

CIA's 'Mata Hari' stole Castro's secrets

By Paul Meskil
New York News

A beautiful German-American girl scored an intelligence coup for the CIA by stealing secret papers from the Havana hotel suite she shared with Fidel Castro.

Among the papers, she told *The News*, were maps showing sites selected for Soviet missile installations in Cuba.

Marie Lorenz, who now lives quietly in New York, was the Mata Hari of the Caribbean cold war. She was one of the most glamorous members of a spy ring recruited for the Central Intelligence Agency by Frank Fiorini, a one-time triple agent who later became known to the American public as Watergate burglar Frank Sturgis.

Ms. Lorenz, Sturgis, other former espionage agents, Caribbean conspirators, and Cuban freedom fighters were interviewed on CIA operation in the Caribbean and the Americas. Some of their clandestine activities are told here for the first time, and some are being investigated by the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence and Vice President Rockefeller's Commission on CIA Activities.

Ms. Lorenz played a small but impor-

tant role in the labyrinth of Caribbean conspiracies.

Her Cuban adventures began in February, 1959, when a launch flying the Cuban revolutionary flag pulled alongside the luxury liner *Berlin*, anchored in Havana harbor on the next-to-last stop of a Caribbean cruise.

In the launch were about 20 heavily armed Cubans, all wearing beards and rumpled olive-green fatigues. The liner's ladder was lowered and the barbudos (bearded ones) swarmed aboard like pirates, grenades dangling from their belts and machine guns swinging from their shoulders.

Women in evening gowns ran for cover with their dinner-jacketed husbands, believing the ship was being raided by bandits. But other American tourists recognized the leader of the band as Fidel Castro, new prime minister of Cuba, and crowded around him for autographs.

"I'm a friend," he shouted, obviously enjoying the commotion he caused, "I like Americans."

The *Berlin's* skipper, former German

— Turn to Pg. 20, Col. 1

See also SFC 22 Apr 75,
"CIA Junked Castro Plot" -
filed CIA (d).

SFEx 22 Jun, "Magdalena - the
CIA spy who lost her fortune."

—From Page 1

Navy Capt. Heinrich Lorenz, invited the Cubans to stay for dinner, and he introduced Castro to his 18-year-old daughter, Marie.

"My father spoke Spanish and he got along well with Castro," Marie told this reporter. "He took Castro and his men on a tour of the ship, then asked to please leave their guns outside the dining room before they sat down for dinner.

"Castro said they didn't feel safe without guns, so my father allowed them to keep their pistols, but he made them leave the machine guns, automatic rifles and grenades in the smoking room."

Castro sat at the captain's table, between Lorenz and Marie, obviously impressing the latter.

Marie spoke German and English. Castro said he needed a secretary who could write letters in these languages. Before the meal was over, he offered her a job.

"He asked me to stay in Havana and work for him," she said. "My father and I both laughed. My father said I was going back to Germany to finish my education."

Castro promised to write to her, so she gave him two addresses, but she never expected to hear from Fidel again.

Two weeks later, two Cuban officers called on Marie in New York. They carried a message from Castro, saying he was in desperate need of an English-German translator. He sent a plane to bring her to Havana.

"I made a big mistake," Marie said, "I got on that plane."

Asked to describe her relationship with Castro, Marie said: "I was his prisoner. I was trapped."

Was she in love with Fidel?

"No, never. How can you be in love when you're afraid, when you're treated like a piece of furniture, when you're sleeping with a live bazooka under the bed, when you're living in a room with guns on every table and cigar butts all over the floor?"

"Almost every Havana housewife heard rumors that Castro was keeping a foreigner, an American girl, at the Hilton. I was becoming a problem to him.

"One day two barbudos came to the room while Fidel was out. They said they were there to help me. They took me to the Isle of Pines. They drove me by jeep to this huge prison complex. They showed me a cell where dictator Fulgencio Batista had imprisoned Fidel and Raul (Fidel's brother) years before. I went into the cell to look at a bronze plaque on the wall. They shut the door and locked me in the cell. Then they went away.

"I spent a week there. As far as I know, I was the only American there.

"Every morning we would hear the firing squads.

"After seven days, I was taken out and flown back to Havana."

One night she was with Castro and his bodyguards in the lobby of the Riviera

Hotel when a man approached her.

While Castro was conferring with his aides the captain whispered to her in English: "I know about you."

"Can you help me?" she responded. "Can you get me out of here?"

"Yes, I'm with the American Embassy. I'll get you out." This was her introduction to Commandante Frank Fiorini (Sturgis), Castro confidante and hired agent for the U.S. Central Intelligence Agency.

For the next few weeks Sturgis kept in contact with her. Marie agreed to spy on Castro. She filched secret documents and reported Castro's conversations with visitors overheard through the Hotel walls. By now, she could read and speak Spanish fairly well.

"The suite was full of guns and papers", she said. "Fidel had papers strewn all over. He had one filing cabinet that was never locked. It was full of money, papers, documents, maps. I took papers out and slipped them to Frank. Fidel never missed them.

"Frank said, 'Get all the data you can,' and I did. I was a regular Mata Hari."

Then Frank arranged her escape. Two Cuban officers put her on a flight to New York, while Castro was away.

Frank also set up the escapes of two top Cuban Air Force officers, a project that forced him to leave Cuba.

Marie joined him in Florida and volunteered for another mission.

Early in 1960 Castro went to Cienega de Zapata. As soon as he left, Marie received orders to return to

the Cuban capital posed as an American tourist, carrying her Castro uniform and a loaded revolver in her overnight bag.

"There was no trouble at the airport," Marie said.

"Castro had Suite 2408 and the adjoining suites, I had the key to 2408. Nobody recognized me when I came into the hotel. I just walked right through. Nobody was around. When Fidel left, they all left with him.

"I unlocked the door, went inside and double-locked the door behind me. I felt pretty confident because I knew Fidel was at Cienega de Zapata. When he left the suite, no one was to go in. Those were the orders.

I took as much as I could and stuffed papers and maps into my uniform pockets and inside the jacket. Then I left the Hilton, went back to the other hotel, changed into a dress and caught the next flight to Miami.

Three years later, an intelligence agent told her the maps were the spots where Soviet missile bases were built in 1962, setting off the historic showdown between President Kennedy and Premier Khrushchev.

The CIA has declined to comment on Marie's involvement.

Marie said two American agents went to Cuba to assassinate Castro shortly before the Bay of Pigs invasion. "I heard they came very, very close to killing him at one of his speeches."

When cash was needed, it came from a CIA man she knew only as Eduardo.

Years later, while reading about the Watergate break-in, Marie saw a newspaper photo of former CIA man E. Howard Hunt and immediately recognized him as the elusive 'Eduardo.'