

IT WAS AN HOUR TILL DAWN. The moon had gone out and the Caribbean was a pool of black ink.

In that dark, still hour on a November morning, a flashlight blinked three times from the shore of a tiny bay on the north coast of Cuba. A few minutes later, a black-painted speedboat slipped quietly into the bay and dropped anchor off the palm-lined beach.

The 36-foot boat, *Violynn III*, was owned and skippered by Alexander Rorke, Jr., 36, a handsome, wavy-haired American adventurer whose wife was the daughter of the late Sherman Billingsley, the society saloonkeeper who hosted New York's famed Stork Club.

Rorke's heavily-armed crew consisted of an American college student and five Cuban exiles, two of them survivors of the Bay of Pigs disaster. Their mission: Kill Fidel Castro.

Rorke and his execution squad planned to ambush the bearded dictator at Santiago de Cuba, the island's second largest city.

As a free-lance reporter and photographer in Cuba, Rorke had covered Castro's revolution from its start in the Sierra Maestra Mountains to the triumphal march into Havana on New Year's Day, 1959. But he fell out of favor with Fidel when he reported that the revolution was turning Red.

One of the first newsmen to spot this trend, Rorke was jailed by the Castro regime in 1959 and again in January, 1960, after a radio broadcast in which he charged that several of Castro's top aides were Communists.

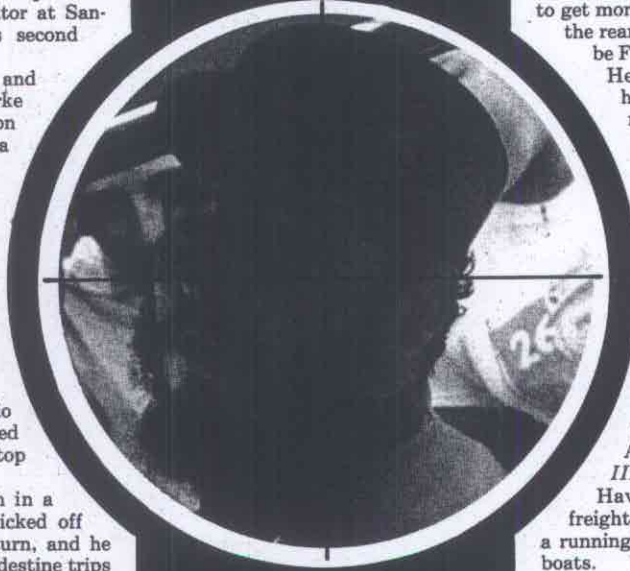
After his second stretch in a Cuban prison, Rorke was kicked off the island. He vowed to return, and he did. He made at least 15 clandestine trips to Cuba in *Violynn III* and several other visits by plane.

Some, if not all, of these mystery missions were sponsored by the Central Intelligence Agency. But whether the CIA sent him on the assassination assignment will probably never be known.

When Rorke and his crew anchored in the small bay, they were met by two members of Cuba's anti-Castro underground. They pulled the speedboat onto the beach and covered it with canvas and palm leaves. Then the assassins set off for Santiago in the back of an ancient truck owned by one of the underground members.

As dawn broke and a heavy rainfall began, they hid in the woods near a cemetery on the outskirts of Santiago. Castro was scheduled to arrive at the cemetery around 9 AM to speak at a

THE CIA PLOTS TO KILL CASTRO



"There is an assassin
in every shadow, a CIA agent
behind every tree," says
a former comrade of Castro.
"He's led a charmed life
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can't last forever!"

by MORTON PETERSON

memorial service for his guerrillas who were killed in heavy fighting around Santiago during the revolution.

The large graveyard was decorated with red flags and huge photos of the Maximum Leader. Despite the downpour, more than 3,000 persons turned out for the ceremony.

At 8:50 AM, a motorcade of five jeeps came roaring along the road to the cemetery. "Here he comes," whispered the execution squad's lookout, watching the road through powerful binoculars.

The first jeep, bristling with guns, was full of soldiers. The lookout trained his binoculars on the second jeep and spotted a familiar figure seated beside the driver. It was Captain Alfredo Gamonal, Castro's chief bodyguard.

A tall man in green fatigues was riding in the back seat. Because of the driving rain, the jeep curtains and the two burly figures in front, the lookout was unable to get more than a glimpse of the man in the rear seat. But he assumed it must be Fidel Castro.

He raised his right fist, two fingers held aloft. At the lookout's signal, machine guns opened up.

Bullets sprayed the jeep, killing the driver, bodyguard Gamonal—and the superintendent of cemeteries, who was riding in back. The jeep swerved off the road and crashed into a tree. Fidel Castro, riding in the fourth jeep, was unhurt. Soldiers swarmed out of the jeeps, searched the woods and threw up roadblocks all over the area, but the execution squad got away.

A few weeks later, the *Violynn III* made a midnight raid on Havana harbor, shot up a Soviet freighter and escaped to Florida after a running gun battle with Cuban patrol boats.

Several months later, British authorities seized the *Violynn III* when it arrived at Norman Cay in the Bahamas with 17 Cuban exiles aboard and a cargo of arms and ammunition. Rorke was questioned by Bahamas security police but was released when his CIA contacts vouched for him.

Shortly before 9 PM about a month later, a twin-engine Beechcraft appeared in the sky above Havana, setting off air-raid alarms all over the Cuban capital. The mystery plane roared in from the sea at an altitude of about 150 feet and dropped five homemade napalm bombs on an oil refinery in the Nico Lopez district: the bombs failed to explode.

As Cuban air force pilots rushed to their MIG fighter jets, and Castro retreated to his basement air-raid shelter, the Beechcraft took off and vanished

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PLOT TO KILL CASTRO

continued

in the dark.

In Washington, two days later, Alex Rorke admitted he was responsible for the air attack. He said he was accompanied on the flight by "a major Cuban underground figure, a student at Massachusetts Institute of Technology and a U.S. freedom fighter technician."

Rorke also confirmed that he had carried out several missions for the CIA, including smuggling guns and anti-Castro agents into Cuba, but he insisted the oil refinery raid was his own idea.

The following September, Rorke and his Beechcraft took off from Florida on another mysterious flight. With him were a pilot, Geoffrey Sullivan, and a Cuban freedom fighter, Enrique Molina Garcia. Before leaving Fort Lauderdale, Florida, Rorke fled a flight plan to Panama, but after refueling on the island of Cozumel, off Mexico's Yucatan Peninsula, he sent a radio message saying he was changing course to Honduras.

That was the last anyone ever heard from the swashbuckling adventurer. The Beechcraft and its crew vanished without a trace. The Coast Guard conducted a massive air-sea search of the Caribbean and the Gulf of Mexico but failed to find any sign of the missing plane—not even any wreckage.

"I knew that someday he might not come back," said Rorke's pretty wife, Jacqueline.

Though the mystery of Rorke's disappearance almost 10 years ago was never solved, investigators hinted that he and his companions were the victims of foul play. There were unconfirmed rumors that Castro agents either sabotaged the Beechcraft, blowing it to bits over the water, or hijacked it to Cuba where its passengers were quietly executed in retaliation for the plot to assassinate Castro.

There have been at least a dozen such unsuccessful plots. Several of them have been secretly supported and financed by the CIA. The facts about these cloak-and-dagger machinations have been revealed only recently.

Alleged CIA plotter Alex Rorke (l.) and Geoffrey Sullivan vanished on mission.



Castro says Alpha 66 members, shown here training in Caribbean, are landing teams of assassins in Cuba. Ten members now face death sentences in La Cabana Prison.

Despite official denials, CIA agents are still trying to get Castro. So are several Miami-based Cuban exile groups, including the revolutionary organization Alpha 66. Small, fast boats from the Florida Keys and Puerto Rico bring armed men and shipments of guns and ammunition to the island.

Ten members of Alpha 66, 18 to 30 years old, were captured by Cuban troops last year. The guerrillas, wearing military uniforms and armed with Belgium-made pistols and carbines, were among two infiltration groups that landed in April and September.

Charged with plotting to assassinate Castro and overthrow the Red Regime, the 10 prisoners were locked up in La Cabana prison, where they were beaten and tortured. During their months in prison, they were not allowed to consult a lawyer or communicate with anyone in the outside world. Finally, after a secret trial before a military tribunal, they were sentenced to death. The Castro government, in its only mention of the case, announced the death sentences March 8, 1971.

THE first assassination plot involving an American occurred in December, 1958—while Castro and his guerrillas were still holed up in the mountains of Oriente Province—when a tall, lean Chicagoan named Alan Robert Nye arrived in the Oriente town of Bayamo with a rifle and revolver in his suitcase.

Nye told several townspeople he had come to join Castro's rebels. Flashing a fat bankroll, he offered to pay for information about where the guerrilla camp was located. He was told what he wanted to know—and the rebels were alerted.

Carrying his guns, Nye set out for Castro's hideout on foot. He was quickly intercepted by bearded guerrillas who took him to their headquarters for questioning.

After the revolutionary government took over a few weeks later, the 31-year-old Nye was formally charged with plotting to kill Castro for a fee of \$100,000. His trial was held in the officers' club in La Cabana Fortress, across the bay from Havana.

Government witnesses testified that Nye was hired by deposed President Fulgencio Batista in a desperate, last-ditch move to stop Castro. It was charged that General Francisco Tabernilla, head of Batista's joint chiefs of staff, arranged to bring Nye to Cuba and paid his hotel bills in Havana.

Nye admitted there was an assassination plot, but he claimed he had gone to Oriente Province to warn Castro that Batista was trying to murder him. Throughout the 105 days he spent in Cuban prisons, Nye insisted he was on Castro's side.

A military tribunal found him guilty and sentenced him to death, but the sentence was suspended on condition that he leave Cuba.

As Castro tightened his grip on the island and took over American industries, the CIA decided he had to go. Several top-level, top-secret conferences were held on this subject and it was finally agreed that the only sure way to neutralize Fidel was to assassinate him.

The assassination was to take place shortly before the Bay of Pigs invasion. The CIA reasoned that a leaderless Cuba would be thrown into such a state of panic that the invading force would meet little resistance.

The plot took shape in the late winter and early spring of 1961. It involved a motley assortment of conspirators, including American racketeers, millionaires, soldiers of fortune and government officials, Cuban exiles and even some high-ranking members of Castro's revolutionary regime.

According to Washington columnist Jack Anderson, the CIA enlisted Robert Maheu, a former FBI agent and Washington wheeler-dealer who later became manager of billionaire Howard Hughes' Nevada operations. Also assigned to the murder mission were CIA agents William Harvey and James "Big Jim" O'Connell.

MAHEU reportedly introduced the CIA agents to John Roselli, a suave, silver-haired gambler with extensive contacts in the American and Cuban underworlds. And Roselli jumped at the opportunity to help Uncle Sam.

Roselli, now 65, began his underworld career in Chicago as a member of the Al Capone mob. As a Prohibition rumrunner, he made many trips between the U.S. and Cuba and became an expert at smuggling men and merchandise ashore. In the 1930's he emigrated to California, married movie actress June Lang and went to work for Hollywood labor racketeer Willie Bioff.

In those days, Roselli was known as the West Coast representative of the Chicago crime syndicate. He and five other racketeers were sent to prison in 1944 for their \$1,000,000 shakedown of

movie producers and labor unions. Paroled in 1947, the handsome, debonair Roselli returned to the good life of Hollywood and Las Vegas, where his pals included movie moguls, stars and Mafia mobsters.

In March, 1961, Roselli flew to Tampa, Florida, and conferred with his old friend Santo Trafficante, rackets boss of Florida's West Coast.

During the Batista dictatorship, Trafficante held the lucrative franchise to operate Havana's gambling casinos. Castro had closed the casinos and kicked the American gangsters out, so Trafficante welcomed the chance to help exterminate Castro. He put Roselli in touch with his underlings who were running the Cuban lottery racket in Miami.

They, in turn, recruited an anti-Castro Cuban, whose cousin was a cook on Fidel Castro's household staff.

CIA Agents Harvey and O'Connell flew to Miami on March 12, 1961, and checked into Miami Beach's swank Fontainebleau Hotel under assumed names. Roselli also was staying at the Fontainebleau. Posing as representatives of a large American oil company whose Cuban holdings had been seized by Castro, the CIA agents outlined their plan to the cousin of Fidel's cook.

The Cuban was given capsules containing a powerful poison.

"SEE if you can persuade your cousin to sprinkle the contents of these capsules in Castro's food," he was told. "The poison works slowly but thoroughly. He will be dead in three days. By that time, there will be no trace of the poison in his system. An autopsy and chemical analysis will detect nothing unusual."

The Cuban agreed and reportedly received a down payment of \$10,000 cash. On the night of March 15, he left for Cuba from Marathon Key, Florida, in a converted submarine chaser, the *Texana III*. Roselli and several Cuban freedom fighters were aboard.

Two nights later, Fidel Castro became violently ill after a supper of chicken and rice. He was not hungry and had consumed only a small portion of the meal. When he started vomiting, a doctor was called and his stomach was pumped out.

Castro immediately suspected that someone had tried to poison him. Police questioned the kitchen staff and the terrified cook immediately confessed his part in the plot.

The cousin was shot trying to escape from Cuba. Several other suspected plotters also were rounded up as the CIA anxiously awaited word of Castro's demise.

When it became apparent that Fidel was alive and well, the agency activated an alternate plan. It called for a military uprising, during which Castro and his Communist advisers would be killed.

Leader of this plot was Major Humberto Sori Marin, a hero of the Castro revolution and one of Fidel's most trusted aides. Among the others involved were Major Aldo Vera, chief of Castro's secret police; Commandante Julio Rodriguez, deputy commander of the Cuban air force base at San Antonio de los Baños; several other high-ranking army, navy, and air force officers; the military commander of Camaguey Province; the head of the Cuban Sugar Institute and the Cuban undersecretary of finance.

When the CIA first learned of the discontent among Castro's top brass, it was training its own Cuban rebel force

in Guatemala. CIA strategists figured a military revolt inside Cuba was just what was needed to insure the success of the Bay of Pigs invasion.

Contact man between the Cuban conspirators and the CIA was Miami millionaire Alberto Fernandez, a former Cuban sugar king. Fernandez was the owner of *Texana III*, the converted sub-chaser, which was equipped with a pair of small speedboats and enough weapons to stock a small arsenal.

During the early months of 1961, the *Texana III* made so many runs between Florida and Cuba that it seemed as if the CIA was running a ferry service. On one occasion, it actually brought several of the Cuban conspirators to Florida for a conference with CIA agents. The Cubans returned home that same night.

EX-CON John Roselli personally delivered the death squads to Cuba's shores, using the *Texana III* and its twin speedboats. One night, during a gun fight with a Cuban patrol boat, gunfire sank one of the speedboats, dumping Roselli and his crew into the water. They were picked up by the second speedboat and whisked to the comparative safety of the *Texana III*, whose powerful engines quickly outdistanced the Cuban vessel.

By the end of March, Castro knew an invasion was imminent. But he wasn't sure when or where the task force would strike. Suffering from pre-invasion jitters, he ordered his security cops to grab everyone suspected of dissatisfaction with the Red regime. Police dragnets went out all over the country. Anyone caught outdoors after curfew was considered a probable saboteur, traitor or spy.

Neighborhood vigilantes, armed with machetes, clubs and flashlights, patrolled every city street and country lane. Committees for the Defense of the Revolution turned neighbor against neighbor, children against parents.

On April 7, 1961, a Havana schoolboy

overheard a woman complaining about the long lines and short supplies at a grocery. The boy, whose parents belonged to the militant CDR, informed the security police. A two-man militia patrol was sent to pick up the woman for questioning.

She was in her home in Havana's Miramar suburb when the soldiers arrived in a jeep. Frightened, the woman picked up her baby daughter and ran to the home of friendly neighbors, a retired engineer and his wife.

The soldiers saw her go out the back door and followed her to the engineer's large yellow house. The engineer and his wife were playing cards when the woman ran in, crying and pleading for help. She had picked the worst possible moment to come calling.

A dozen leaders of the anti-Castro conspiracy were in the back room of the engineer's home. It was to have been their last meeting before the uprising. Spread out on a table were military maps of Havana, pinpointing the government buildings to be seized by the rebels. A large X marked the spot where Castro was to be slain in his headquarters.

Major Sori Marin was discussing the assassination plan when the door burst open and the militia patrol charged in, looking for the woman. Thinking the plot had been discovered, Sori Marin yanked his pistol from its holster and backed toward a window overlooking the rear garden.

The soldiers cut him down with two short bursts from their Czech-made machine guns. With Sori Marin dead, his companions surrendered without a struggle. They were hauled off to prison, interrogated, tortured and eventually executed.

Four of them were Cuban exiles who had been sent back to their homeland by the CIA to get Castro.

Ironically, neither Castro nor his Communist advisers knew a thing about the plot until (Continued on page 50)

Alan Nye hears Havana court sentence him to firing squad for reportedly plotting to kill Castro for \$100,000. Sentence was commuted later provided Nye leave Cuba.



Plot to Kill Castro

(Continued from page 29)

the militiamen stumbled onto it by accident. But once the conspirators were in custody, Fidel quickly learned what had been going on almost under his whiskers.

Hundreds of Cubans were arrested and thrown into jail. Military officers suspected of disloyalty were promptly shot. And by the time Brigade 2506 struggled ashore at the Bay of Pigs, Castro was ready and waiting.

On several occasions before the invasion, the CIA landed assassination teams equipped with two-way radios, high-powered rifles, grenades and bombs. But none of them reached their target.

The Bay of Pigs fiasco was Castro's greatest military victory. Within 72 hours, his forces had smashed the CIA-backed forces that landed at Playa Larga and Playa Giron. Then, in his moment of triumph, Castro had his closest brush with death.

The invasion began on April 17. Two days later, Castro arrived in the seaside town of Playa Giron to take personal command of his troops and interrogate prisoners. He visited a ramshackle wooden cottage that was full of wounded members of battered Brigade 2506.

One of the captives was Enrique Ruiz-Williams, 40, a mining engineer who was second-in-command of the Brigade's heavy gun battalion. Williams, known to his friends as Harry, had been blown into the air by an exploding shell. Hit by more than 70 pieces of shrapnel, he was covered with wounds from his scalp to the soles of his feet. He had major wounds in the chest, near his heart, and the neck. Both feet were smashed. He also had several broken ribs and was unable to use his left arm.

Williams had never met Castro, but he recognized him as soon as the Maximum Leader entered the cottage. Although barely able to move, Williams reached under his thin cotton mattress and found the .45-caliber automatic he had hidden there when he was carried

into the house earlier that afternoon. Slowly, painfully, he struggled to a sitting position and aimed the pistol at Castro. There was a moment of complete silence during which everyone in the cottage—Castro, his bodyguards, the wounded captives—were still as statues.

Gasping for breath, Williams tried to squeeze the trigger. But the effort was too much. His right hand shook and the gun lowered although he tried to keep it steady. Then a militia captain stepped to his side and grabbed the pistol. Williams fell back on the mattress, completely exhausted.

He closed his eyes. When he opened them again seconds later, Castro was standing over him. "What are you trying to do, kill me?" the dictator inquired without anger.

"That's what I came here for," Williams replied. "We've been trying to do that for three years."

Williams recovered from his wounds and was released, along with other Bay of Pigs prisoners, after a year in prison. Of all the people who tried to knock off Fidel Castro, he came closest to succeeding.

The rash of assassination attempts that preceded the Bay of Pigs landings came to an abrupt halt when the invasion was crushed. For almost two years, there were no new efforts to murder Castro. But in 1963, amid reports that the United States was preparing for another Cuban invasion, the CIA resumed its shipments of arms and agents to Cuba.

Many of these missions were carried out by the *Rex*, a 174-foot converted U.S. Navy patrol boat. Operating out of West Palm Beach, Florida, the *Rex* flew a Nicaraguan flag and carried a Spanish-speaking crew who had strict orders not to talk to strangers. The vessel was equipped with the latest radar and sonar gear, plus other electronic surveillance devices.

The *Rex* carried two 20-foot speedboats, each armed with two .30-caliber machine guns. The *Rex*'s own armament included a 75-mm. cannon, two 57-mm. cannon, five twin 20-mm. cannon and as many tommy guns as the crew could handle.

On the night of July 21, 1963, the *Rex* landed several heavily-armed Cubans on Cayo Verde, a small island off Las Villas Province, scene of the Bay of Pigs invasion. Militia patrols spotted the infiltrators and captured them after a brief gunfight. Three members of the infiltration group later were executed by a firing squad.

Described by the Castro regime as "CIA agents," these men had been sent to assassinate Fidel Castro on July 26 when he delivered a major speech in Havana's Plaza de la Revolución. The assassination, to be carried out by several gunmen using high-powered rifles and grenades, was to coincide with a "major uprising" that was to be set off in Pinar del Rio Province by a CIA-supported group called Citizens Committee for a Free Cuba.

Unaware that the execution squad had been captured in Cayo Verde, 50 members of the Free Cuba Committee gathered at a mountain hideout near San Diego de Nunes, about 40 miles west of Havana, on the morning of July 26. Their revolt was to start in a few hours.

The committee chairman, a young anti-Communist named Ernesto Guerra, was delivering last-minute instructions when his words were drowned out by the roar of motorcycle and truck engines. A convoy of 30 trucks, transporting some 400 Soviet soldiers, surrounded the rebels' meeting place. The mountain road was sealed shut. For the committee members, there was no escape.

As they raised their rifles and pistols, the Russian troops opened fire with machine guns. All 50 Cubans were slaughtered. This incident, kept secret by the Castro government, was the first use of Soviet combat troops to massacre Cuban insurgents and to crush an attempt to exterminate Castro.

The raid was led by Colonel Yosif Lutzenko, commander of Soviet army forces in Pinar del Rio.

On the night of October 21, 1963, a mystery ship appeared off the western tip of Cuba. It was the *Rex* again, running without lights to avoid detection. Its two launches were lowered and they set off for shore with six men in each boat.

As the first speedboat scraped the sand of a secluded beach, a high-powered spotlight was switched on by a Cuban militia patrol. Shots rang out. A Cuban gunboat appeared and sprayed the second launch with machine-gun slugs as it raced back to its mother ship.

The first launch was captured along with its six-man crew. The second launch sank about 50 yards from the *Rex*, which picked up the dead and wounded and drove off the Cuban boat with a cannon shot.

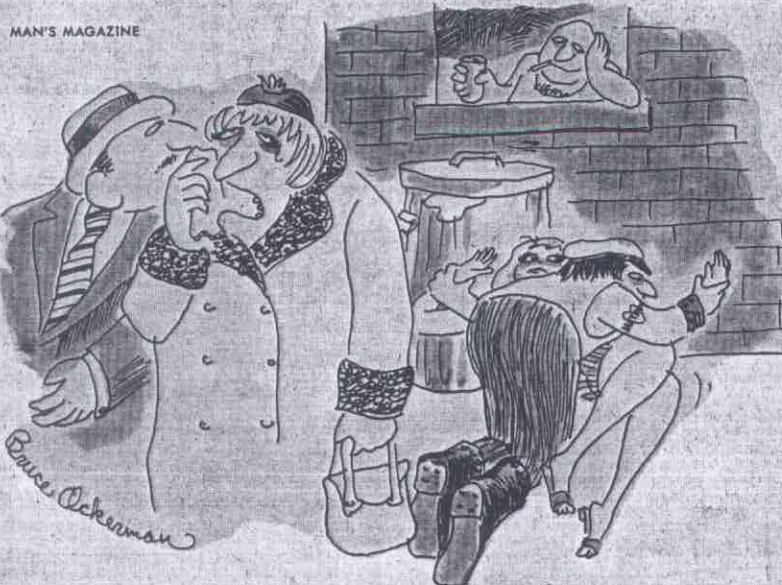
Next morning, a U.S. submarine surfaced off the coast of Cuba. Five Cubans—four dead and one wounded—were transferred to the sub by the *Rex*, which then sailed home to West Palm Beach.

A few hours later, Castro staged a TV talkathon in which he announced the arrests of "six CIA agents." He accused the CIA and the United States of "waging an undeclared war on Cuba." "No comment," the CIA replied.

One month after the *Rex* raid, President Kennedy was assassinated by Lee Harvey Oswald, a Castro sympathizer who had made a mysterious visit to the Cuban embassy in Mexico City and had belonged to the Fair Play for Cuba Committee, a pro-Castro group, in New Orleans.

It may never be known whether President Kennedy was aware of the

MAN'S MAGAZINE



"All the world loves a lover."

CIA plots to assassinate Castro or whether these plots resulted in his own murder. But some investigators are convinced that the Kennedy assassination was triggered by the bungled plots against Castro.

In late 1964, a year after the Kennedy murder, the CIA scored a major intelligence coup. American agents in Paris were contacted by Major Rolando Cubela, 35, a hero of the Castro revolution and a top-ranking officer in the Cuban army. Cubela, a medical doctor before he became a guerrilla, served as Castro's personal physician during the rebel campaign. After Castro took power, Cubela was named president of the Federation of Students at the University of Havana. Later he became head of a large Havana hospital.

But he was not a Communist. And as Castro was surrounded with Latin Reds and Russians, Cubela began to have serious doubts about Cuba's future.

While attending an international health conference in Paris, Cubela decided to defect to the United States. Two months later, in a Madrid apartment used by the CIA as a "safe house," he conferred with two CIA agents and three Cuban exile leaders, including Manuel Artime, one of the commanders of the Bay of Pigs invasion.

The CIA now dusted off its old assassination - uprising - invasion plot. The script was virtually unaltered. Castro was to be killed; then loyal Cubans would throw off their Communist chains and support an invasion force, led by Artime, which would quickly take over.

Cubela, who knew little about all the previous attempts that failed, became convinced that the plot could succeed. He even agreed to serve as the assassin.

On his return to Havana, he was given a high-powered rifle with telescopic sights. He held secret meetings with several other plotters, including Cuban army Major Ramon Guin. After months of searching for a good spot to carry out the assassination, they rented a vacant apartment in downtown Havana overlooking the entrance to Castro's headquarters in the Presidential Palace.

Finally the preparations were completed. The conspirators received word in February, 1966, that the invasion army was ready. Cubela moved into the Havana apartment and crouched by the window each day with the rifle beside him.

Late one afternoon, a black Zim limousine—a gift to Castro from Nikita Khrushchev—pulled up to the Presidential Palace. As Cubela watched, three men in green fatigue uniforms came out of the palace and walked towards the car. Peering through the telescopic sights, Cubela saw the familiar face of Fidel Castro. The cross hairs of the sights centered on Castro's skull.

The rifle barrel protruded from the open window of the third-floor apartment. Cubela could feel the sweat rolling down his cheeks and into the open collar of his shirt. Keeping his eye glued to the sights, the burly, balding major squeezed the trigger.

Nothing. The assassination weapon failed to fire. Unaware he had just had another narrow escape, Castro climbed into the bulletproof limousine and drove away.

A few days later, his secret police received information about the plot. Cubela was asleep in his comfortable home near Havana University when the cops called at 3 AM. In the house, they

found the rifle and several other weapons.

Cubela, Guin and five other men were arrested. Charged with plotting to assassinate Castro, they went on trial before a military tribunal in La Cabana Fortress, where the mass trials and executions of Batista henchmen were held in 1959. The state prosecutor, Jorge Serguera, had sent hundreds of Cuban men and women before firing squads.

Cubela and his co-defendants seemed headed for a similar fate. Then a letter from Castro was read, asking the court to spare their lives. When the plea for leniency was heard, the 500 spectators jumped to their feet and cheered. Cubela and Guin each were sentenced to 25 years in prison; three other defendants got from 10 to 20 years; the remaining two, who had confessed their part in the plot and implicated the others, were set free.

Though another assassination plot had been foiled, there was no freedom for Fidel Castro. He had become a prisoner of his own regime and still is today. He seldom appears in public anymore. His comings and goings are kept a secret, so that no one knows in advance where he will appear. His food and drink is sampled by security guards as a precaution against poisoning.

His bodyguards have become so jittery that they sometimes fire on innocent passersby in the mistaken belief that they are assassins.

"Castro sees an assassin lurking in every shadow, a CIA agent behind every tree," says one of his former lieutenants who now lives in Miami. "He has had a charmed life so far, but he knows his good luck can't last forever." So does the Castro-stalking CIA. ▲

Motorecycle Gang

(Continued from page 19)

his unforgivable insult to a biker's colors; his friend got it because he was witness to the abduction. Nine bullets into the Weasel, nine stab wounds...

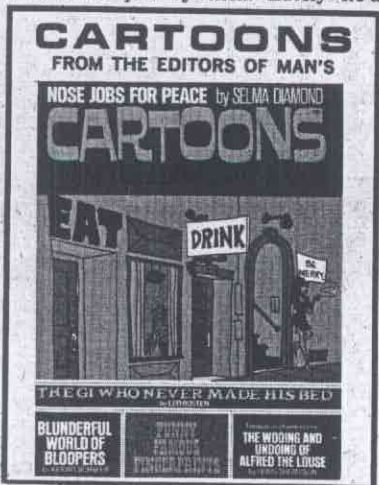
That was March, 1970. Meanwhile, bikers' groups in the New York-New Jersey area had fought outside the National Hot Rod and Custom Car Show at Manhattan's Coliseum. A gory return bout two weeks later in Times Square scared hundreds of straights into vanishing like scared rabbits down the subway entrances. But by now the battling bikers weren't so readily identifiable as Pagans, Aliens, Outlaws. Many were shedding their old identities, combining into one of two main forces in the Eastern U.S.—Hell's Angels and Breed.

The Angels were toughly arrogant, copying the lifestyle of their West Coast parent body. The Breed was attracting younger recruits, cocky kids eager to carve a name for themselves... like the kid with the spray gun who charged into a Cleveland tavern and wrote in two-foot letters on the mirror behind the bar BREED—H.A. STOMPERS.

Insolent challenges began to fly. Throughout the fall of 1970 skirmishes were sporadic—the bikers' power struggle was measured in terms of relative recruiting figures. But the very fury of the recruiting drives made a major confrontation inevitable.

The East just wasn't big enough for both of 'em, Dum Dum Fidel told himself soberly on March 6, 1971. He was a dues-paid member of the Breed now,

wore his colors proudly, even sported a five-inch steel cross riveted to his leathers. But he knew inside him he was getting too tired, too old maybe, for long-distance runs and blood feuds. *There's gonna be a showdown, he thought. There's gotta be. Well, maybe he'd have quit by then. Lately he'd*



even been thinking of how it would be if he owned his own gas station...

The showdown. Within 24 hours Dum Dum Fidel was riding a pickup truck on his way to Cleveland.

It is 9:30 AM, March 7, 1971. Cleveland Police Chief Lewis Coffey listens on the phone, brow creased in a frown. He hangs up and turns to an aide. "The

FBI," he says briefly. "Their information now is that Breed members are heading this way from at least five Eastern states."

It isn't the first such report. The police department intelligence unit has already been warned by agents of the Federal Bureau of Narcotics and Dangerous Drugs that bikers in considerable numbers, riding an assortment of vehicles ranging from pickup trucks to funeral hearses, are converging on Cleveland for the Fourth Annual Motorcycle Custom and Trade Show.

Chief Coffey contacts the Fourth District, relays the FBI tip. "There's no concrete evidence that they mean trouble," he adds. "And we can't stop the show on the basis of rumors." But he promises a fleet of tactical unit cruisers to patrol the neighborhood, then outlines his precautionary strategy.

Around noon, Chief Coffey gets a call from Clayton Crook, police chief of Brunswick, 20 miles south of Cleveland. Chief Crook advises him that a couple of local Breed members have rented a big, ramshackle barn, telling the owner that they need it for a repair shop. And all morning, trucks and cars have been arriving at the barn, spilling over on the parking lot of St. Ambrose Catholic Church next door.

Coffey listens, staring gloomily out the window at the rain-swept streets of downtown Cleveland. He asks, "How many of them do you estimate have shown up so far?"

"At least 175," replies Chief Crook. The Breed rendezvous is a two-floor crumbling barn on Pearl Road in Brunswick. It's flanked by vehicles parked bumper to bumper, bearing license