

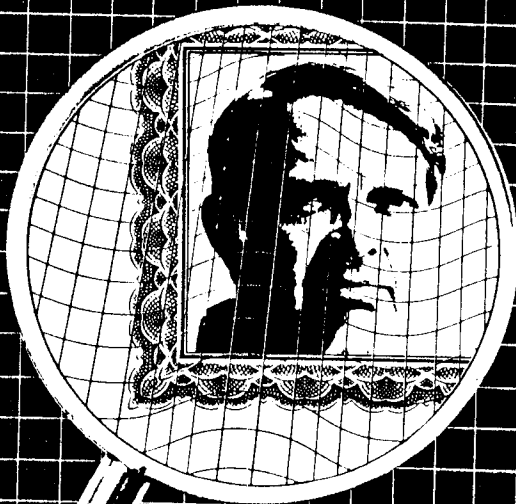
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# PORTRAIT OF A COLD WARRIOR



SECOND THOUGHTS OF  
A TOP CIA AGENT

JOSEPH B. SMITH

tripped up in organizing large-scale anti-Communist activities, and fell into a mire of ex-Nazis and Soviet infiltrators and had to be pulled out. He never served overseas again.

Henry generated animosity daily. He was convinced that he knew more about Communism, about propaganda, and about the proper techniques of propaganda operations than anyone else in the Clandestine Services, or the world for that matter. As a staff officer his role was supposed to be limited to giving advice and assistance when sought. This was something his own view of his competence and his German soul both found unbearably restrictive. Thus, when his advice was sought, he gave more than anyone wanted to hear, and whenever and wherever possible he sought to impose his ideas although they were unsolicited. Because he was fat and dogmatic, he reminded me of my first boss, Dr. Wing, the chairman of the Dickinson history department. The trick of getting along with both of them was to ignore them without letting them realize you were.

Not all of Henry's ideas were bad, however. Some were remarkably good. This was the tragedy of his fate—he should have been heeded many times when he wasn't. For example, his great interest in the summer of 1960, when I returned from Manila, and joined his office, was the rift that was growing between the Soviet Union and the Chinese. He was convinced it was the most significant development of the cold war and should be the major preoccupation not only of covert operations, but intelligence and the entire policy-making structure of the U.S. government—the State Department, the Defense Department, and the National Security Council. At his insistence a study group had been formed to examine the matter. Members of the group consisted of representatives from China operations, from Soviet operations, from the Communist Branch of the Counter Intelligence Staff, from the Office of the Deputy Director for Intelligence, the overt analyst side of CIA, and Henry, plus experts on different aspects of the problem who joined the group from time to time. As long as I was associated with him, while he made progress with the China operations' representatives, and, of course, had the complete support of the DDI intelligence analysts, he could never convince the representa-

tives of Soviet operations or the Counter Intelligence Staff that the "world Communist movement," in the existence of which they believed with the fervor of early Christian martyrs or Mohammed's desert warriors, could possibly split. Until I retired from the Agency, in fact, there were many members of the Counter Intelligence Staff who insisted the whole thing was a mammoth deception operation designed to catch us off guard—the arguments they used against Henry's ideas in 1960.

Another good insight Henry had, I learned the first time we discussed my new responsibilities, was that the Cuban task force's plan to destroy Castro would lead to disaster.

The man I was to replace as chief of the guidance section was having some problems working out his new assignment, Henry explained to me, so that during the overlap period, he had a special operation he wanted me to handle. He said it was so secret that of all the officers on the Covert Action Staff only he and Curly and the chief of the Paramilitary Branch had been briefed on it. This tightly held secret was the actual purpose of the Cuban task force. He said that when he was finished briefing me, he would let me read the CA Staff's copy of the NSC directive that had ordered the overthrow of Fidel Castro.

"The first thing you must understand," said Henry, "is the special nature of our Western Hemisphere Division. Colonel J. C. King, the division chief, has the unique distinction of being the only division chief in the Clandestine Services who has held his job since CIA was organized. The reason for this, as far as I can make out, is the special nature of our relationship to Latin America. I'm afraid it's the one place in the world where, as much as I hate to admit it, the Communists' propaganda claim that the United States is an exploiting imperialist power can't easily be denied. U.S. business interests have huge investments in Latin America, and the U.S. government's policy seems to be that the protection of these interests should control completely what we do in Latin America.

"Colonel King was an Army attaché in Buenos Aires during the war, and he had many links with the area. Among them are the close relations he developed with the FBI. As you know, the FBI was responsible for counter-intelligence operations against the Nazis throughout Latin

America during the war. When we came into existence, they reluctantly withdrew. Colonel King was able to convince a number of their officers to join him, and he's manned his division almost entirely with these FBI men. They and he all are close to American and Latin business leaders. They also are in with the police forces and local intelligence organizations. Of course, they supported Batista to the hilt. Fidel Castro's victory was a shock to J. C.'s men and their American business friends in Havana, who owned everything of consequence in the country either directly or through Cuban associates, from which they'll probably never recover. Before Castro had settled into office, the businessmen ran to Washington to tell President Eisenhower Castro was a dangerous Communist who had to be overthrown at any cost. J. C. ran right along with them. And so we have the Cuban task force."

Henry said he didn't want to get into the question of whether Castro had always been a Communist or not, although, he said, Castro simply didn't seem to fit the model of disciplined Marxist Communist Party leader that thirty years of experience with Communists had taught him to expect. It was too late now to worry about this, we were committed to a course of action, and, as good soldiers, we must do all we could to carry out our orders successfully. He was bothered about the chances of success, however, for several reasons.

"First of all, as in the case of Guatemala, when the director had to see a covert action program carried out, he has had to push J. C. and his officers aside. They know only how to talk with police chiefs and to exchange information with security officers of American companies. Sophisticated political or propaganda operations, they are not good at.

"So again, Tracy Barnes is really running the operation and the task force, as he did our Guatemalan operation. He's brought in many of the old team. I did the propaganda on the Guatemalan operation, and Tracy asked me to do it again, but I said no."

The reasons Henry had refused the assignment were, first, he thought that, although J. C. King had been pushed aside again, he would continue to try to assert the interests of the old Batista followers and agents, since

American business interests in Cuba were vastly greater than they had been in Guatemala and, hence, the businessmen would hound J. C. to put their Batista friends back in power. Henry was sure that there would be continual problems as a result, the most serious being that any attempt to put Batista or any of his followers back in power would doom the operation to failure. "The reason Castro won," said Henry, "was that everybody in Cuba, except J. C.'s friends, hated Batista. Any invasion force that goes in for the purpose of putting him back just won't have the support of the Cuban people. I think a lot of good propaganda operations, but they can't produce miracles."

Henry's second fear was, in a sense, an extension of his first. He wasn't sure that Castro didn't have a much greater following than WH Division liked to think, even though he had been brutal and killed and imprisoned hundreds of people. "I'm afraid he may have a real power base. This was something Arbenz didn't have. I think we must not fool ourselves that Cuba is another Guatemala."

Finally what bothered Henry was that the whole operation was going to be almost impossible to hide. "In the case of Guatemala," he pointed out, "we worked from a neighboring country. Now we're working out of Miami. I don't think it's enough to say that, historically, Cuban revolutionary movements were supported by Americans and call that cover." More seriously, he was concerned that the signs of preparations could not be kept out of the American press. It was not like planning an invasion of Guatemala from a neighboring police state, he observed. Above all, the basing of such an operation in the United States, if not an outright violation of CIA's charter, was striking too close to it to suit him.

"For all these reasons, I'm afraid it just won't work," he concluded, "and if it's blown, it could destroy the Agency. I hate to see that happen, especially over a tiny Latin country, when so much needs to be done about China and Russia."

This attitude, naturally, had led to another of his excursions into the realm of offering unsolicited and unwanted advice. He was more or less *persona non grata* with Tracy and the task force. He wanted me to see what I could do to help them as we had been ordered to do.

(He also wanted me to find out what was really going on since no one would tell him.) He figured I was a new face who might be accepted.

Our propaganda guidance section divided its workload by assigning an officer to assist each area division. I was assigned the Western Hemisphere Division, in addition to my responsibilities reading into replacing the chief. We produced "Bi-Weekly Propaganda Guidances"—a booklet that took up significant developments in the various areas of the world which the divisions considered all stations should be aware of so they could produce newspaper or magazine articles or broadcasts, depending on assets available, that would make it appear that independent world opinion was supporting the position regarding such developments that CIA wanted given support. Copies of such articles were mailed to cover addresses each station maintained. Thus, an article about Berlin might be printed in Buenos Aires and a copy mailed to Berlin. Berlin would get it reprinted or, at least, mentioned in a German paper or news analysis broadcast and German readers or listeners would then think that the Argentines, not Americans, were saying whatever it was CIA wanted said.

The responsibility of the chief of the propaganda guidance section was to have these guidances coordinated with the State Department and with USIS. This directive had been given by the Operations Coordination Board, OCB, established by the National Security Council to insure all operations of all U.S. agencies working abroad achieved some common purpose. The OCB was one of the clumsiest bureaucratic devices anyone ever devised, but it fitted President Eisenhower's style of making decisions by committee. As everyone knows, this is about the poorest possible way to make a decision. I recall sitting on OCB panels on Indonesia and Malaya. Each agency representative had obviously been briefed that whatever the proposed U.S. objective toward the country of concern might be, his job was primarily to safeguard the role his agency wanted to play in regard to it. The result was that every point was compromised so that, in the end, no one's toes were tread upon, but no action responsibilities were ever put in forceful terms or even very clearly. As the CIA representative, I was always instructed to say nothing

specific but to insist that what we might do about any matter was to be subsumed under some such clause as "other agencies will take appropriate action."

The clearance process for the propaganda guidances was the same sort of farce. After the section's officers had discovered what the divisions wanted to discuss in the guidances and had written these topics up and had them okayed again by the divisions, I would bundle them over to the State Department, where they would be circulated to cleared State desk officers and to USIS. I would take one two-week batch with me each time I went and receive the comments on the batch I had delivered two weeks before. The only thing I enjoyed about the business was that the State Department officer who had been assigned the task of supervising the clearance procedure had been the economic officer when I first arrived in Singapore; Bob Boylan introduced me to him the first time he took me to the consulate general's offices and told him he was going to have to introduce me to Jantzen's special people. The man never caught on to the fact that I was CIA. He was astounded to see me bring the guidances. I think he always wondered whether or not USIS might be up to some tricky business, assigning me to such a job.

Even though I stressed each time that these guidances were intended for use by assets not attributable to the U.S. government, and, which, therefore, were trying to make oblique points and not merely mouth the words of the USIS press officer or the State Department spokesman on the subject, the guidances were always watered down so they were as nearly like the official statements as my State and USIS friends could make them. Playing safe was their primary professional skill.

The worst job of all was trying to clear themes on Cuba. I knew the themes were intended to provide a long-range buildup for the day the Cuban brigade hit the beach and liberated the country. None of the officers with whom I cleared the guidances knew of the brigade's existence. Furthermore, when I began to work on the Cuban problem, we still maintained diplomatic relations with Castro. These were not severed until January, 1961. Thus the heavy dose of "Castro Communism" that I tried to make them swallow was especially difficult for these diplomats to take. All I could do was continue to try.

The day after Henry briefed me, I read the NSC directive of March 17, 1960. This ordered two types of activity be undertaken by CIA. The first was to form a unified Cuban exile political group which would be capable of replacing Castro and in whose name the operation would be undertaken. The second was to train a Cuban guerrilla force which would be able to establish a foothold on the island and enable the new government we had formed to proclaim itself. A fundamental assumption of the paper was that the Cuban people would rally to the new cause, once it had shown its strength. The paper suggested the formation of the new Cuban exile group be completed within six months. No specific date was mentioned, but presumably the operation would get under way in August, I thought.

I next made myself acquainted with the covert action chief on Colonel King's Western Hemisphere Division staff because I was supposed to work not just on Cuba but to cover all topics of interest to WH Division. I explained, however, that I was also supposed to support the Cuban task force and asked to be introduced to the appropriate officer.

Paul, my new acquaintance, was the kind of down-to-earth Pennsylvania Dutchman I had grown up with. We immediately formed, not only a business relationship but a friendship. He was never taken in by any of the con men on the Cuban task force, of which there were more than a few. Paul and I lived through the whole experience consuming all their bluster and dramatics like so much Philadelphia scrapple.

Paul suggested, before I really got into things, I read up on Latin America and become familiar with the U.S. stake involved. I recalled Henry's briefing. I soon had digested the statistics that bore out what he had said concerning J. C. King and his business friends.

In 1960 American private investment in Latin America amounted to \$8 billion. The total U.S. private investment in Europe at that time was less than \$5.5 billion. One-fourth of all U.S. exports, I found, went to Latin America, and one-third of our imports came from there. Of the seventy-seven articles listed as strategic materials to be stockpiled in World War II, thirty were produced in large amounts in the countries to the south of us.

Ninety percent of all quartz crystals, two-thirds of the antimony, half the bauxite and beryl, one-third of the lead, one-fourth of the copper that we needed came from these countries. Zinc, tin, tungsten, manganese, petroleum, and iron ore also were found in substantial amounts in Latin America. Two items, not strategic materials, but staples of every American household, coffee and sugar, were very significant. Almost all of these two products consumed in the United States came from our good neighbors of the hemisphere. Annual trade, both ways, totaled more than \$8 billion.

Like many people born and raised in the northeastern part of the United States, I had never given much serious thought to Latin America. Its image was for me the one that Hollywood presented with Carmen Miranda and Wallace Berry as Pancho Villa portraying the people of the area. I was educated to think that Europe was the only area outside the continental United States which was of any great concern to America. World War II and nine years in the Clandestine Services had made me appreciate Asia. Now I was learning that Latin America, economically speaking, was far more significant than either of these parts of the world. I may not have been paying any attention to Latin America, but a lot of people had, and they had gotten rich in the process. I was very eager to become involved in what we were doing there, and what we were doing was getting ready to throw Fidel Castro out.

Paul introduced me to Dave Phillips—the head of the Cuban task force's propaganda branch. I had heard of Dave from the man who had come out to Manila to be Jocko's deputy the latter part of my tour there. Bill Caldwell was one of J. C. King's FBI men and had been chief of station when Castro had taken over. Although he was certainly in no way responsible for this bad turn in the affairs of the U.S. ambassador's good friend Batista, Bill had to leave Havana, and a place was found for him in the Philippines. He had told me one day, in the course of discussing our propaganda operations in Manila, that he was surprised at how sophisticated they were. He said, "When they told me I should get some propaganda writing started in Chile, I went out and recruited a young American who was bumming around putting out a small

newspaper—a guy named Dave Phillips. He sure was a help. Dave's not only a good writer, he's a great snake oil salesman. I brought him to Cuba and he was doing my propaganda work for me when Fidel took over. I don't know what he's doing now. Since he was under unofficial cover, I hope he got out all right."

Dave got out. He was now running the propaganda show like a newsroom. He had a number of telephones on his desk—one for office calls, one for Coral Gables, where the Florida station was located, one for New York, one to talk directly to Tracy Barnes. He welcomed me warmly. His manner with me and with others reminded me of Bob Jantzen. Dave, however, did not limit his remarks to the clichés that were Bob's trademark. Although his manner was Rotarian, he had a quick mind bursting with ideas. His enthusiasm and energy were not theater, they were real.

He said he was happy for any help the staff and I could give him, and we got down to the business of discussing his propaganda objectives, what assets he had for his own direct use, and what he thought the worldwide guidance system might do to support them. From that first day, we had a relationship that I thought was productive and certainly one that I found a great pleasure.

Dave's principal activity was seeing that Swan Island radio was supplied with material, also that Cuban exile media men were put to proper use. He did a lot of work also through a New York public relations man who had worked for Wendell Willkie.

The Swan Island radio was an amazing operation for me. I had stretched my cover very thin in Manila, but a fifty-kilowatt radio station owned by something known as the Gibraltar Steamship Company broadcasting propaganda to Cuba as a "commercial venture" was an eye-opening experience for me in how the WH Division went about its work. Evidently, I mused, any type of business venture, even a New York-based steamship company running a radio station from an uninhabited island in the Caribbean, was something that Latin Americans, conditioned to living with all sorts of American business activities in their midst, could accept as legitimate.

Dave and I decided that the most useful thing the staff

could do was give maximum publicity to every shred of evidence that Castro was converting his revolution into a Communist model, and his country into a police state and a Soviet satellite. The rapidly unfolding events in Cuba in the summer and fall of 1960 and in early 1961 provided ample material to use.

Cuban Communists, who had actually opposed Castro's tactics when he was fighting Batista, had by 1960 become prominent in government affairs. By far our favorite example of Communists in the Cuban government, however, was Ernesto "Che" Guevara, the Argentine medical student who had joined Castro in Mexico at the very beginning of Fidel's great adventure. Guevara took over the National Bank on late November, 1959, although he had no known qualifications as an economist. He had a plan, however. Batista had left the country practically bare of cash. Guevara proposed that funds be raised by taking away the assets of the middle class. He also froze wages and imposed "revolutionary discipline" on the workers. His trump card was to turn to the Soviet bloc for economic assistance. We pushed in all our guidances, the theory that Guevara was the man who made Cuba Communist, aided by Fidel Castro's brother Raul and Raul's wife, Vilma, her sister Nilsa, and Nilsa's husband, a well-known Cuban Communist. Everything Guevara did, we pointed out, was part of a pattern—destruction of the middle class, destruction of workers' union rights, and reliance on the Soviets for aid was not just an economic policy, it was a blueprint for a Communist state. The emphasis on Guevara was supposed to raise resentment when played back to Cuba over Radio Swan because a "foreigner" was dominating their government. The emphasis on Raul Castro and his clique was intended to diminish Castro in the eyes of the world and of the Cubans.

Events in 1960 provided us the drift toward satellite status as ammunition for our "Bi-Weekly Guidances." In February, Castro signed a pact with the Russians which provided him \$100 million in credit over a twelve-year period. Then Soviets also agreed to buy a million tons of sugar a year and to send technicians. There was a point about the sugar-purchasing arrangement that we delighted to make.

The Soviets agreed to buy the Cuban sugar at a price of .0278 cents a pound, one-half the price the U.S. paid. The Soviets then sold the sugar to their own citizens at forty cents a pound. This was an example of Communist economic exploitation that made the worst kind of dealing the Communists could ever accuse capitalist imperialists of look good by comparison. Also, we liked to point out that the Soviet exploitation of the Cubans went one step further—the Soviets agreed to pay 20 percent in cash and the rest in Soviet goods.

In May, 1960, the two countries agreed to resume diplomatic relations, which Batista had severed at our request. Two months later, the first Soviet ambassador arrived. This was a priceless opportunity for our propaganda treatment. The new ambassador was Sergei M. Kudryavtsev. He had been first secretary of the Soviet Embassy in Ottawa in 1947 when Igor Gouzenko, the code clerk of the Soviet military, GRU, office in Canada, defected in one of the great spy sensation cases of the 1940s.

Kudryavtsev had to leave Canada as a result of the revelations of his connections with Soviet intelligence exposed by Gouzenko. Subsequently he had served in Vienna and as minister counselor of embassy in Paris. He was a representative of the international section of the Soviet Communist Party as well. His appointment, we said, proved that Castro was now a Soviet puppet with an experienced Soviet spy sent to Havana to watch over his activities.

Meanwhile relations with other Soviet bloc countries, who usually played a key role in promoting Soviet foreign policy objectives as well as supporting Soviet intelligence operations abroad, kept pace with the evolution of the Cuban-Soviet axis. Czechoslovakian technicians poured into Havana. Poland agreed to supply equipment for a shipyard capable of constructing 10,000-ton ships. On September 2, Castro announced that Cuba recognized Red China and that China was buying 130,000 tons of sugar.

By mid-fall 1960, as the presidential campaign began to climax and the two contenders added Cuba to their topics of debate, as I have already noted, a disturbing note began to creep into Cuban and Soviet announcements, I thought. Raul Castro, touring Soviet bloc coun-

tries, was quoted as saying he was delighted to learn that "the Soviet Union would use every means to prevent any U.S. armed intervention." On October 27, Khrushchev declared "Soviet rockets are ready in case the U.S. attacks Cuba." These were not the first signs that the Cubans evidently had gotten some wind of our task force plan. As early as July, there had been talk of Soviet defence of Cuba against U.S. attack. Khrushchev had mentioned his rockets and Che Guevara had declared, "Cuba is now defended by the greatest military power in history." But more than words was involved. Between August 1 and October 28, when Khrushchev again rattled his rockets, 22,000 tons of arms, we knew, had entered Cuba from the Soviet Union. Soviet technicians had also arrived. The military aid totaled about \$40 million, we estimated. I recalled that the operational approval which President Eisenhower had given indicated the new Cuban exile political front should be formed within six months. Presumably by now the operation to overthrow Castro was under way.

Even before the chilling prospect that Castro and his giant ally might be getting ready for us became so apparent in October, 1960, I had tried to find out what was wrong with the timetable. I got nothing out of Dave Phillips, but did get a clue from Paul. He admitted that he understood plans for the unification of Cuban exile political groups had run into trouble. "With Howard Hunt and this guy they brought in from the German desk running the show," Paul said, "as you might imagine, the political action group is behind schedule, all right."

I had heard about Howard Hunt, it seemed, all my career, but I had never met him. I had met the "guy from the German desk" several times back in the days I worked for Kay and coordinated propaganda themes occasionally with him. His operational alias for the Bay of Pigs activity was "Frank Bender," but as Arthur Schlesinger pointed out in *A Thousand Days*, his real name was Droller. From what I knew of him and what I had heard of Howard Hunt, I couldn't imagine them functioning well together. Paul told me that Gerry Droller was in charge of the Political Action Branch at head-

quarters and that Hunt was "working in the field" directly with the Cuban exile groups.

Gerry Droller was a man I would be associated with rather closely when I myself eventually joined the WH Division after the Bay of Pigs. I also met Howard Hunt in time. My original reaction when Paul told me these officers were the key figures in arranging the most delicate piece of the operation—the political basis that would justify the invasion and become the foundation of the post-Castro Cuba—was stunned amazement. How these two could put together a coalition of Cuban exiles, involving the constant soothing of egos, I could never imagine. Hunt, almost the epitome of the kind of WASP that is not appreciated in Latin America—a man who naturally would talk down to Latins—and Droller, who always seemed to go out of his way to try to be the caricature of a Jew invented by Goebbels' propaganda ministry and who in addition couldn't speak a word of Spanish—negotiating with Latin political leaders just did not make sense to me.

When Howard Hunt wrote *Give Us This Day* he made clear how correctly my insight was. No one, not even Paul (from whom they might well have been mostly concealed), gave me any of the details of the mess of bickering that Hunt and Droller made of the Cuban political exiles because of their personal problems and because of Hunt's extreme political conservatism and Droller's constant opportunism. Hunt does not give too many details in his book, but enough of the essentials for anyone who knew the two men to be able to see pretty clearly why the exiles were not united by August, 1960.

First of all, Howard Hunt would have liked to have used in a key role a Batista follower who was a friend of J. C. King and especially of former ambassador to Cuba, William D. Pauley. Pauley also, incidentally, owned the Havana Gas Company. Pauley's protégé was Dr. Antonio Rubio Padilla. Hunt tells how Droller fended off Rubio Padilla in an important meeting in the spring of 1960 when the operation was just getting under way. Gerry, of course, was following the line laid down by Tracy Barnes—the official position of taking care not to remove Castro in order to bring back the Batista gang, which was the reason the task force had to be established under Tracy

Barnes's control and not left to J. C. King. I could picture Gerry Droller "fending off" the Cuban. He did not know how to fend off anyone without being insulting.

Throughout his book and, obviously, throughout the operation, Hunt speaks up constantly in favor of a number of other right-wing adventurers who made the task of uniting the Cubans so terribly difficult. He praises to the sky Captain Pedro Luis Diaz Lanz, whose daring personal leaflet drop when he defected as Castro's air force chief he admired. Diaz Lanz wanted to be air chief of the Bay of Pigs operation to the disruption and dismay of the officers in charge of this phase. Hunt relied heavily in his liaison with the exile political leaders on an ex-Marine, Frank Fiorini. Fiorini accompanied Diaz Lanz on the leaflet drop run over Havana. Fiorini worked for Hunt in Coral Gables under the name of Frank Sturgis, the name he was using when he broke into Democratic Party headquarters in the Watergate Apartments to find the proof that the Soviets were financing the Democratic Party which Hunt told him was there.

After August, 1960, the operational planning of the Cuban task force changed course. Since Hunt and Droller couldn't form a political organization sufficiently coherent to confront Castro, the emphasis shifted to a larger-scale military action. Napoleon Valeriano, Ed Lansdale's man, who had been training the Cuban exile guerrilla fighters, was dismissed and \$13 million to train a full-fledged fighting brigade was approved. John Kennedy didn't know it, but there was no chance that the operation which had been originally approved in March, 1960, could be undertaken before the November elections.

When Kennedy was elected and briefed, he asked to have the operation thoroughly reviewed. His closest advisers especially wanted the Batista group completely out of the picture. This caused Hunt severe pangs of doubt, but not Gerry Droller. He quickly became an advocate of the Kennedy line on Cuba—the "revolution betrayed" theme that became our number one propaganda tune both covertly and overtly. Arthur Schlesinger, just before the invasion, would give this line its most eloquent expression in the State Department Cuban White Paper, issued April 3, 1961.

The Kennedy group was especially impressed by the



credentials of Manolo Ray, a U.S.-trained Cuban architect who for eighteen months was Castro's minister of public works. Ray did not defect until the end of 1960, when his escape was arranged by CIA. He was brought by ship to Tampa, where he was met by Gerry Droller. Ray formed the Movimiento Revolucionario del Pueblo, MRP. He wanted to join the overall exile political front we had formed. Kennedy's advisers strongly favored this. Hunt was so disturbed by the possibility of this dangerous leftist becoming part of the operation that he quit as case officer for the front and went to work for Dave Phillips's propaganda shop.

One morning in mid-March, 1961, Curly called me into his office. "Joe, Tracy wants us to do a special job to help out the task force," he said. "The White House wants to put out a policy statement on Cuba. It will be both an analysis of the situation as the United States views it and a rationale for what's going to happen. In other words, it will be an explanation of why the brigade went in."

He explained that the White House wanted us to prepare a first draft and provide all the information that would help make it a strong document supporting the revolution betrayed theme.

"Of course," he added, "they want all we've got on Communists in the Castro government and growing Soviet influence on Cuba, the kind of stuff you've been putting out in the guidances."

"Dave Phillips's shop is too busy to do this kind of research paper. Since you're closer to the situation than anyone outside Dave's shop, would you please take a crack at it?" He told me that Tracy said he understood Arthur Schlesinger would do the final write-up and it would be put out as though it were a State Department White Paper policy statement.

I knew now that things were coming to a climax, and I went to work feverishly to produce the best draft I could. The Cuban invasion evidently was going to be the counterpoint of the Alianza para el Progreso theme that the Kennedy administration had just launched on March 13. How they were to be woven into a harmonious whole I didn't quite see but obviously the Cuban White Paper was to be an effort in that direction.

I peppered the draft with the names of Cuban Communists in key positions: President Osvaldo Dorticos, Raul Roa, Major Antonio Nuñez Jiménez, head of the National Agrarian Reform Institute, Dulce María Escalona Almeida, director of primary education, Pedro Cañas Abril, director of secondary education, Valdés, the cruel G-2 chief, the sinister Che Guevara, of course, and many others. I put great stress on the Soviet military equipment theme. I noted that since mid-1960 30,000 tons of equipment worth \$50 million had arrived in Cuba from Soviet sources and pointed out that in the parade on January 1, 1961, the annual Castro Revolution anniversary celebration of the takeover of Havana in 1959, Soviet JS-251 tanks, Soviet SU-100 assault guns, Soviet T-34 35-ton tanks, Soviet 76 mm, 88 mm, and 122 mm field guns were seen. I also pointed out that Cuba was becoming a military police state of frightening proportions, noting that proportionately more Cubans were under arms than were either Soviets or Americans—1 out of every 30 Cubans, as compared to 1 out of every 50 Soviet citizens and 1 out of every 60 U.S. citizens, were in some kind of military service.

Curly and I went to Tracy Barnes's office to clear the document with him. I had already checked it with Dave. We waited. Gerry Droller, we were told, was having a conference with Tracy. "Oh good," said Curly, "we'll get his comments too."

After a while the door opened, Gerry was coming out, but Tracy had a few final words to say. "Tell Manolo Ray that, damn it, we want no more discussion. Tell him he's either in or not. Tell him we are going with the formation of the Revolutionary Council. If he's not in now, he never will be. If he's not, tell him he'll be sorry."

I remembered shouting something very like that over the phone in Manila, when someone suggested still further negotiations with Macapagal after I had made up my mind to go with the Grand Alliance. Not a very good way to save the Philippines or to save Cuba, I thought to myself.

"Gerry," said Curly, "Joe and I have a draft for Schlesinger's policy paper on Cuba. Would you like to take a look at it?"

Gerry took the paper in his hands. He glanced at it but

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didn't read it. "What's dis? Werda, words, making mi de lips. You guys got time to schlepp around with this policy paper crap but I'm a busy man." He rushed out the door.

On March 22, the Cuban Revolutionary Front was publicly announced at a press conference at the Belmont Plaza Hotel in New York. Its leader was declared to be José Miró Cardona, who had been Castro's first prime minister. Ray and the MRP were in. The bulk of the front consisted of the Frente Revolucionario Democrático which Hunt and Droller had formed originally in the spring of 1960 at a meeting in another New York Hotel—the Commodore. From then on, until the invasion flopped, the Miró Cardona group was used to put out all statements—it was fulfilling the role originally planned for such a group in the NSC paper approved on March 17, 1960.

The story of the failure of the invasion at Playa Girón, Bahía de Cochinos, on the Zapata peninsula, Cuba, has been told many times, as I have said. I will recall only the small part of it that I saw at headquarters from Monday April 17, until the early evening of Wednesday, April 19. The Saturday before the invasion an air strike was flown from Puerto Cabezas, Nicaragua, attacking Castro's air force parked on the ground in Havana. Reportedly, 60 percent of the planes were knocked out. Two of the Cuban exile pilots who flew for us landed in Florida, claiming to be defectors from Castro's forces they had just been shooting up. Their thin cover story was torn apart by Raul Roa in the UN and Adlai Stevenson was forced to tell a bald lie. Nevertheless, my propaganda shop was geared up to repeat the cover story around the world. President Kennedy meanwhile cancelled a second air strike because of the embarrassment.

Long before this point was reached, however, the operation had been badly blown. In October, 1960, a Guatemalan newspaper, *La Hora*, had run a story on the training site at a remote Guatemalan coffee plantation. In November articles by Ronald Hilton in the *Hispanic American Report* and then *The Nation* told the tale to the American public. Don Dwiggin, aviation editor of the *Los Angeles Mirror*, wrote about the "secret" air base that fed the camp with men and supplies. Paul Kennedy elaborated further on the front pages of the *New York Times* on January 10, 1961. The *Miami Herald*, which had been

cooperating by not telling the story that everyone in the Cuban exile community who cared to know had known for months, resented being scooped and followed with two stories, one on the camp and one on the air traffic between Florida and Guatemala. In addition *Time Magazine* in January talked about Gerry Droller, the mysterious "Mr. Bender" and his activities. It discreetly called him "Mr. B" but it was less discreet about describing what he was up to with the Cuban exiles.

Why did no one take pause at all this? For the reasons I have already mentioned—the arrogance, the opportunism, the momentum of the operation carried it onward to its doom. These factors were given further impact when President Ydigoras, of Guatemala, dispatched Roberto Alejos, owner of TRAX, the training camp, to see President Kennedy to tell him he thought it was time to act. I learned this later. At the time, however, I heard he had told our chief of station in Guatemala to tell us "to get these Cubans out of here as fast as you can." Ydigoras was sensitive to the implications of the widely blown activities if no one else was. Finally, although all the Cuban exiles knew about the operation, anyone who cared to read about such matters knew about it, and Castro knew about it, in Washington the final fateful decisions were kept tightly controlled by the little group of men who had been running the operation.

I didn't know what was happening that weekend of April 15 and 16, 1961, because I had been shut out of the task force area on Friday, before the fateful air strike of Saturday, April 15, got under way. I had seen cots being brought in when I was refused admission, however, so I assumed that D-Day was near. I learned later, as did everyone else, that the top officials of CIA spent Sunday, April 16, pleading with the President to change his decision cancelling the second strike at Castro's planes. My friends on the task force spent a nervous day and a sleepless night.

The Cuban Revolutionary Council issued a press bulletin on the morning of April 17, announcing "before dawn Cuban patriots in the cities and in the hills began the battle to liberate our homeland . . ." Dave Phillips's prose. Brigade 2506, as the Cubans called themselves, taking this name from the serial number of the one

trainee who had died in a practice parachute jump, had landed. All that day and the next, I could learn very little, except, on Tuesday, Paul sounded very glum, and he said, "Don't bother Dave. Things are going badly."

Wednesday afternoon, Al Cox, chief of the paramilitary branch of the Covert Action Staff, called me into his office. His eyes were glistening. "Joe," he said in a choked voice, "the brigade has been lost." I couldn't believe him. "You mean they're in trouble?"

"No," said Al, "I mean they're gone. I've just talked to the task force. They need help. Everyone is in a state of shock, but Bissell wants to send out a cable. No one over there has the heart to write it. Please go over and see what you can do."

When I arrived at the task force building, located among the Agency temporary buildings across Independence Avenue from the Reflecting Pool area, a secretary, who had been alerted to my arrival, admitted me to the war room. I saw J. C. King, holding his head in his hands, and a couple of officers I didn't know. I thought I spotted Howard Hunt in the back of the room. I asked for Dave Phillips. Someone said he had gone home. Richard Bissell was talking on the telephone.

"Yes, Mr. Ambassador," he was saying, "yes, I'm sorry, but it's true. There is nothing more we can do. I'm afraid we've lost. No, we have nothing else to throw into it. Well, I'm sorry you're distressed. We all are. Yes, I'm sorry too that you weren't better informed. Well, good evening, Governor."

Bissell had been giving the news to Adlai Stevenson. I approached him slowly. I was caught up in the mood of the room. With difficulty, I managed to explain I had been sent over by Al to do a cable for him. I asked if he had anything special he wanted me to say.

"No," he said, "nothing special, just tell everyone what happened. Here, I'll sign as releasing officer on a blank cable form so the commo people will know you have the proper authority. Remember, I want this message sent to every station and every single base in the world."

I went over to Dave's shop and found one of his stunned subordinates. I asked him if he had any ideas about what I should say. "Well," he replied, "I think we

should do what we can for those men. They fought like hell. Say they were overwhelmed by Soviet tanks and fighter planes."

I did. I found out later it wasn't true. Old used U.S. tanks and planes had done the job for Castro. I didn't regret giving these men an unearned increment in the odds which they had faced. They had been undone by a series of shortcomings that were not theirs. I thought that perhaps even I might have contributed my small share.

All night long I kept being awakened by calls from the communications people. They had never received instructions to send messages directly from Washington to a number of our bases around the world. Evidently the DDP didn't know any more than I did just how many bases he had around the world nor that many of them received their messages only by relay systems too involved and insecure to receive the kind of direct communication I had ordered.

The night of April 19, 1961, was not like any other for many officers in the Clandestine Services. In the offices of the Cuban task force that evening I had the feeling all those there felt almost that the world had ended. Actually, it was just one more operation gone wrong. Soon the Kennedy brothers would have CIA back in the business of overthrowing Castro again. All the officers involved in the new venture would be working at the task "with vigor," as the President liked to say of many things.

[ 19 ]

## South of the Border and Beyond

Six weeks after the Bay of Pigs disaster Paul called me and asked me to come to see him. He said he had something important to talk about. He did. The conversation we had that morning set off a series of events that shaped the course of the rest of my career with the Clandestine Services.

of J. C. King, who was a permanent employee of the American Chamber of Commerce. Each year the station provided a large sum in support of the Chamber's Fourth of July celebration and called this a propaganda effort to cement good relations between Americans and Venezuelans.

Because President Kennedy had ordered action, however, the chance to change all this was at hand. When the new fiscal year began on July 1, 1961, WH Division found itself with an additional \$10 million in its budget for the purpose of stopping the spread of Castroism. Unfortunately, in all the countries in the area, including Venezuela, there were no specific projects to spend the money on in order to accomplish this objective.

We did have in Caracas a group of Basques who had fled Franco's Spain. They had penetrated the Venezuelan Communist Party for us, a task made easy because the Communists hated Franco almost as much as they did and an excellent common bond existed between them. This project, however, couldn't accomplish what needed to be done to satisfy President Kennedy's wishes. New, sophisticated political operations and additional intelligence collection were both needed. Above all, we needed links with the Betancourt group, with his Acción Democrática, AD, Party so we could help them help themselves fend off Castro's efforts.

Two phenomena intrigued me in the weeks following my entering on duty in WH, one that was most uncommon in my CIA experience, and one that was very familiar. The uncommon experience was asking, pleading, begging the field station to come up with additional ideas for spending more money. Usually, a desk officer's fate was to tell the field station it had to find new ways to cut costs, not new ways to spend more money. The familiar experience was seeing all those who had been directly responsible for the Bay of Pigs operation being promoted. Being part of a major disaster always led to success in the clandestine Services for officers below the very top. Thus, although Allen Dulles and Richard Bissell lost their jobs before 1961 had ended, Tracy Barnes had a new division created for him, Domestic Operations Division, and Howard Hunt went to work for him. Jake, the man who directed all daily operations of the Cuban task force,

serving directly under Barnes, was made chief of operations for the entire Western Hemisphere Division. Dave Phillips went off to a senior field assignment in Mexico City. Gerry Droller became a special assistant for political operations to J. C. King and began traveling around Latin America to drum up projects for spending our new funds.

I recalled that the case officer who had made the first contacts with the Sumatran colonels, providing us all the information which misled us so badly, received an immediate promotion when he returned from Indonesia and was given his choice of assignments. He chose London. No more jungle duty for him. Whether this practice of rewarding an officer for his contribution to horrendous mistakes resulted from a guilt feeling on the part of the top echelon at involving their subordinates in such questionable activities or stemmed from the same motivation as hush money does, I could never decide. Unfortunately, I was never close enough to a disaster to benefit. I got out of the Indonesian adventure before it failed, and the Grand Alliance defeat was swallowed up in the victory of the coalition we put together for Macapagal.

The most interesting thing about my new job was a proposal which our insistence on developing new projects finally brought forth from Caracas. Some friends of Betancourt wanted to start a new daily paper which would be an unofficial mouthpiece of the AD Party and publicize the land reform program and other parts of the Venezuelan president's democratic revolution formula. The station chief didn't think too much of the idea, but I saw it as exactly the kind of activity we needed.

This kind of newspaper was precisely what Paul Linebarger meant when he defined gray propaganda. A paper associated with a leftist-inclined party which frequently opposed U.S. policies would have considerable weight when it occasionally supported us. More important, I saw this as a mechanism for access to AD political leaders. Since they, in turn, had ties with men of like mind in other countries, I could envision our supporting the newspaper as a means of following the plans of this group and trying to influence them.

One of the Venezuelan proponents of the plan was an importer of U.S. and other foreign cars. If he hadn't been involved I was sure the station would never have heard of