by covert means—else dominoes fall and new threats of nuclear exchanges ensue.

American policy in this era came to resemble a terrible Rube Goldberg machine fashioning ever more menacing confrontations out of the humiliation of past defeats. It is impossible to know to what extent the secret war, with its hundreds of American case officers and its thousands of Cuban agents, shaped succeeding events. But the men who directed the war and the tactics they employed were to be seen encroaching on the news of the next ten years.

Ted Shackley, the station chief of JM WAVE, packed his bags and took his aides with him to orchestrate a new secret war in Laos and then to direct the underground aspects of the war in Vietnam. Rip Robertson and his fellow paramilitary cowboys also joined in the effort and helped run the Phoenix program. And the CIA's Cuban agents began the confusing trek that would change them from trusted government agents into common criminals. During the same period the two Kennedys would be assassinated, and President Nixon, employing both the tactics and the veterans of the secret war, would attempt a covert attack against the American system itself. □

# COMMENTARY

## ON POLICY

WHEN AN EVIL HAS SPRUNG UP WITHIN A STATE, OR COME UPON IT FROM WITHOUT, IT IS SAFER TO TEMPORIZE WITH IT RATHER THAN TO ATTACK IT VIOLENTLY

As the Roman republic grew in reputation, power, and dominion, the neighboring tribes, who at first had not thought of how great a danger this new republic might prove to them, began (too late, however) to see their error; and wishing to remedy their first neglect, they united full forty tribes in a league against Rome. Hereupon the Romans resorted, amongst other measures which they were accustomed to employ in urgent dangers, to the creation of a dictator; that is to say, they gave the power to one man, who, without consulting anyone else, could determine upon any course, and could have it carried into effect without any appeal. This measure, which on former occasions had proved most useful in overcoming imminent perils, was equally serviceable to them in all the critical events that occurred during the growth and development of the power of the republic. Upon this subject we must remark, first, that when any evil arises within a republic or threatens it from without, that is to say, from an intrinsic or extrinsic cause, and has become so great as to fill every one with apprehension, the more certain remedy by far is to temporize with it, rather than to attempt to extirpate it; for almost invariably he who attempts to crush it will rather increase its force, and will accelerate the harm apprehended from it. And such evils arise more frequently in a republic from intrinsic than extrinsic causes, as it often occurs that a citizen is allowed to acquire more authority than is proper; or that changes are permitted in a law which is the very nerve and life of liberty; and then they let this evil go so far that it becomes more hazardous to correct it than to allow it to run on. And it is the more difficult to recognize these evils at their origin, as it seems natural to men always to favor the beginning of things; and these favors are more readily accorded to such acts as seem to have some merit in them, and are done by young men. For if in a republic a noble youth is seen to rise, who is possessed of some extraordinary merits, the eyes of all citizens quickly turn to him, and all hasten to show him honor, regardless of consequences; so that, if he is in any way ambitious, the gifts of nature and the favor of his fellow citizens will soon raise him to such a height that, when the citizens become sensible of the error they have committed, they have no longer the requisite means for checking him, and their efforts to employ such as they have will only accelerate his advance to power....

I say, then, that inasmuch as it is difficult to know these evils at their first origin, owing to an illusion which all new things are apt to produce, the wiser course is to temporize with such evils when they are

recognized, instead of violently attacking them; for by temporizing with them they will either die out of themselves, or at least their worst results will be long deferred. And princes or magistrates who wish to destroy such evils must watch all points, and must be careful in attacking them not to increase instead of diminishing them, for they must not believe that a fire can be extinguished by blowing upon it. They should carefully examine the extent and force of the evil, and if they think themselves sufficiently strong to combat it, then they should attack it regardless of consequences; otherwise they should let it be, and in no wise attempt it. For it will always happen... as it did happen to the neighboring tribes of Rome, who found that it would have been more advantageous, after Rome had grown so much in power, to placate and keep her within her limits by peaceful means, than by warlike measures to make her think of new institutions and new defenses. For their league had no other effect than to unite the people of Rome more closely, and to make them more ready for war, and to cause them to adopt new institutions that enabled them in a brief time to increase their power.

—Niccolò Machiavelli, 1520

From *The Discourses*, translated by Christian Detmold.  
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## ON WAR

Famine, plague, and war are the three most celebrated ingredients of this world of ours. In the category of famine can be included all the bad food to which scarcity obliges us to resort, abridging our life in the hope of sustaining it. In plague are comprised all the contagious diseases, which number two or three thousand. These two gifts come to us from providence. But war, which unites all these benefits, comes to us from the imaginations of three or four hundred persons scattered over the surface of this globe under the names of princes or ministers; and it is perhaps for this reason that in many a dedication they are called the living images of divinity.

The most determined flatterer will readily agree that war always drags plague and famine in its train if he has glimpsed the hospitals of the armies in Germany and has been in certain villages in which some great warlike exploit has been performed.

It is certainly a very fine art that desolates the countryside, destroys dwellings, and brings death to 40,000 out of 100,000 men in an average year.\* This invention was at first cultivated by nations assembled for their common good. For instance, the Greek diet

\*This form of words appears in all the editions, but the figures are clearly impossible: a mortality rate of 40-per cent in war would long since have extinguished the human race; Voltaire no doubt wrote that 40,000-100,000 men were killed every year in war.



## COMMENTARY

informed the diet of the Phrygians and neighboring peoples that it intended to set out in a thousand fishing boats to exterminate them if it could.

The assembled Roman people judged it to be in its interest to go before the harvest to fight the Veians or the Volscians. And a few years later all the Romans, furious against the Carthaginians, long fought on land and sea. That is not the way things happen nowadays.

A genealogist proves to a prince that he is the direct descendant of a count whose relatives had made a family pact three or four hundred years ago with a house whose very name has left no memory. This house had remote pretensions to a province whose last owner had just died of apoplexy. The prince and his council conclude without difficulty that the province belongs to him by divine right. This province, which is some hundreds of leagues distant, protests in vain that it does not know him, that it has no wish to be governed by him, that one must at least have a people's consent before legislating for it. These discourses do not even reach the ears of the prince whose rights are incontestable. He immediately finds a great number of men who have nothing to do nor to lose. He dresses them in heavy blue cloth at 110 sous the ell, puts a heavy white cord round their hats, makes them turn right and left, and marches to glory.

The other princes who hear of this escapade take part in it, each according to his means, and occupy a small piece of land with more mercenary murderers than Genghis Khan, Tamerlane, Bajazet ever dragged in their train.

Fairly distant peoples hear that there is going to be fighting, and that five or six sous a day can be earned if they care to take part. They at once divide themselves into two troops like harvesters, and go off to sell their services to anyone who wants to employ them. These multitudes go for one another, not only without having any interest in the proceedings, but even without knowing what they are about.

Five or six belligerent powers can be seen at once, now three against three, now two against four, now one against five, all equally hating each other, uniting and fighting with each other turn and turn about, all agreed on a single point: to do as much harm as possible.

What is marvelous about this infernal undertaking is that each chief of murderers has his banners blessed and solemnly invokes God before he sets off to exterminate his neighbors. If a chief has had the good fortune to have only two or three thousand men butchered, he does not thank God for it. But when about 10,000 have been exterminated by fire and sword, and, by a crowning grace, some town has been destroyed from top to bottom, then they sing a rather long four-part song, composed in a language unknown to all those who fought, besides being crammed with barbarisms. The same song serves for marriages and births, as well as murders: which is unpardonable, especially in the nation most famous for new songs.

*From time to time Commentary will publish the observations of prior witnesses whose remarks pertain to the day's news. Harper's continues to welcome brief contributions from any of its readers who find themselves moved to passion by the statement.*

Natural religion has a thousand times prevented citizens from committing crimes. A well-bred soul has no wish to commit them. A tender soul is afraid of them, remembering a just and vengeful god. But artificial religion encourages all the cruelties done in association, conspiracies, seditions, robbery, ambushes, attacks on towns, pillages, murders. Each one marches gaily off to crime under the banner of his saint.

A certain number of orators are everywhere paid to celebrate these blood-stained days. Some wear long black jackets, doubled by abridged cloaks; others have shirts over gowns; some wear two slings of motley cloth over their shirts. All talk for a long time. When it is about a battle in Veteravia, they refer to what was done of old in Palestine.

The rest of the year these people declaim against the vices. They prove by three points and by antitheses that ladies who lightly spread a little rouge on their fresh cheeks will be the eternal objects of the eternal vengeance of the eternal; that *Polyeucte* and *Athalie* are the works of the demon; that a man who has 200 crowns' worth of seafood served at his table in Lent infallibly brings about his salvation, and that a poor man who eats two and half sous' worth of mutton goes forever to all the devils.

Out of five or six thousand declamations of this kind there are three or four at most, composed by a Gaul called Massillon, that an upright man can read without disgust. But among all these discourses there are hardly two\* in which the orator dares to protest against this scourge and this crime of war, which comprises all scourges and all crimes. The wretched orators speak ceaselessly against love, which is mankind's only consolation and the only way of perpetuating it. They say nothing about the abominable efforts we make to destroy it.

O Bourdaloue! You have delivered a very bad sermon against impurity, but none on these variegated murders, these rapines, these pillages, this universal fury that desolates the world. The united vices of all the ages and of all places will never equal the evils produced by a single campaign.

Wretched physicians of souls, you declaim for five quarters of an hour about some pinprick, and you say nothing about the disease that tears us into a thousand pieces! Philosophical moralists, burn all your books. So long as the whim of a few men causes thousands of our brothers to be honorably butchered, the portion of mankind devoted to heroism will be the most frightful thing in the whole of nature.

What becomes of and what do I care about humanity, benevolence, modesty, temperance, tenderness, wisdom, piety, when half a pound of lead shot from 600 paces shatters my body, and I die at the age of twenty in agony beyond words, in the midst of five or six thousand dying men, while my eyes, opening for the last time, see the town in which I was born destroyed by sword and fire, and the last sounds I hear are the cries of women and children expiring under the ruins, all for the alleged benefit of a man I do not know? — Voltaire, 1764

\*Here we have a good example of Voltaire's scrupulous justice: he originally wrote "not a single one."

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