

IV. CUBAN REVOLUTIONARY COUNCIL: A CONCISE HISTORY

(205) The forerunner of the Cuban Revolutionary Council (CRC) was the Frente Revolucionario Democrático (FRD), formed in May 1960. (1) At the head of it were the leaders of five major anti-Castro groups. The proclaimed purpose of the FRD was to establish a democratic government in Cuba through the use of military force. (2)

(206) The FRD set up headquarters initially in Mexico, but recruited most of its proposed invasion force from Miami. (3) The military arm of the FRD was known as Brigade 2506. (4) The Brigade was eventually composed of 1,443 men who were trained by U.S. Army specialists at two sites on the south coast of Guatemala. (5)

(207) The leaders and their organizations that composed the FRD executive committee were: Aureliano Sanchez Arango of the Triple A group; Justo Carrillo of Montecristi; Antonio de Varona of Rescate; Manuel Artime of the Revolutionary Recovery Movement (MRR); and Dr. Jose Ignacio Rasco of the Christian Democratic Movement (MDC). (6) Antonio de Varona served as General Coordinator (7) and the membership was soon expanded to include Dr. Antonio Maceo, a noted Cuban surgeon; former Cuban President Carlos Hevia; and conservative leader Rafael Sardinas. (8)

(208) In March 1961, The State Department pressured FRD leaders to accept the Movimiento Revolucionario del Pueblo (MRP), headed by Manuel Ray Rivero, into the FRD. (9) The inclusion of Ray's group into the alliance of Cuban exiles was reportedly also "terribly important to the White House," which wanted to broaden the political base of the FRD. (10) In an effort to attract Ray and his group into the FRD, Antonio de Varona resigned voluntarily and Dr. Jose Miro Cardona was elected its new president. (11) Dr. Miro Cardona was a former Havana jurist who broke with Castro after serving him as his first Prime Minister. (12)

(209) Shortly before the April 17, 1961, Bay of Pigs invasion, the Cuban Revolutionary Council (CRC) was formed to coordinate and direct FRD activities with U.S. Government support. (13) The new organization had direct access to President Kennedy and top White House aides. (14) All the groups within the CRC maintained their separate identities. (15) The leaders expressing publicly their unity, especially during the period prior to the planned invasion. The regrouping included the following Cuban exile leaders: Chairman, Dr. Jose Miro Cardona; Board of Directors—Antonio de Varona, Justo Carillo, Carlos Hevia, Antonio Maceo, Manuel Ray, and Manuel Artime. (16) CRC committees were organized in key cities in the United States and delegations appointed in Latin American countries. (17)

(210) The failure of the Bay of Pigs invasion resulted in Castro capture and imprisonment of over 1,000 of the Brigade's members. (18) The dejected leaders of the CRC, who had been sequestered for security

reasons at the start of the invasion, (19) were later taken to the White House for a personal visit with President Kennedy who expressed his regret and assumed responsibility for the invasion failure.(20)

(211) Shortly after the unsuccessful invasion, Manuel Ray withdrew his organization, the MRP, from the Council,(21) and by October 1961, the CRC had completely absorbed the FRD.(22) Dr. Miro Cardona remained at the helm of the Council, which had been enlarged to include the Revolutionary Action and a faction of the 30th of November Movement.(23) While some unification had been achieved through the FRD and CRC, the Cuban exile groups were plagued by factionalism, personal rivalries for leadership roles, and conflicting programs.(24) Nevertheless, the CRC was still considered the principal unifying organization of the Cuban exile community(25) although no anti-Castro leader emerged who could command broad support of the community.(26)

(212) After the October 1962 missile crisis, the policy of the United States toward the Castro regime changed drastically. In his book "The Losers," Paul Bethel, former press attaché at the Havana Embassy noted:

There is no doubt that President Kennedy and his brother, the Attorney General, consciously set about the business of stopping all efforts to unhorse Fidel Castro—from outside exile attacks, and from Cuba's internal resistance movement.(27)

When two Cuban exile groups made raids against Russian installations in Cuba and a Russian freighter in the Cuban port of Caribarien, the Attorney General dispatched 600 Federal agents to Miami in an effort to prevent further actions against the Castro regime.(28) A directive was issued that prohibited key anti-Castro leaders in Miami from leaving the area without Federal approval.(29)

(213) Although individual groups received financial aid from the U.S. Government(30) the effectiveness of the CRC as a unifying organization deteriorated. In April 1963, Jose Miro Cardona resigned his position as president in a clash with the Kennedy administration over Cuban policy.(31) Miro Cardona claimed that Kennedy had promised another invasion would be launched and had instead chosen a course of peaceful coexistence with the Castro regime.(32) The CRC was revamped and Dr. Antonio Maceo elected president,(33) although Antonio de Varona was still a dominating force in the organization.(34) Government funds to the CRC were cut off on May 1, 1963, and could no longer support its Latin American delegates.(35)

(214) The credibility of the CRC then took a severe blow. In June 1963, the Miami News revealed that a highly publicized commando raid on Cuba, purportedly made on June 21, was actually a hoax.(36) According to the newspaper, "Although Dr. Maceo did not say it, sources related that the proposed landing of up to 3,000 commandos was a fraud that ballooned with the tacit consent of other publicity-minded CRC members."(37) Following the revelations, Dr. Maceo resigned as president of the CRC and was succeeded by Antonio de Varona.(38)

(215) Varona was able to hold the financially pinched CRC together for about 6 months, but he himself had to leave Miami in early 1964 and move to New York to seek employment, giving up his full-time activities as an anti-Castro revolutionary leader.(39) The Cuban Revolutionary Council quietly disintegrated.

Submitted by:

GAETON J. FONZI,
Investigator.
ELIZABETH J. PALMER,
Researcher.

REFERENCES

- (1) CIA Memo, October 30, 1967.
- (2) Executive session testimony of Antonio de Varona, March 16, 1978. Hearings before the House Select Committee on Assassinations, p. 10 (hereinafter Varona executive session testimony).
- (3) FBI teletype to Director and SAC, New Orleans from SAC, Miami, September 7, 1960, Bureau No. 105-78462-4 (JFK document 012692, item 3).
- (4) Mario Lazo, "Dagger in the Heart," (Scranton, Pa.: Funk and Wagnalls, 1968), p. 258.
- (5) *Ibid.*
- (6) E. Howard Hunt, "Give Us This Day," (New York: Popular Library, 1973), p. 44. (hereinafter cited Give Us This Day.)
- (7) FBI Airtel to Director from SAC, Sergio Arcacha Smith Black Line file, New Orleans, December 12, 1960, HSCA (JFK document 012691).
- (8) See ref. 17, "Give Us This Day," pp. 71-72.
- (9) *Id.* at pp. 172-73.
- (10) *Id.* at p. 173.
- (11) *Id.* at p. 154.
- (12) Theodore A. Ediger, "Battle of Miami," Dallas Morning News, July 1, 1962.
- (13) CIA Memo, October 30, 1967.
- (14) *Ibid.*
- (15) Security File No. 020, CIA Handbook, House Select Committee on Assassinations.
- (16) CIA file.
- (17) See ref. 7.
- (18) "Selected Chronology on Cuba," Congressional Research Service, Library of Congress, December 21, 1962 (JFK Document 012743) (hereinafter Selected Cuban Chronology).
- (19) See ref. 6, "Give Us This Day," pp. 191-192.
- (20) See ref. 3, Varona, executive session testimony, p. 23.
- (21) CIA cable, April 9, 1963.
- (22) CIA Memo, October 30, 1967.
- (23) See ref. 12.
- (24) Staff security file, House Select Committee on Assassinations, FBI Study Document, vol. 37, item 1, Cinal 100-422089, National Security Information—Latin American Activities, October 18, 1961 (JFK Document 000092).
- (25) *Ibid.*
- (26) *Ibid.*
- (27) Paul D. Bethel, "The Losers," New Rochelle, N.Y.: (Arlington House, 1969), p. 398.
- (28) *Id.* at pp. 398-399.
- (29) *Id.* at p. 399.
- (30) CIA Memo, July 9, 1964; CIA undated document.
- (31) See ref. 18, "Select Cuban Chronology."
- (32) *Ibid.* April 15, 1963.
- (33) "Maceo Quits as Head of Cuba Group," Dallas Morning News, June 23, 1963.

(34) FBI No. 105-107224-126, report from Miami, June 11, 1963. (JFK Document 012 689, item 4.)

(35) Ibid.

(36) Hal Hendrix, "Raid a Hoax. Cuban Exile Boss Quits," Miami News, June 23, 1963.

(37) Ibid.

(38) See ref. 18, "Selected Cuban Chronology."

(39) "Cuban Anti-Castro Chief by Day Selling Cars in Jersey by Night," New York Times, August 22, 1964.