

MEMORANDUM

SUBJECT : Political Action Operations in Cuba - The PROENZA Case

1. Introduction

This memorandum sets forth information concerning the conduct of a series of interlocking non-violent political action operations against the Cuban government, its internal coalition and its alliance with the Soviet Union mounted in 1963.

2. Objectives

Pursuant to instructions from the 303 Committee, during the Kennedy Administration, the CIA established among its objectives against Cuba the fragmenting of its governing coalition and exacerbation of its relations with the USSR. This decision was taken prior to the October 1962 Missile Crisis. As a result of the decision a number of non-violent operations were carried out. Those pertaining to the Teresa Proenza Proenza case are set out below.

3. The Operations

a. On 3 April 1963 a set of spurious documents falsely ascribed to a disaffected CIA agent in Mexico were passed through a CIA controlled asset to the Cuban Embassy in Mexico City. The documents made it appear that the Cuban Vice Minister of Defense, a highly placed and extreme Moscow-line Communist (who had been in Moscow when the missile build-up was planned in early 1962), was actually a CIA agent who had betrayed the build-up. The purpose of this disinformation was to cause a great strain in the relations between the Cuban Communist Party (then known as the PSP) and the other partners in the coalition. It was also hoped that the operation would redound against the USSR because the Vice Minister of Defense was a senior Moscow-line member of the PSP. It was calculated that the USSR would move to defend the Vice Minister, who was probably their chief agent in the Cuban government, and that a collision between the Soviets and Cubans could result. The Cubans accepted the spurious papers and paid for them per our demand.

b. Through the summer of 1963 several further deliveries of spurious documents were made to the Cubans and several thousand dollars were received in payment. But results of the operation from inside Cuba were not yet observed. Therefore on 13 November 1963, when a delivery of documents was again

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being made, several were included revealing the presence of another "CIA agent" in the Cuban government, this time inside the Cuban Embassy in Mexico. This target was Teresa Proenza Proenza, long-time Cuban Communist and contact of the Soviet intelligence in Mexico, who was acting as Cuban Cultural Attache. She also was a close contact of the Vice Minister of Defense. On 10 December 1963 Miss Proenza was informed of her sudden transfer back to Cuba; she actually departed on 23 January 1964. Her recall was believed to be a result of the spurious documents and of her known long-time friendship with the Vice Minister of Defense.

c. The first reaction to the operation inside Cuba occurred in the week of 14 March 1964. At that time a junior member of the Communist Party (PSP) was tried and convicted of betraying non-Communist leaders of the resistance to the former government of Cuba which had been overthrown by Fidel Castro. As the trial wore on it became apparent that since the young Communist had been the protege of the Vice Minister of Defense the trial was really a trial of the latter.

d. During 1964 deliveries of documents to the Cubans were continued and payments received. On 18 November 1964 the Vice Minister of Defense was arrested on charges of treason and removed from his post, as was his wife who also held cabinet rank. They were jailed as was Teresa Proenza.

e. After terms in prison all three defendants were released to house arrest. Proenza was later permitted to work as a librarian in Havana. The Vice Minister died peacefully in his bed several years later. His widow was allowed to leave Cuba to reside in Spain. This phase of the CIA operation wound down in March 1966 when the Cubans ceased taking an interest in it.

4. Concluding Remarks

The foregoing is but the barest outline of a highly complex operational system that made use of a wide variety of techniques and assets which have not been revealed to the public. The story would make dramatic headlines if it became publicly known, especially in the present environment. The fact that several persons were deprived of their freedom as a result of the operation would attract further attention. Furthermore, this operation laid the basis for other operations of a similar nature that were successfully mounted against Cuban and other hostile targets. In short, this file is a Pandora's box the opening of which would not only expose the cryptonyms of other operations of this type but would attract unfavorable publicity for the Agency in certain quarters and would expose hitherto secret techniques and assets. This would make their employment in the future very difficult. The fact that this series of

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operations did not begin to register on the Cubans until after the death of President Kennedy should remove any suspicion that it could in any way have caused Castro to direct an assassination attempt against the President.

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