

A CLOAK-AND-DAG

By STEVE DUNLEAVY

Watergate burglar Frank Sturgis and the woman he is accused of threatening are a pair of spies straight from the pages of James Bond and who once plotted together to kill Cuban dictator Fidel Castro.

It was Sturgis, while working as Castro's security chief in 1959, who recruited the German-born beauty and used her to steal vital plans for Russian missile sites in Cuba.

And it was Sturgis who helped smuggle Marita Lorenz out of Cuba when she became Castro's "live-in" prisoner and who later recruited her for a mission to return to Cuba to make a vain attempt to poison the dictator.

THREE-HOUR TALK

Their cloak-and-dagger story was revealed to me by the couple in a three-hour conversation at the West Side Holiday Inn

here.

Sturgis, a vehement anti-Communist, said: "Let me tell you, Marita is a girl with more guts than 20 male secret agents."

BEGAN IN 1959

"I have been involved in several plots on Castro's life. He is a murdering butcher responsible for the death of countless Americans and many personal friends of mine."

Their hair-raising partnership goes back to 1959

when Miss Lorenz, an attractive 19-year-old, was on board the luxury liner, Berlin, captained by her father, Heinrich Lorenz.

The vessel was docked in Havana harbor when Castro and his machine-gun toting band of bearded revolutionaries boarded it. Miss Lorenz was captivated by Castro and went to work for him as a secretary. They soon became lovers.

"But after a while it

GER DUO

was apparent I was nothing but a live-in prisoner, locked in the top suite of the Havana Hilton," she explained.

Meanwhile Sturgis, who had fought with Castro in the revolution, had become his air force security chief. "But," he said, "by this time, I had long been disillusioned with him because it was obvious he was a Communist, which I hated."

Sturgis said: I became a double-agent working for

the CIA. I was getting excellent information from Juan Orta, Castro's secretary, but I needed more. Marita came along." Sturgis knew she wanted to end her affair with Castro.

TOOK A RISK

One night Castro appeared in the lobby of the Riviera Hotel with Miss Lorenz and his entourage of bodyguards. It was then that Sturgis took a risk that could have cost him his life on the spot.

"I sidled up to her, got her alone and told her straight out that I was an agent with the American Embassy and I wanted to help her — but for a price. I wanted information."

Sturgis recalls: "Marita was the only person who really had access to Castro's suite. I agreed to get her out of Cuba if she could steal papers and documents from the cabinet in his suite." Castro's cabinet was never locked and was stuffed with guns, money and documents.

'NEVER MISSED'

Miss Lorenz recounts: "I didn't know what I was looking for. I just put my hands into wads of papers not knowing what they were." But one load she stole provided to be the original groundwork plans for the Russian missile sites.

"Fidel never even missed them. He was so disorganized. Paper, cigar butts were all over the place," she said.

Sturgis was ecstatic. "She was smart and beautiful. I had a contact in Castro's office and his bedroom. I had him pretty well tabbed." Sturgis turned his information over to the American Embassy.

'AN OBSESSION'

True to his promise, Sturgis smuggled Marita

onto a U. S.-bound plane late in 1959. "I had to keep my word," he said as he sipped a soft drink, then added: "I don't drink liquor. People who get drunk in our business get killed."

One would think that the excitement stopped there. But Sturgis was determined to kill Castro.

"It had become an obsession," he said, "At one stage I wanted to blow him up with a suitcase of explosives. I could have planted it very easy in the office building where Castro met with his chiefs of staff."

UNSUSPECTING

"I kept on badgering my commanding officer at the American Embassy. But I could never get the go-ahead. My boss thought I was crazy, going to blow up the entire leadership of the Cuban government. Most of them were Communists. Maybe a few of the good guys would have got killed, too, but hell, this was war."

Throughout the entire time, Castro kept Sturgis on as his security chief, not suspecting his former

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comrade was plotting to kill him.

"It was 1959 and President Eisenhower, according to the word from the top, didn't want any assassinations. Of course it was different in the Kennedy years. The Kennedy Administration was eager to do him in."

By early 1960, Sturgis, was frustrated and running out of time and luck, it was only a matter of time before Castro would realize he was a double-agent and have him executed. "I got out a few days before they were going to blow me away."

That's when Miss Lorenz came back into the picture.

She recalled: "I suppose I must have been a little crazy to listen to Frank but he was a good guy and very patriotic. He wanted Fidel dead."

POISON PELLETS

Sturgis, together with another agent, talked her into going back to Havana with two poison pellets to kill Castro. Despite the fact she had spurned Castro, she believed she could get back into his bedroom—and she did.

She returned dressed in a Cuban revolutionary army uniform, armed with the poison and a revolver.

"Boy, what guts," Sturgis said. "She just walks straight back into his arms. Could you imagine another girl doing that? She could have gone straight to the firing squad."

Miss Lorenz soon won her way back into Fidel's favor. But the plot was doomed. The poison pellets were in capsules and hidden in a cold cream jar. The cream had melted the outer lining of the capsule and the poison was just a gooey mess.