

## CUBA

### Can't Anyone Here Play This Game?

Fidel Castro must have laughed till he split his fatigues. Incredibly, disastrously, Manolo Ray, the Cuban freedom fighter who had promised to be operating inside Cuba by May 20, was exposed as a bungling amateur. Worse, Fidel did not have to lift a finger. The British, with an assist from the U.S. Coast Guard, put the damper on what was surely the most ludicrous act yet in the endless, tragicomic opera of anti-Castro moves.

Five days before the May 20 deadline, the exile leader had quit his job



RAY BOUND FOR TRIAL  
Hiding in a hole.

in Puerto Rico and dropped out of sight. For two weeks, nothing was heard from him. Miami tingled with stories that Ray was in Cuba, carrying out a cleverly conceived plan to harass and eventually topple Castro. As it turned out last week, Ray did not start until May 24 and never set foot in Cuba.

**Everybody Knows.** Following standard procedure, Ray and his seven companions, including a woman radio operator, were launched from a CIA-sponsored "mother ship" that obligingly runs exiles to within striking distance of Cuba. As Ray and his men later told it to TIME Correspondent Ed Reingold, the weather was terrible the first few days, and Cuban patrol boats were everywhere. "Big, fast boats," recalled one of the infiltrators. "We saw ten in all." So the small band zoomed around tiny keys that lie between Florida and Cuba, testing their 24-ft. catamaran and tinkering with their boat's two 100-h.p. Volvo inboard-outboard engines. The Volvos were gobbling gas and running hot at high speed. Nevertheless, Ray finally decided that the time had come. The five FN Belgian rifles with flash suppressors, 1,000 rounds of ammunition, hand grenades and masses

of plastic explosives were unloaded for a final check at the Anguilla Cays, where Ray planned to make a last radio transmission.

The good thing about the Anguilla Cays is that they are only 40 miles off the Cuban coast. The bad thing is that everybody knows it. Castro watches them; so do the British who own them, and the U.S. sends over numerous reconnaissance flights. So it was hardly surprising that Her Majesty's destroyer *Decoy* steamed up to look around. But it surprised Ray and his group. Frantically, they tried to hide their equipment. Then five of the party, including two freelance photographers, gunned away in the catamaran, hoping to decoy the *Decoy* away from the island while Ray stayed behind.

**A Green Lump.** It didn't work. The quite-competent-thank-you British captain saw the launch departing and sent a landing party to see what it might be leaving. "I found a shallow hole," related Ray, "and I threw myself down in it and covered myself with a green cloth. I crossed my arms and put my head down and hoped they wouldn't find me. They almost didn't." But on the second search of the island, one British sailor noticed the green-covered lump and hustled Ray to his feet.

Meanwhile, back at the launch, the Cubans were holding their own against the pursuing destroyer. But it was all over when two U.S. planes showed up and began dropping messages, the third and decidedly last of which ordered them to heave to or risk a barrage of 4.5-in. shells.

And so Ray and his party were carted back to Nassau to stand trial for illegal entry into the Bahamas. At first, when police discovered Manolo's identity, the group tried to arrange for another Cuban to take his place at the trial. Next, a CIA type showed up, gave a different name to each newsman present and prepared to pay whatever fine was levied against the culprits, explaining that he was a "friend." At the trial, the Cubans were all so busy jostling around Ray to conceal him from photographers that no one could have missed him, and one newsman happily snapped Ray framed under a protecting armpit. The terribly understanding Nassau judge meted out \$14 fines to each of the eight, plus a warning never to trespass again.

Aside from the CIA's less-than-glorious role, the depressing thing about the whole sorry business was that Manolo Ray up to last week was considered a small but genuine threat to Castro. A former Castro ally, he had the bearded one so worried that Cuba went on a full-scale military alert; scores of suspected Ray supporters were arrested, and Castro announced the execution of eight "CIA men" in the last fortnight. Unless the whole thing was some ex-

ceedingly devious ploy, Ray's dunce cap for failure seemed all the bigger. "We have experience, and we are just as determined as we were," he said after the Nassau trial. "We think it will be easier next time. Fidel knows me, and he knows I'm coming." That may be so, but after last week's fiasco, Fidel may not care.