

File. Cuba, 10/4/5 on

LIFE

ABOARD A DEFIANT CUBAN RAIDER
*Hit and Run Attack
on a Russian Ship*

Lost 49 Days in the Yukon **HELEN KLABEN'S ORDEAL**



HELEN KLABEN AT
TIME OF RESCUE

DECCA SEL H6420794732 48 01
MR FRED C STELLO
1420 HIGHLAND DR
SILVER SPRING MD

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Foreign Aid Is a Good Long-Term Policy Tool

Nothing, as the French say, endures like the provisional. U.S. foreign aid is now in its 17th year and has dished out its 100 billionth dollar. It has been supported by three Presidents and passed by nine Congresses. Yet almost every year it is in fresh trouble and it gets by as a chronic emergency measure rather than a wise long-term policy of the U.S.A.

Moreover the emergency keeps changing its nature. First it was the immediate relief of postwar hunger. Then the military rescue of Greece and Turkey. Then the economic rehabilitation of Europe by the Marshall Plan. Then the military and economic support of Mr. Dulles' network of alliances and foreign bases. Now foreign aid means spurring growth in the "developing countries." Other purposes too crop up in it from time to time, such as the bolstering of friendly but unstable governments, the influencing of votes in the U.N., the pushing of U.S. exports and the dumping of U.S. farm surpluses. Small wonder this agency has gone through a dozen changes of name and about as many changes of boss. It has endured partly by placating Congress with a blood sacrifice—a new administrator nearly every year.

This year AID's new chief is David Bell, the former Budget Director. He is a very sharp man and his 1963-64 aid program, which the President sent to Congress last week, is in more persuasive shape than usual. It has had the benefit of some tough and sensible admonitions from Lucius Clay's Committee to Strengthen the Security of the Free World. And while the total sum asked—\$4.5 billion—probably includes some of the same old waste and masks the same old mixed motives, there is also a fresh rationale behind it which should command support for nonemergency, long-term reasons.

"Freedom is not on the run anywhere in the world," said President Kennedy's message. For once, the Congress is not being asked to scare itself into voting for foreign aid. Rather it is being presented with an opportunity to influence those "countless large and small decisions" being taken in the developing nations, decisions which will help steer them toward political and economic institutions either of freedom and order or of coercion and waste.

There are good arguments why the U.S. should be cautious about entering these decisions. Congressman Passman, the most relentless critic of foreign aid, has collected plenty of real-life horror stories about the counterproductivity of foolish aid dollars. He wants to cut the program nearly in half. But he does not wish to eliminate it. The argument is not over whether we should stay in the aid business but over the amount, criteria and efficiency of its administration.

Here Bell's new program, as modified by the Clay report, is reassuring. Aid is now to be concentrated in those countries best able to use it; already 80% of it goes to only 20 of our 95 client countries. Self-help gets more emphasis and so does the prospect of ending aid in those countries where it can be replaced by normal financing. (Greece, Israel, Formosa are about

ready to stand on their own economic feet; Colombia, India, Nigeria and others are showing a good momentum.) Private investment will get more encouragement; the President even wants to tempt U.S. investors in developing countries with a special tax credit. And the Administration will continue its efforts to get Europe and Japan to take a larger share of the capital-export burden. (Bell was in Paris last week negotiating a reduction in the interest rates charged by former beneficiaries of the Marshall Plan, who exported \$2.5 billion of development capital last year.)

Bell sees aid not as a welfare program but a catalytic one. For example, U.S. surplus milk is given free to several million schoolchildren in Latin America, but the purpose is not primarily humanitarian. It is to show how a school lunch program can drastically reduce truancy and thus illiteracy; it is to create a market for a native dairy industry. This often works.

Bell's plans and policies deserve the kind of appropriation from Congress that will give them a real chance to work—*i.e.*, around \$4 billion. If they show results, perhaps Congress, instead of treating foreign aid as an annual emergency, will come to accept it as a proven tool of Western diplomacy and a long-term commitment like the Alliance for Progress, whose goals are finite but not to be achieved overnight.

To Ivan in Cuba: Now Hear This!

Every night at 10:45 a 15-minute broadcast in the Russian language is beamed to Cuba from a station in Santo Domingo. This is an excerpt from a typical broadcast:

"Our troops must be withdrawn from Cuba, where their presence provokes popular anger. Under no circumstances may our troops be used for the suppression of a popular revolt against Castro in Cuba. The oath of allegiance does not obligate our officers and men to submit to the orders to fire at the civilian population."

Another program is addressed directly to the Soviet commander in chief:

"To shoot? Will you really order to shoot? To shoot . . . and thereby to cover the name of our nation, your own name, with the disgraceful stain of murderer!"

These broadcasts, which began last November, are the work of an enterprising private group of anti-Communist Russians called *Narodno Trudovoi Soyuz*—National Alliance of Russian Solidarists. They have exposed thousands of Soviet soldiers and "technicians" to something the Soviet government didn't count on—a nightly dose of anti-Communist propaganda in their own language.

There is not much doubt that these programs are getting through. Cuba has no jamming facilities equal to coping with a commentary beamed simultaneously on three short-wave and five standard AM frequencies. The primary aim of Constantine W. Boldyreff, a czarist general's son who is the chief NTS representative in America, is to create a state of mind which will cause Russian soldiers to think twice before they kill Cubans. He reminds us that the early success of the Hungarian revolution in 1956 took place partly because large numbers of Soviet troops remained neutral.

The best indication that the Kremlin is taking Boldyreff's propaganda seriously is the fact that Radio Moscow is now fighting back with a half-hour of daily broadcasts to Cuba. So be it: as Milton said, "Let her [Truth] and Falsehood grapple: who ever knew Truth put to the worse in a free and open encounter?"

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RAIDERS' ARSENAL. Men of raiding party pass automatic weapons from mother craft (left) to cannon-armed speedboat *Phoenix*.

A wild fighting ride on the old Spanish Main

VAMOS! THE BUCCANEERS ATTACK THE SOVIET PREY

Vamos in Spanish means "Let's get going"—and that's what the Cuban buccaneers did. The raid they launched against Castro's Cuba was an adventure of derring-do straight out of the Spanish Main of old. They set forth in a leaky speedboat that took them into the Cuban port of Caibarién. With a homemade magnetic mine, they tried to sink a Russian freighter. They holed the freighter, and their unlikely feat touched off the wildest inter-

RAID COMMANDERS. In azure sea off the Bahamas, Tony Cuesta, a onetime Havana businessman, sits at left in makeshift torpedo boat *Phoenix*, ready to command comrades to begin their strike against Castro.

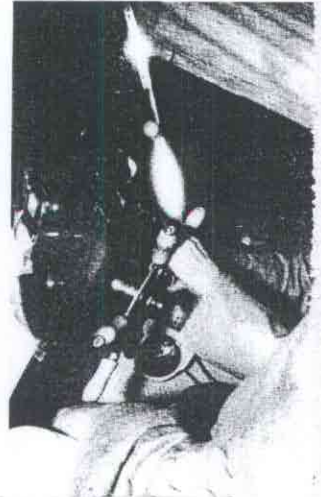
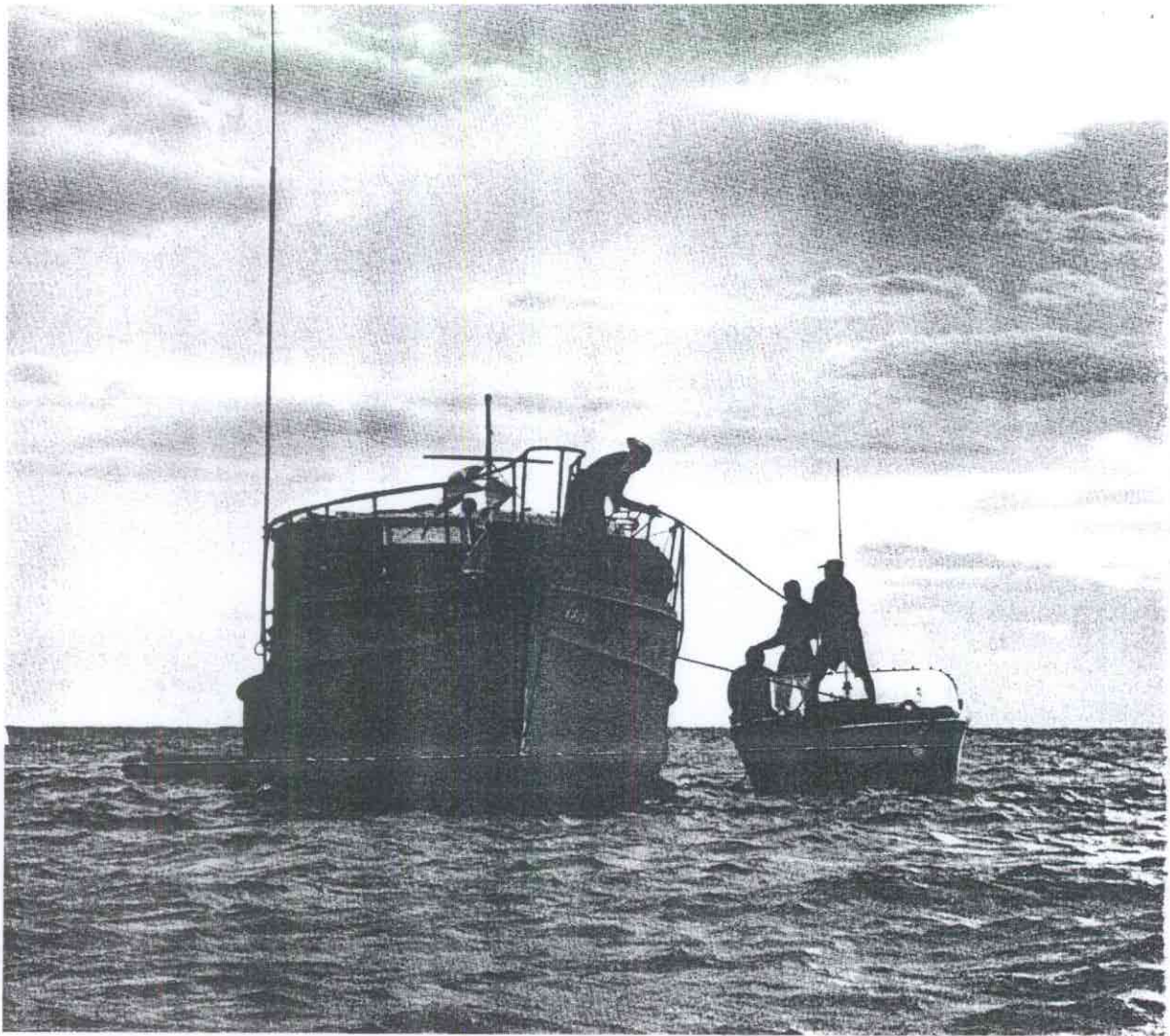
national dustup since the Cuban missile flap of last October.

The governments of the U.S., Great Britain, the Soviet Union and Communist Cuba were caught up in a curious embarrassment over such forays. Having winked at—if not openly condoned—hit-and-run warfare against Cuba, the U.S. snappishly decided it now would "take every step necessary" to make sure that no more such raids were launched from U.S. territory. Acting under U.S. pressure, British authorities swiftly rounded up 17 anti-Castro raiders as they were about to strike at Cuba from the Bahamas. And Cuba made a show of apologizing for Cuban MiGs that fired on the U.S. transport *Floridian* in in-

ternational waters in the Florida straits.

Small wonder that many Americans were baffled and Cuban exiles reacted with dismay and rage. The U.S. said that the raids would invite reprisals against the anti-Communist underground in Cuba and might slow down the Soviets' withdrawal of their 17,000-man expeditionary force from the island. The Cuban exiles were left to speculate on whether the U.S. has some large-scale plan afoot. They could remind themselves that President Kennedy himself had pledged to return the flag of the Bay of Pigs brigade to "a free Havana."

On these pages is the story of a raid, here reported and photographed by Andrew St. George, an adventurer who went along.



'THE TENSION IS ALREADY GNAWING AT ALL OF US'

Pictures and Text by
ANDREW ST. GEORGE

At 3:30 on the afternoon of the raid Tony looks at his watch and says quietly, "Bueno, vamos. Well, let's go." We have been hiding in an inlet along the Anguila Isles, biding our time until we can make our approach to the Cuban coast in darkness. Now we start south again at 10 or 12 knots. Our speed should be 35 knots, but the *Phoenix*, our converted 22-foot speedboat, is cutting through heavy swells and we are getting drenched. Every now and then there is a shattering blow of a wave against her hull. Each time it feels like the blow of a steam hammer. I can't help glancing at the explosives lashed all around us.

We are well out into the Nicholas Channel before the day dies like a burning chain in the west. The water here is deep. These are Cuban waters. Soon it is wet and dark, with plumes of clouds above us and plumes of foam and spray all around us.

A little after 11 p.m. we see the glow of Caibarién, our destination, at the edge of the moonless sky. Tranquilino, our navigator, throttles back the engines and grunts with satisfaction. He has steered a perfect course through the night, through the depths and shallows. He has done his share of the job.

Tony studies his watch again, with the care of a jeweler. "Bueno," he says. "Let's get ready for this thing." He unscrews a canteen. "Have some water now. You'll need it."

I drink, and suddenly am aware that the engines have been running softly for some time, and that Tranquilino is steering us nearer the

harbor estuary. Anchored downwind I can see the looming bulk of three cargo vessels. At my side Tony is watching them sharply, calculating position, distance, current, possible interception, alternate withdrawal routes.

He says, "Wonder if they have lots of vodka aboard. Be a pity to waste it." The remark eases the tension, but not for long.

On a calm sunny morning eight days earlier, we had put to sea from "somewhere in Florida." It seems a long time ago. At that point the adventure is more like a carefree excursion than the start of a desperate raid.

It is daybreak and we board a mother ship, which will later be used to supply the *Phoenix* and to tow her part way to her destination. Our civilian supporters bring last-minute supplies—a net bag full of onions, some plucked chickens, a Cuban flag sewn by lady sympathizers, a paper bag full of hand-rolled, uncut cigars. We all drink strong Cuban galley coffee, light cigars, embrace those who stay behind. A few minutes past 7, our mother ship steams out of the marina.

At sundown, in one of the Bahama cays, we rendezvous with the *Phoenix*. Tony Cuesta, a Cuban patriot who is a veteran of three years of coastal raids on his homeland, is already aboard. So is Tranquilino, the stubby, gnarled fisherman who will be our guide in to the Cuban coast. Five others, myself included, are joining them for the raid.

Next day we tow the *Phoenix*, over a vast velvet carpet of marbled blue sea, to a coral inlet on our base island. From under the flat, jumbled rocks of the coral pile the men pry plastic-wrapped hardware—a 20-millimeter cannon and steel clip boxes, infantry rifles, a carbine, pistols in waterproof canteen bags, Pentolite ammunition, long, puttylike slabs of explosives in carton tubes, cans of gasoline mixed with baby soap flakes. (Non-detergent baby soap and gasoline make the easiest sort of do-it-yourself napalm.)

Tension is already gnawing at

"VAMOS, WELL LET'S GO" . . . Now it is the time of action and the tiny *Phoenix* prepares to cast off from the mother vessel. At left, below, night has fallen and in picture taken by infrared light, raiders bail as the boat heads into a drenching swell. At right, crouched by the steering wheel, they check approach to the Russian target.



'THERE IS A SUDDEN, SHATTERING BLAST'

RAID CONTINUED

all of us. Soviet-made MiGs and torpedo launches are known to be combed the Cay Sal bank with cannon at the ready. Ramón Font, our armorer, brings aboard our heavy artillery, the lone 20-mm. cannon. Then he goes to work on the rear deck, trying to make a torpedo of the homemade bomb we are carrying. It is a slow, tedious, nerve-racking job.

At around 3 p.m. that afternoon a cool breeze rises from the northeast. The guide, Tranquilino, suddenly becomes restless. "Let's try it tonight," he says.

Tony understands at once what Tranquilino means. Just now it's the sort of weather that in Spanish is called "the evenings when souls are let into heaven." But we know it won't last.

A little after 5 p.m. we board the *Phoenix*. We speed away into the dying day, twin engines roaring. Twenty minutes pass and the engines begin to whine painfully. We know what this means. Despite months of preparation the *Phoenix* is still unpredictable. We summon whatever tricks we have at our command, but it's no use. Darkness makes repairs almost impossible. We have to turn back to find our island base.

Three days pass. Tony and Mario Alvarez, the wiry little electrician who had become our combat engineer, work on the engines night and day. The trouble is simple to diagnose but hard to repair. The forward gas tank is corroding at the inner seams and throwing black grit into the gasoline pumps.

"No se preocupen," says Tony casually. "Don't worry." Then, with a smile, "Now every time I thump the hatch, it means change

the gasoline filter, but *pronto, bien pronto.*"

It is eight days from the time we left the mainland and the weather is still not right. It's hazy and windy, but we know we must strike soon or turn back. Food and fuel are running low, and the danger of being spotted is increasing all the time. We start to load the *Phoenix* at sunup. Rifles go in, ammunition, lanterns, crackers, cans of Metrecal, my infrared lights and cameras; two 30-gallon drums of reserve gasoline. Then the tadpole-shaped torpedo, with its charge, is lashed to the stern of *Phoenix*, whose gunwales now barely top the water. Finally Tony hoists the Cuban ensign on the radio mast and starts the twin motors. The *Phoenix* gets away with a roar, lurching up and forward on the water.

Less than half an hour out, I hear the port engine's familiar weakening whine. I have been waiting for the sound, yet it touches me like a dental drill. Tony turns to shout back at Mario, who disappears in the stern hatch. Between the two rear gas tanks he keeps half a dozen filter replacements and, although I can't see what he's doing, I know he's fixed the trouble because all of a sudden the motors are revving at a steady, normal rate.

Finally we reach our hiding place to wait for darkness. Ramón begins to fiddle with his explosives again. He has abandoned the torpedo idea that we had in the beginning. The tiny outboard motor which was to propel it just won't work. The torpedo is now a magnetic mine, homemade and improvised, but nonetheless a mine.

When it is night we start for the coast once more. It is Mario's turn to get back to his work. He must watch over and replace the gas filters at the first sign of trouble. His teeth are clenched with the force of concentration.

The sea is smooth at the harbor entrance. Ramón drags the plastic-wrapped cannon barrel across the cockpit. Tony breaks out the rifles. He pulls them one by one from the front hold, unwinds the heavy plastic protectors, checks the breech action, hands them to the men, who carefully recheck them. A day at sea in one of these boats has been known to corrode the toughest firing mechanism.

ARMING THE MINE. Raider here prepares incendiary device to strap on to homemade 40-pound magnet-equipped explosive mine. As he works he hums *Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star*.



Ramón calls back, "Tony, the grenades..." We have two hand grenades. Both were handmade by Ramón, who wants to see them go to work tonight.

Tony studies the dial of his watch again.

"The hour..."
"Twelve-forty," says Tony. And to Tranquilino, "Well, *viejo*, it's ready."

I have a heavy leather telephone-man's belt around my middle. I hook its spring clip into a special handle on the engine cover. It will steady me, yet not prevent my turning, and keep me safe from what I secretly dread most—falling out of the boat while it's maneuvering at top speed.

We are ready now. Tranquilino turns up the tachometer as gently as a nurse—1,000, 1,200, 1,500, 2,000.

"Listen." Alfredo's voice has a new pitch, sharp and high. "Look there on the left!"

The lights of a low-silhouetted motor launch are approaching. They swing to port with frightening speed. Twenty knots? Twenty-five? It must be one of the new Soviet patrol vessels making her rounds.

"Wait," says Tony gently.

The motors are throttled down. We watch silently in the darkness. The launch has apparently seen nothing suspicious. Its lights sweep quickly across our windshield and melt into the darkness.

"Now," says Tony. We pick up speed again.

In a few more minutes we are within a hundred yards of our target. She is a bulky, round-bottomed freighter with such an oddly Levantine look that I experience a sharp stab of worry: what if she is Turkish? Or Greek?

Tranquilino circles her with slow precision until we approach our target from the bow. Our boat is cruising slowly, deliberately and so quietly that I can hear Alfredo shift his rifle. Two hundred yards, perhaps, 150—and the silence is shattered as Ramón begins to crank back the breech lock of his automatic cannon.

A hundred yards. Fifty. Thirty.

There is a sudden, shattering blast. I can feel it in my jaw, ears and spine. Ramón is firing his cannon at the command bridge of the freighter. I see something splinter topside, and then the cannon swings lower, toward the water line. Eight, nine, ten—they are deep, heavy explosions. Suddenly his clip is empty. I see him tear it off and fling it high overhead into the water. We are now less than

10 yards from the freighter. The hull leans over us menacingly, but there is no answering fire—only shouts and the noise of running feet on deck.

Tranquilino makes a neat, calm little turn. Ramón is up again, jumping over me, knocking me down. When my head is up again, Ramón is standing in the stern hatch, struggling with the magnetic bomb. Every man in our boat is standing, as rigid as a sentry.

"*Ahora, la bon ba—*there is the bomb," Tony says quietly.

Tranquilino brings us alongside the freighter. Every rifle aboard the *Phoenix* is firing at the deck of the freighter and at its lighted portholes. Under the covering arch of fire, Ramón leans out ready to drop the bomb, its fuse lit, overboard.

But the bomb won't budge. The line attached to its float is tangled on the deck rail. Ramón tugs and yanks. The burning fuse has three or four minutes to go. We need that time to dump it over and get away into the night.

Ramón crashes his body against the railing. The railing gives, the line swings free. Someone leaps to help and the bomb is overboard.

"*Dale!*" Ramón shouts at Tranquilino. "Gun her!"

Tranquilino swings the *Phoenix* away from the freighter. Ramón vaults forward.

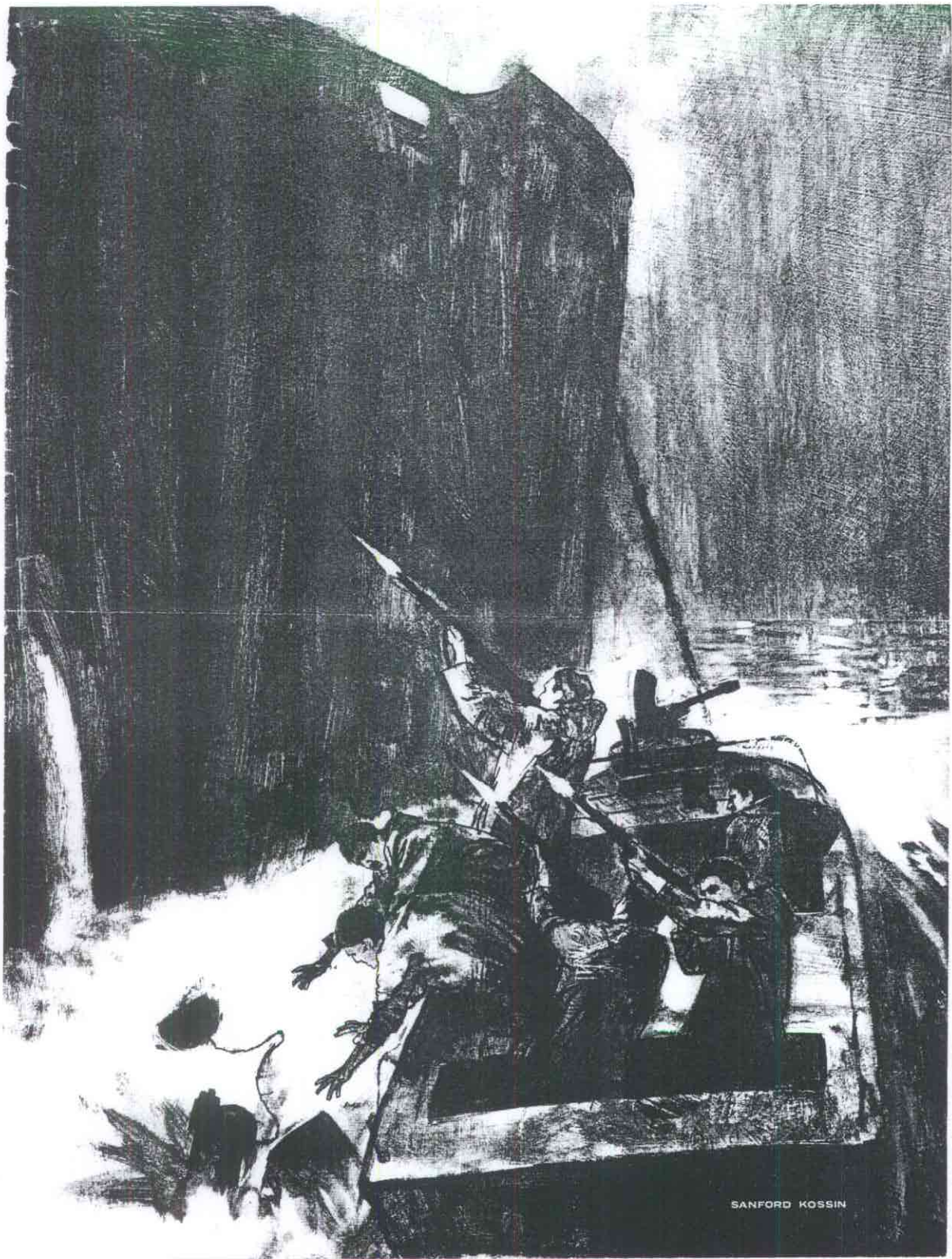
There is a thud in the night. A geyser shoots up, way above the freighter's tall funnels. There is no flash. Our boat shudders for a moment. From behind us I hear the crash of glass.

The rifles on the *Phoenix* keep firing. Then all is silence as we speed away into the night.

In the stern the riflemen embrace. One of the men shouts at the top of his voice, but the engine drowns him out. We are doing nearly 40 knots, the flying water a tall curtain on both sides of the boat.

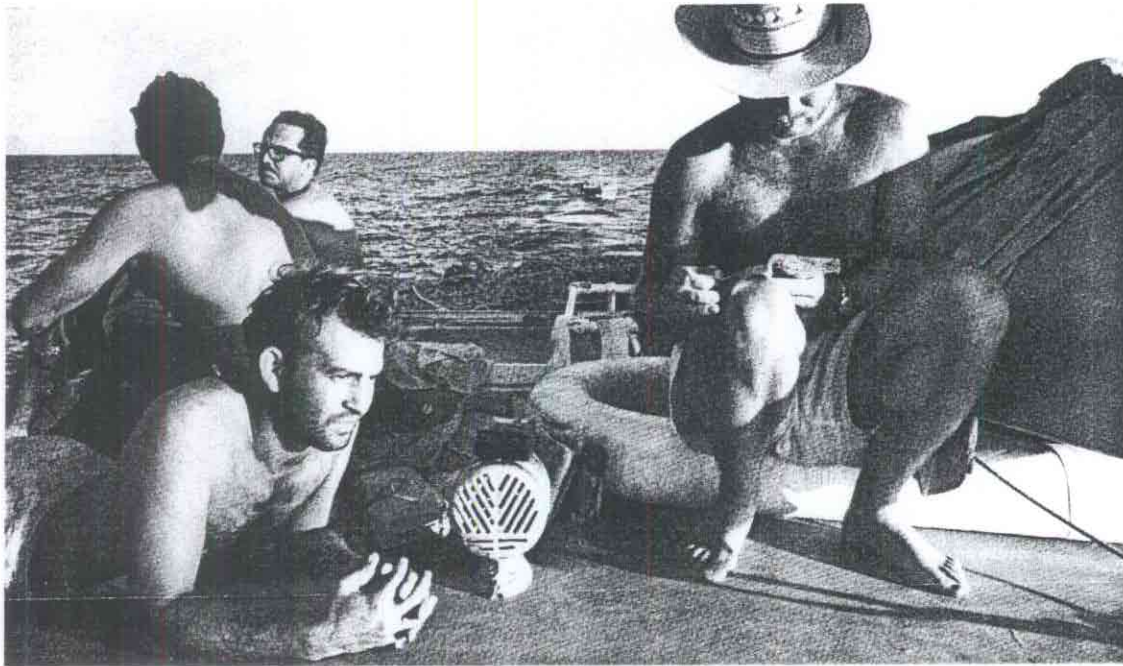
With a grin on his face, Tony speaks up: "It's 2:30 a.m. Right about now Castro's phone is going rrrring, rrrring. When he hears what happened I can just see him throw his cap on the floor and pace up and down and bite on his beard and chew the tip off, the way he does, you know—when he is really having a fit. That's what makes me happiest."

IN FOR THE KILL. Hard against hull of Russia's 7,000-ton ship *Baku*, the raiders cut loose with all firepower to cover the launching of magnetic mine that blasts 13-foot hole in ship.



SANFORD KOSSIN

'I CAN JUST SEE CASTRO BITE HIS BEARD'



SAFELY AWAY. Back on the mother vessel that now tows the *Phoenix*, the commandos listen to radio accounts of severe damage to Russian ship.

TOIL'S REWARD. In mother ship the commandos sleep away (below), unaware—nor would they care—that Russia would send a protest to the U.S.

RAID LEADER. Tony Cuesta (right) gave the orders. Now, hollow-eyed, sleepless, he sits in cabin under fishing rod, perhaps planning a new attack.

