

Cuban Refugee Activists

It Has Been All Downhill Politically
And Even Personally for Miami
Exiles Since That Day in 1962

By Richard Harwood
Washington Post Staff Writer

MIAMI—The heat and the special brilliance of the sunlight matched the mood of the huge crowd of Cuban exiles in the Orange Bowl on Dec. 29, 1962.

The cadenced roar from 40,000 throats was like a heavy surf beating in the great stadium:

"Guerra (war)! Guerra! Guerra!"

They were caught up in an emotional frenzy touched off by President John F. Kennedy, who had, a moment earlier, received the only thing of value the survivors of the Bay of Pigs invasion attempt had to give—the flag of Brigade 2506.

Deeply moved, the President declared: "I can assure you that this flag will be returned to this brigade in a free Havana!"

To the Cubans, that impulsive promise was a liberation pledge. It gave birth to extravagant hopes. But those hopes, the brigade's biographer, Haynes Johnson, has written, began to die when Mr. Kennedy died. The process was accelerated by America's preoccupation with Vietnam. Today, the hopes have all but vanished, like the Brigade itself. The exile community is splintered, leaderless, disillusioned and impotent.

U.S. as Adversary

THE FEW REMAINING activists for the most part now regard the Government of the United States more as an adversary than as a friend.

Felipe Rivero, who drank scotch with a beer chaser on the beach at the Bay of Pigs, is in jail in Miami awaiting action on charges of plotting "violent acts against Cuba."

Orlando Bosch, head of the Insurreccional Movement for Revolutionary Recovery, is under indictment for attempted piracy of ships in the Cuban trade, attempted gun-running and con-

THE WASHINGTON POST Sunday, Sept. 17, 1967

B3

in Disarray

spiracy to blow up a Cuban sugar mill.

Jorge Mas, an intellectual bomb-thrower who runs the largest of the extant exile organizations—RECE (Cuban Representation of Exiles)—broods in a windowless back room on West Flagler Street over the hostility of American officialdom.

"They give Castro a sanctuary," he complains bitterly. "But they harass us. They seize our boats and our guns. Their agents (from the Immigration and Naturalization Service) spy on us all the time."

Ramón Donestevez, a chubby boat

builder who dreams of a "sail-in" to Havana to plead for the release of political prisoners, is threatened with a five-year prison sentence if he carries out his plan. Government agents follow him 24 hours a day to frustrate his scheme.

"Why does your government persecute me?" he asks. "We have waited eight years for them to get our prisoners released and they have failed. Are they afraid we will make them ridiculous if we show them how to get the prisoners out?"

A Dismal Roster

THE MORE SUBSTANTIAL figures associated with the Bay of Pigs—

many of them military heroes—have dropped out of sight. At least two were committed to mental hospitals. Others have been discredited by time and events.

Manuel Ray, who was to have been the Minister of Sabotage and Internal Affairs if the Castro regime had fallen in 1961, lost face and influence in 1964 when he botched a new invasion scheme. Manuel Artime, civilian leader of the Bay of Pigs contingent, suffered a similar fate. He is now said to be in the restaurant business in Florida.

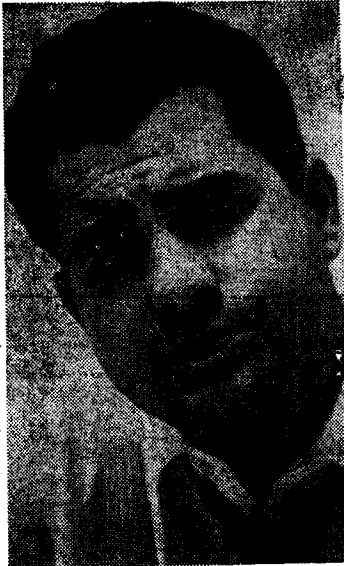
Eloy Gutierrez Menoyo, a guerrilla warfare theoretician, was captured and jailed in Cuba when he attempted to translate his theories into practice against the Castro government.

Only Erneido Oliva, second in command of Brigade 2506, retains his old prestige. But he is no longer active in the exile organizations. He has his own dreams of military conquest and they do not involve the United States directly.

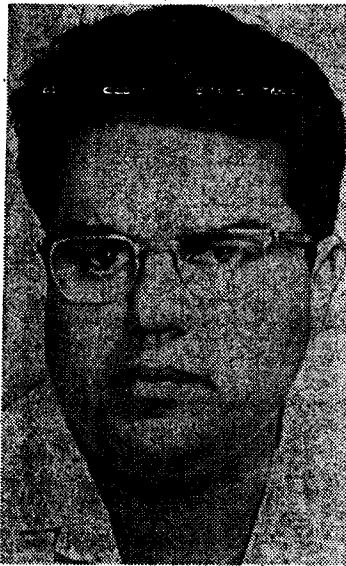
An American diplomatic official, surveying the disarray, compares the Cubans now to the Polish exiles in London. "The Poles," he remarked, "have three separate 'governments' in exile. That's the history of all exile movements. They break up into splin-

ter groups like the Cubans, who have no effective leadership and no ability to work together."

Another officer of the Federal bureaucracy who is engaged in what is known as "intelligence work" is equally harsh and equally clinical in his judgments:



JORGE MAS
... charges "persecution"



RAMON DONESTEVEZ
... broods over hostility

"The ability of the exiles to influence the course of affairs in Cuba is nil. Their input has absolutely no effect."

The "input" to which he referred consists of isolated and unproductive acts of terrorism, carried out with great infrequency and conspicuous clumsiness.

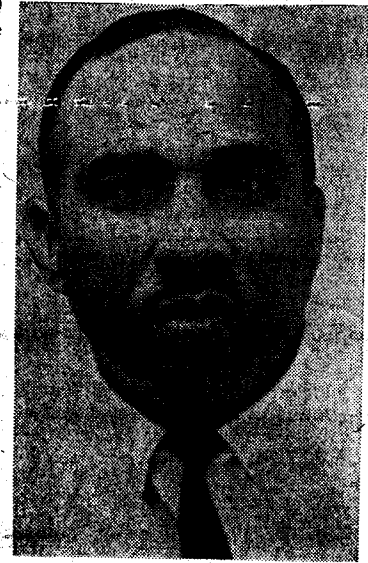
The indicted Orlando Bosch, for example, once attempted to smuggle 100-pound bombs out of Miami (for an air raid on Havana) in the back seat of a Cadillac. He was caught before he got out of town.

The jailed Felipe Rivero wired up two bazookas as time bombs for an ineffectual attack on the Cuban embassy in Ottawa. Many think he planned the bazooka shot at the United Nations building in New York during a speech by Ernesto "Che" Guevara in 1964. The round fell into the East River.

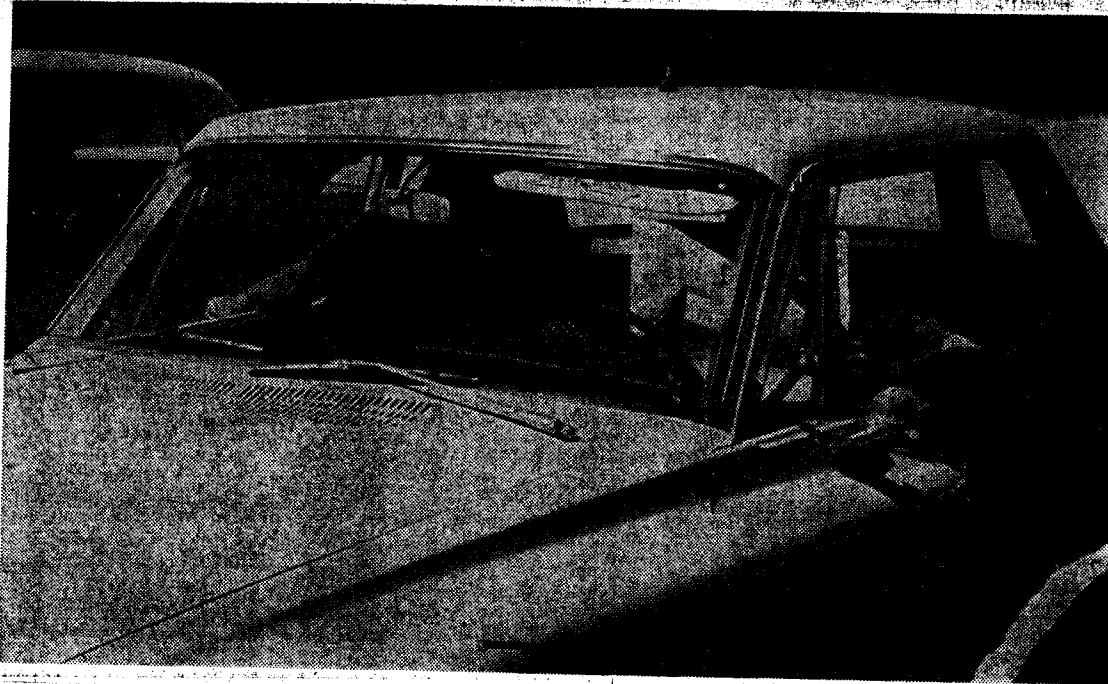
The CIA Again?

JUST A FEW WEEKS ago, a half-dozen men sent into Cuba by the Miami-based group Second Front of Escambray were captured by Castro's forces.

Two of the men told Castro's police they were carrying bullets coated with potassium cyanide to be used to as-



ERNEIDO OLIVA
... still operating



Agents of the Immigration and Naturalization Service are keeping a watch on sail-in organizer Ramon

Photos by Richard Harwood—The Washington Post

Donestevez. They first tried to hide from the camera but wound up by taking out after the photographer.

sassinate Castro. They also said that they had been trained by the American CIA but that is considered unlikely here. There is no visible evidence that the agency is encouraging, financing or arming exiles.

The terrorist groups such as Armando Fleites' Second Front, Bosch's Insurreccional Movement, Jorge Mas's and one called Alpha 66 live hand to mouth, operate on emotional impulses and are subject to continual harassment by American authorities.

Fleites and his lieutenants are supported by their wives. Mas and his staff of a half-dozen men and women are on the payroll of Jose Bosch, of the Bacardi rum family, and regularly solicit contributions from the big exile community. The money dribbles in—\$5, \$8, \$10.

U.S. officials estimate that the largest of the groups—RECE—has no more than 300 or 400 active members, although Mas has 15,000 applications for the "liberation army" locked in his safe.

Oliva, who has no visible means of support but who travels extensively in Latin America and turns aside questions about his connection with the United States Government, is confident that an army of 40,000 or 50,000 exiles could be raised with no great difficulty. He would be willing to put

such an army, or a smaller force, at the disposal of Latin American governments faced with guerrilla problems. In exchange, he would hope for Latin American help in the ultimate "military solution" to the Cuban problem.

All-Latin Project

CUBA, HE SAYS, can only be liberated by Cubans and other Latins. He believes there is no place for American troops in such an undertaking although American arms would be necessary.

Both Oliva and Jorge Mas of RECE believe that Castro is stirring up trouble throughout Latin America and is actively encouraging the Negro "revolt" in the United States. As a result, they believe that collective military action against Castro will one day become a necessity. Mas thinks that day may be close at hand.

"You have lost the war in Vietnam," he declares. "You have lost the war on poverty. You have chaos and anarchy in your cities. The only place the U.S. can rebuild its prestige is in Cuba. We do not ask for U.S. troops. We only want a change in policy to help Cuban freedom."

To American officials, such talk is "unrealistic." They no longer take the exiles seriously and have no timetable for giving back the flag of Brigade 2506 in Havana.