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Executive Registry

78-9748

OLC # 78-2825

26 July 1978

MEMORANDUM FOR : Deputy Director of Central Intelligence
FROM : S.D. Breckinridge
SUBJECT : HSCA Request for Sensitive CIA file

1. Action Requested: That you approve the recommendation in paragraph 6 to withhold files on Teresa Proenza Proenza with a generalized explanation to the HSCA Chief Counsel of the reasons therefor.

2. Background: The HSCA investigators have come across references to the name of Teresa Proenza Proenza, who served in 1963 as the Cultural Attache at the Cuban Embassy in Mexico City, and have requested her file. The files concerning this person lead to a very sensitive deception operation that resulted in the jailing of certain Cuban officials, including Miss Proenza. The ramifications of the operation are extensive but do not, of themselves, relate to the assassination of J.F. Kennedy.

3. The fact that Miss Proenza was ordered back to Cuba suddenly in December 1963, shortly after the assassination of President Kennedy, may make her of special interest to the HSCA; however, the cause for the recall was the CIA operation.

4. HSCA has not been exposed to the techniques of deception operations. This particular operation continues to have considerable sensitivity, without reference to the techniques that we would wish to not have exposed to this Committee. Attached at Tab A is a paper summarizing the nature of the operation. At Tab B is a shorter summary prepared as a first attempt to get an agreement with the HSCA investigators to not inquire into this matter further.

5. The Deputy Director for Operations has approved recommendations of Chief, IAD/CAS, concurred in by Chief of LA Division, that this matter not be shown to HSCA.

(EXECUTIVE REGISTRY FILE)

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If you agree, the undersigned will undertake to discuss the matter with the Chief Counsel of the Committee and seek agreement, although he may raise the question to the level of the Committee chairman.

6. Recommendation: That the Chief Counsel, HSCA, be briefed in general detail only on the nature of the operation involved in this matter with the request that the matter not be pursued further by the Committee.



S.D. Breckinridge

Attachments

APPROVED: /s/ Frank C. Carlucci
Deputy Director of Central Intelligence

DISAPPROVED: _____
Deputy Director of Central Intelligence

DATE: 27 JUL 1978

OLC/SDBreckinridge/hfs

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ROUTING AND RECORD SHEET

SUBJECT: (Optional)

House Select Committee on Assassinations (HSCA) Request for CIA
Files on Teresa P r o e n z a Proenza

FROM:

Walter Raymond, Jr.
Chief, IAD/CAS 3D0004

EXTENSION

4253/
1596

NO.

DATE

26 JUL 1978

TO: (Officer designation, room number, and
building)

DATE

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INITIALSCOMMENTS (Number each comment to show from whom
to whom. Draw a line across column after each comment.)1. Chief, LA Division
3C20

26 JUL 1978

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3.

Deputy Director for Operations 7E26

26 JUL 1978

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Chief, IAD/CAS
3D0004

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6.

7.

Chief, IAD/CAS/COB

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8.

9. NA SHEPANEK
PCS/LOC

26 July 1978

10.

11. Mr. Scott Breckenridge
PRINC. COORDINATOR,

12. HSCA

13.

14.

15.

BY HAND

9-10: Per your
request the DDO
position on the
Proenza case.
If you need anything
further please let
me know.
"Bon chance"
Shap

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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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2. Summary of the PRIMARY

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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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25 May 1978

MEMORANDUM FOR: SA/DO/O

VIA : Chief, LA/STB

FROM : Charles W. Anderson
Chief, CAS/PAG/COB

SUBJECT : Maria Teresa P r o e n z a Proenza

1. Maria Teresa P r o e n z a Proenza, born 11 March 1908 in Havana, Cuba, is a Cuban citizen who resided in Mexico for a number of years before the coming to power of Fidel C a s t r o in January 1959. Miss Proenza, a member of the Cuban Communist Party in Mexico was an associate of many Mexican and foreign Communists and leftists in intellectual and artistic circles. For example, in 1957 she was the housekeeper of famed Mexican Communist artist Diego Rivera. She was also well acquainted at the Soviet Embassy in Mexico City.

2. When the incoming Castro regime took command of the Cuban Embassy in Mexico City, Miss Proenza was locally hired to work there in propaganda affairs. Eventually she was given the title Third Secretary/Cultural Attache. She maintained her leftist Communist and Soviet contacts and played an important propaganda role for the Cuban Government because of them.

3. On 13 November 1963 this Agency initiated an operation to counter Miss Proenza's effective exploitation of her contacts in Mexico, a work which frequently had strong anti-U.S. overtones. Miss Proenza returned to Cuba in January 1964.

4. At no time has this Agency maintained contact with Miss Proenza.

• Charles W. Anderson

cc: C/LA/STB

memo

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SUBJECT: Maria Teresa P r o e n z a Proenza

DDO/C/CAS/PAG/COB:CWAnderson:jd(ext. 1620)(25 May 1978)

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