

Miami Full of Anti-Castro Conspirators

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MIAMI, Fla., — This subtropical metropolis, a favorite refuge of winter sun-worshippers and Cuban exiles, has conspired the way an old barn has mice.

In 1963-65 alone, U.S. authorities shortstopped no fewer than 23 expeditions bent on mini-invasions of Fidel Castro land. Nobody knows how many others got through the net.

One of the most ambitious plots involved 80 anti-Castroites who planned to take over Haiti last November and go on from there. A top man split with the leader and talked. The enterprise had to be postponed and gasters began calling it "the day of piglets."

INVASION FORCE

Undaunted, the plotters bided their time until Jan. 2, when the helter-skelter invasion force began marshaling in the Florida Keys. At this point U.S. customs agents moved in and arrested everybody in sight.

Earlier, an anti-Castro dreamer assembled a \$25,000 invasion arsenal in a truck and left it in a downtown parking lot. Truck and cargo were grabbed by police.

Inept planning and a shortage of funds are not the only roadblocks for the busy conspirators. They also have to contend with five federal agencies, including Customs, Coast Guard, Immigration, Bureau of Investigation and the Central Intelligence Agency. For a plotter, it's something like a bullfight supervised by the society for the prevention of cruelty to animals.

Still Castro's Cuba lies there, only 150 miles from Miami and only 90 from Key West, as a constant temptation to the revolutionaries. Exiles claim that in 1966 they staged six aerial

harassments from "bases somewhere in the Caribbean"—generally translated as "the Florida Keys."

BOMBED CUBA

Biggest of these, they claim, were bombings of the Cuban north coast chemical and sugar installations. One of their raiding planes, they say, was shot down over Cuba in mid-November and three of their men were captured after landing on the eastern tip of the island the following month.

The anti-Castro exile factions in Miami are divided into "activist" and "propaganda" groups.

The most noisily busy of the activist factions at the moment is MIRR, for Insurreccional Movement of Revolutionary Recuperation. The others are Comandos I, Brigade 2506, Los Pinos Nuevos and 30th of November, all operating under RECE, or Cuban representation in exile; and the 2nd Front of Escambray, Alpha 66, CORE, or Committee of Revolutionary Orientation in Exile, and the Cuban Nationalist Association.

The purely propaganda groups are Revolutionary Unity and FORDC for Cuban Revolutionary Workers Front.

Boss of the MIRR is a short, intense medical doctor, Orlando Bosch, 40, who has been picked up twice while apparently preparing anti-Castro maneuvers.

BOSCH CONVICTED

He was convicted last year, and is awaiting sentence, on a charge of transporting bombs. Bosch was arrested again Jan. 15 and charged with loading an airplane with bombs and explosives.

He was cleared of extortion charges last December after being accused of telephoning threats to four wealthy Cuban refugees in alleged attempts to



Rolando Masferrer, center front, is seen with U.S. marshal, left, after his arrest last January in Key West, Fla. Following Masferrer are some of his men —A.P. Newsfeatures Photo

obtain \$20,000 for an anti-Castro war chest.

Of his clashes with the law, Dr. Bosch said: "The persecution continues. Those who call themselves allies are not our friends and those who call themselves friends are not our allies."

Another exile leader, Armando Fleites, said after his arrest in a Cuban raid attempt: "Another victory for Castro." Keeping tabs on people like Bosch and Fleites is a big job for the U.S. agencies responsible for enforcement of the neutrality act.

The plot to strike at Haiti, topple dictator Francois (Papa Doc) Duvalier and use the is-

land republic as a base against Cuba had its genesis in Miami more than a year ago. Its architect was Rolando Masferrer, 47, lawyer, honor graduate of Havana University and a terror to Castro's followers in the final years of dictator Fulgencio Batista's rule.

EXILED PRIEST

The Rev. Jean Baptiste Georges, an exiled Haitian priest in his early 40s, was a key figure in the operation. He was to be President of the country if the invasion succeeded.

Federal officials got their first signs of anti-Castro activity involving Haiti in December, 1965, when a truck

loaded with rifles, rocket launchers and other armament was found in a parking lot.

It was registered to a Henry Vixamar, a 24-year-old Haitian teacher, who readily claimed the weapons.

He said he planned to invade Cuba, explaining he was not violating the law since the material would be used from a point outside the United States. Vixamar eventually was released for lack of evidence.

Vixamar was booted out of Haiti in 1962, Haitian sources here said, for organizing a pro-Communist student union. One report said he called on U.S. State Department officials in

April, 1964, and told them he had been "divinely commissioned" to overthrow Papa Doc.

VAGUE LINKS

Vixamar's links with Masferrer—if any—are vague. But last November Masferrer, too, had Haiti on his mind, as a way station for an attack on Cuba.

The Haitian invasion force under Masferrer counted about 80 men and, according to its leader, was equipped with some \$100,000 worth of weapons and ammunition.

U.S. customs agents placed its actual value and battle worth at far less.

"With that equipment," said one, "they could not successfully have invaded Burdine's." Burdine's is a large Miami department store.

The equipment included 140 rifles, about a dozen machine guns, two rocket launchers and about 72,000 rounds of assorted ammunition. There also were two small vessels.

For temporary barracks, some of the expeditionaries—among whom were a few Americans—used Nellie Hamilton's boarding home in southwest Miami. A pleasant woman from Arkansas, Mrs. Hamilton, 74, still remembers the "boarders."

NICE BOYS

"They were nice boys, no different from other boarders," she said. "I didn't know what they were up to. Sure, some had guns but I thought it was for target practice."

The invaders later moved to keep out of the way of authorities. By this time, mid-November, the "invasion" was known to practically anyone in Miami who regularly tunes in to refugee chit-chat at Long Flagler street or Southwest 8th in "Little Havana."

The scheme began coming apart on Nov. 23 when Napoleon Vilaboa, 29, a former Cuban rebel army officer, abandoned the

little army. He told newsmen he had agreed to be chief of military operations on the understanding the operation had CIA support. He and Masferrer had an argument, he said, and he quit.

The invasion finally foundered Jan. 2 when U.S. customs agents moved in and arrested some 75 men. Masferrer told reporters that "paid U.S. informers" scotched his plan. He, Father Georges and others are awaiting trial on charges of conspiring to invade Haiti, and to export arms without license.

The failures of Bosch, Masferrer and other Cuban exiles have aroused little reaction among their compatriots in the Miami area. Indignation with U.S. policy seems matched by criticism of the quality of leadership among the current crop of activists.