

The Six Attempts To Murder Castro



Jack Anderson

PRESS ACCOUNTS have identified Cuba's Fidel Castro as the target of an unsuccessful CIA assassination plot.

The headlines couldn't have come at a worse time for Secretary of State Henry Kissinger. He is in the thick of "most delicate negotiations," according to our White House sources, to restore some kind of diplomatic relationship with Cuba.

Actually, we reported as far back as Jan. 18, 1971, that the CIA had arranged six assassination attempts against Castro in the early 1960s.

The plot began as part of the discredited Bay of Pigs operation. The strategy was to eliminate the Cuban leader before the CIA invasion force landed on the island. Without the charismatic Castro, it was thought, the defenders would become demoralized and disorganized.

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TO CARRY OUT the assassination, the CIA selected an underworld figure who could be disowned. He was John Roselli, identified in confidential FBI files as "a top Mafia figure."

Roselli's CIA contacts were William Harvey and James O'Connell, who accompanied him on hush-hush trips to Miami to line up the assassination teams. No one else was told, however, of the CIA's role in the murder mission.

Roselli represented himself as an oil man seeking revenge against Castro for his seizure of oil holdings.

Each attempt to kill Castro was

meticulously planned, like an episode from the TV drama, "Mission: Impossible!" For the first try, the CIA furnished Roselli with special poison capsules to slip into Castro's food.

A couple weeks later, just about the right time for the plot to have been carried out, a report out of Havana said Castro was ill. But he recovered in time to rout the Bay of Pigs invasion on April 17, 1961.

The CIA, unsure whether the plotters had failed or the poison hadn't been strong enough, decided to try again with a more powerful dose.

Four more attempts were made on Castro's life thereafter, using assassination teams equipped with high-powered rifles, explosives and two-way radios. The assassination teams never got a shot at Castro.

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SUBSEQUENTLY, President Kennedy was gunned down in Dallas by Lee Harvey Oswald, a fanatic who had been active in the pro-Castro movement and had paid a mysterious call upon the Cuban embassy in Mexico City a few weeks before the dreadful day in Dallas.

Sources familiar with the CIA conspiracy can't shake a nagging suspicion that Castro may have become aware of the U.S. plot upon his life and, therefore, may have recruited Oswald to retaliate against President Kennedy.

Written with Les Whitten