

# What's Happened to Bay of Pigs

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MIAMI.—Juan Jose Peryero sat in his dusty, cluttered office in a rundown section of Miami where he operates his automobile paint and body shop. He reminisced, and looked into the future.

"I will go again—all of us will, some day. And next time we'll finish the job. There'll be no quitting or excuses. We're ready to fight again to free our country."

U. S. Army Capt. Hingo Suetiro Rios (retired) hopped out and held the front door of his neat, three-bedroom home open for a visitor. He grinned a greeting, settled down on a job couch and quietly told about his recent past in South Vietnam, and his dreams for the future.

"Cuba is my life. I've never stopped fighting for it. It's been a long time, but the struggle we started then continues. We have a spirit of unity that will prevail—soon." Tomas Cruz, a tall, dignified Negro who fights racial discrimination as readily as he does Communism, paced the floor and gestured emphatically.

"I am an optimist as well as a realist about my homeland," he says.

"The Nixon Administration has to act.

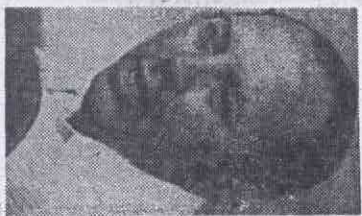
*"I will go again—all of us will—some day. And next time we'll finish the job. There'll be no quitting or excuses. We're ready to fight again to free our country."*

Juan Jose Peryero

Something will happen soon, possibly this year. And I am ready . . ."

Ten years ago, those three displaced Cubans and some 1500 of their countrymen were in a Guatemalan training camp run by the American CIA. On April 17, 1961, they hit the beaches in the disastrous invasion of Cuba at the Bay of Pigs.

Those who weren't killed were captured by Fidel Castro's troops. They spent 20 months of confinement in fear, confusion and bitterness.



Today, these ransomed "freedom fighters" pursue their more prosaic vocations, in exile. Now, they go about making a daily living and providing for their families—as cab drivers, accountants, lawyers, salesman, mechanics and fighting men for the U. S. armed forces.

They are part of the more than half-million Cubans living in exile in this country and elsewhere.

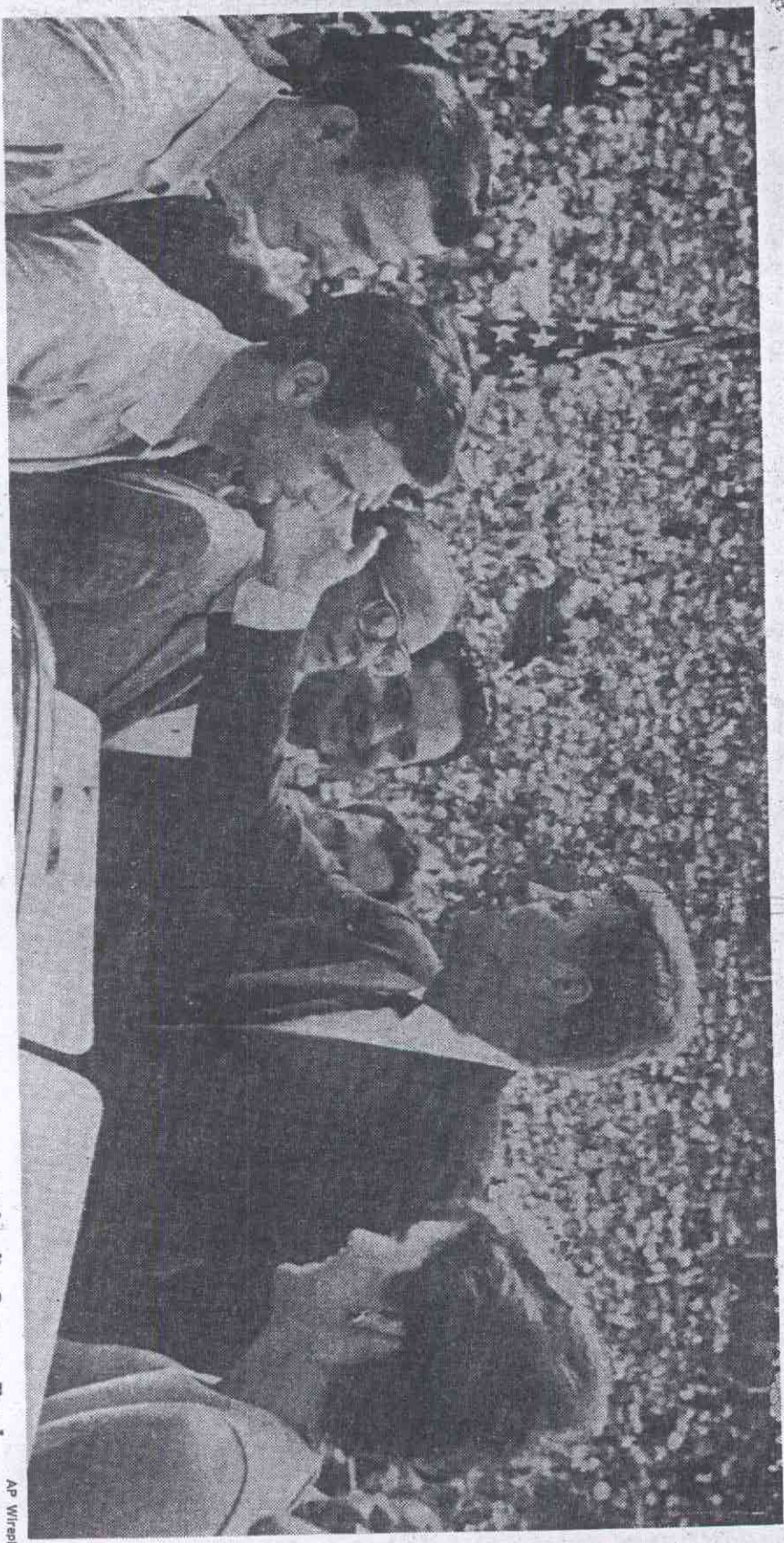
But these men are special, they say. They claim a unity that other exiles or refugees do not have.

Their "unifying bond," as Suetiro calls it, is the still active Assault Brigade 2506. Suetiro was a youth of 21 when he led the 2d Infantry Battalion of Brigade 2506 onto Playa Giron, the beach leading from Bahia de Cochinos, the Bay of Pigs.

Today, he has a plastic plate in his head and partial paralysis of the left side of his body as a result of a Claymore mine explosion in Vietnam. He served with the 82d Airborne Division and was a logistics officer with the 25th Infantry Division when wounded.

At 31, he is studying accounting at the University of Miami while supporting his wife and two children.

Along with more than 200 of his countrymen, he joined the U. S. armed forces in March 1963, following the release of all but nine Brigade prisoners by the Castro regime. Castro demanded and got \$3 million in American food and medicines for



*President Kennedy and wife greet Cuban participants in 1961 Bay of Pigs incursion at Miami's Orange Bowl.*

AP Wirephoto

their freedom.

"We expected to return rapidly to Cuba after the Special Officers Training Course in Ft. Benning, Ga.," says Sueiro.

### Badly Mistaken

"We were badly mistaken. After President Kennedy was killed, there was a change in the political situation in this country and we were told another invasion of the island was impossible. Many of our people got out of the armed forces, maybe half. But many of us remained, or returned after quitting."

Why?

"I feel that besides fighting communism, I was keeping myself ready for any possible return to Cuba in a fighting capacity."

He says many of the Cuban officers in the U. S. Army, Navy and Air Force feel the same way.

"Naturally, many of them have a career,

## Veterans?

good rank, prestige and have put in a good part of their lives as fighting men for the United States forces," says the shy, mild-mannered Sueiro.

"But I feel sure that given the opportunity, the majority would drop everything, leave their positions and families and return to fight in Cuba . . . I know all my friends in the Army feel this way. At heart, that's what we all want—an opportunity."

He says the brigade was formed "of all kinds of people—students, former army personnel with Batista or Castro, college graduates and peasants, laborers—all with different political beliefs and ideas.

"But Fidel Castro achieved one thing for us. He made it possible for Brigadistas to become unified. This spirit of unity continues to exist among the men of the brigade, be they dedicated family men tens of thousands of miles away, or here in ordinary jobs.

"Their thinking is here, at the center of activity, the 'brigade.'"

Assault Brigade 2506 exists not only in the minds of men such as Sueiro, but as a physical being in a second-floor walkup above a photographer's studio on West Flagler St., in the heart of the Miami district known as "Little Havana."

It is an "association" now, holding boisterous meetings in the smoke-filled hall but dedicated to keeping alive the spirit of return.

Still active are its leaders, then and now, José Perez San Roman, Manuel Artime, Peruyere and others.

Its current president is a stocky, nervous barker who learned his trade in Castro's prisons.

### Man of Mystery

Manuel Artime, perhaps the most familiar

name among all the Bay of Pigs personalities, is today a man of some mystery in Miami.

Artime was the civilian "political chief," who reportedly arranged for CIA sponsorship and recruiting for the brigade. He was the liaison between the uniformed fighting men and their Cuban exile political backers and CIA leaders.

Today, he is owner of a Miami store called Mon Petit, which sells baby furniture, toys, clothes and notions. But he rarely is in town, spending much of his time shuttling back and forth between Central America, Mexico and Miami.

He is in the import-export business, friends say. But others claim that he continues to make the contacts necessary for another large-scale invasion of the Communist island.

Artime declines interviews as does Perez San Roman, the brigade's fighting leader at the Bay of Pigs. "Pepe," Perez San Roman, now 40, working in Miami for a trucking firm.

### Retort to Castro

Cruz, 40, a salesman-collector for a home products firm in Miami, was commander of a parachute company in the 1961 assault. His colleagues hold him in high regard for a face-to-face encounter with the bearded Castro while they were prisoners.

During the televised show trials in which the invaders were sentenced to 30-year prison sentences, the Cuban premier singled out the lanky Cruz and asked:

"What are you doing here? As a black man, don't you know that we have wiped out discrimination in this country? You can go anywhere, swim at any of the clubs, do what you want."

Cruz retorted: "I didn't come here to go swimming. I came to free my country from Communism."

Rafael Guas Inclan, vice president of Cuba when dictator Fulgencio Batista fled the advancing Castro guerillas, lost his son in the Bay of Pigs invasion. The youth died fighting rather than surrender, says Guas Inclan.

Now 74 and a Miami resident, he is active in the exile movement as head of a small group called Alliance for the Liberation of Cuba.

Receiving a newsman in the dark and shabby meeting hall where a number of oldsters noisily played dominoes, Guas Inclan expressed bitterness at what he called United States failure to meet its commitments.

"The United States of today has lost much of its prestige regarding our country . . . It should know that Cuba is only a Russian trampoline to this country," he says.

With that, he expressed the opinion held by a majority of Cuban exiles.

While grateful to this country for its shelter and generosity, it is difficult for them to understand Washington's attitude of maintaining the status quo in regard to Cuba. Brigadistas and most of the other exiles bemoan U. S. inaction.

They do anything to encourage and even provoke a confrontation with the Castro regime.

Their great hope is for Cubans on the island to rise up against Castro so they, and the United States, will have an excuse for another invasion.

Meanwhile, they wait. And hope. They argue among themselves, as Cubans will.

But theirs is a common goal—to return.