# CHAPTER FOURTEEN

# MAKING OUR BED IN CENTRAL AMERICA: PART II

THE LANDSCAPES of Guatemala, El Salvador, Nicaragua, and Honduras have long been reddened by the blood of their citizens. People there and elsewhere in Central and South America dwell in poverty, illiteracy, and disease, sometimes in the shadow of a wealthy few. There may be nothing the United States can do that would quickly or dramatically change all this, which is sad. If these conditions *could* be eliminated, not only the Latins would benefit. The people of the U.S. would get a rich new marketplace. Prosperity and peace breed good trading partners.

For the past quarter century, the United States has fretted and fumed, and applied great resources trying to change conditions in Latin America. Yet the condition the U.S. has concentrated on changing has not been bloodshed, poverty, illiteracy, or disease. The U.S. effort has been directed toward changing the government of Cuba, where all these evils exist *less* than almost anywhere else in Latin America. And the U.S. has punished any nation that tried, even slightly, to emulate Cuba.

By almost any standard statistic for measuring minimum human economic needs—life expectancy, infant mortality, number of doctors or hospital beds or deaths per 1,000 population, calories consumed, literacy, number of television sets and radios in use relative to population—Cuba ranks high. It ranks ahead of Guatemala, El Salvador, and Honduras, where the U.S. has intervened recently to preserve established governments. It ranks ahead of Brazil, Chile, the Dominican Republic, and Guyana, where the United States

intervened to help install governments that are now in power. It ranks ahead of most other countries in the region, and right up with the wealthiest states of Latin America, Argentina and Mexico.

And Cuba is certainly as safe and peaceful a place as you can find—when the U.S. isn't invading it. To be sure, Cuba uses police state tactics to insure this peace and safety. But governments that the U.S. supports and protects also use police state tactics, and often to promote violence. Terror, torture, and mayhem simply aren't part of Cuban life, even in prisons.

The truth is that the average Cuban lives very well these days by Third World standards. He appears much happier than his counterparts living under regimes that the U.S. supports or imposed. He endorses his government's foreign and domestic policies much more enthusiastically than his counterparts endorse the policies of their governments.

While some South American countries have much higher per capita incomes than Cuba does, the difference is diverted to the upper classes. Thus Cuba is well down on the statistical list in such items as the number of private cars. But it has put a high floor (or in President Reagan's term, safety net) under the laborers and farmers.

Money flows freely. Most families are well-fed and decently dressed. They are decently housed, though sometimes crowded and unable to move where they want because of an apartment shortage. Increasingly, they are enjoying home television and nights on the town. Big new hotels can't keep up with all the family vacationers. The average Cuban can go to a fancy restaurant and order the pick of the menu.

Much about Cuban life would certainly be unacceptable to Americans, and isn't particularly liked by Cubans. Local busybodies are parked on every residential street, watching who comes, who goes, who's friends with whom, and what people spend their money on. Anything out of the ordinary is reported, and will be questioned; people realize that if they ignore warnings and become known as troublemakers, they can lose job advancements, new housing assignments, or travel privileges. Ultimately, even jail is possible for political or social strays. Despite the Cuban government's assertion that these neighborhood watchdogs are democratically selected and uniformly respected, a lot of Cubans don't like having them around.

And Cuba is still a poor country by Western standards. Not only luxuries but many routine items are scarce. Decent clothing doesn't always translate into desirable fashion. One may accumulate conveniences only as government planners budget to put them on shelves. Because of the U.S. boycott on sales to Cuba, many goods aren't available even if the government wanted resources to be spent on them; other goods are available only as produced by the Soviet bloc, which almost everyone acknowledges makes inferior products.

The *libretta*, or ration book, limits citizens to one pair of pants and shoes, one shirt, and four sets of underwear a year, though all are available at prices

well below those in the U.S. Most Cubans can afford more, and so a growing number of ration-free clothing stores are springing up; prices are higher there, however, and selection unpredictable. In addition, uniforms are provided free at schools and many workplaces, so daily apparel is often taken care of by the government.

Staples are rationed at food stores, and rations are too small for a healthy diet (each person is entitled to three quarters of a pound of meat every nine days, and one and one quarter pounds of beans and five pounds of rice a month). So, under the inevitable anomalies of a socialist economy, families often go to restaurants, order big meals, and then instead of eating the food, bag it and bring it home, where it lasts several days. That is sometimes easier and cheaper than buying the uncooked ingredients in a store.*

Most people eat at least one meal a day at work or school, or at ubiquitous lunch counters and cafeterias, where variety is limited but nutritious food is cheap, plentiful, and ration-free. In fact, there seems to be an organized effort to coerce people into eating food prepared at mass kitchens, where a national diet, well-balanced nutritionally, can be imposed. The sight of Cubans carrying doggie bags home from such informal restaurants is common.

*Perhaps my most startling experience in Cuba came at the graceful old Spanish mansion that is now La Verja, the most elegant restaurant in the port city of Cienfuegos. The dinner line formed in the mansion courtyard half an hour before the restaurant opened. After one or two squabbles over who had arrived first, the doors swung wide and dozens of Cubans—workers from the city docks, from the new cement and fertilizer factories, and from various government offices, along with their wives, children, and often elderly parents—were formally escorted by the tuxedoed maître d' to white-linened tables. A three-piece combo began dinner music.

Suddenly, without benefit of menus or conversation, waiters burst from the kitchen with trays of food. The meals coming off the trays were identical—huge, meaty ham hocks, a delicacy known in Cuba as *lacon naturale*. Just as quickly, out from the patrons' pockets and purses came plastic bags. Waiters assisted parents, grandparents, and kids in shoveling the ham hocks off the white East German china and into the baggies. And people got up to leave.

The soiled hand of a workingman, who obviously hadn't been home to change clothes since pulling his nine-to-five, reached over from the next table and thrust before me a five peso note, valued at $6. "Will you buy a *lacon naturale* for me in addition to whatever you're having for dinner?" he asked in Spanish. It seemed the limit was one to a customer, and he had already bagged his.

Within minutes, two-thirds of the restaurant had emptied out, the combo resumed playing and the rest of us, plus other diners who strolled in, were politely offered daiquiris and menus. It was a ridiculous way to distribute goods, all right. But working people had money in their pockets, and they had access to pleasures that working people find in few other Third World countries. By the same token, you can see hordes of children pouring out of schools at 3:00 P.M., and ambling over in their neat little shorts and shirts to soda shops with change in their pockets to buy ice cream or fruit juice, just as they might in the U.S. or France.

Since 1980, Cubans have been able to patronize "free markets," where pork, beans, and other commodities are sold unrationed by farmers who produce a surplus after fulfilling their government crop quotas. Free market prices are, of course, much higher than the 1960s-level prices enforced at restaurants and government markets.

For all its inconveniences, life is better than in most comparable countries. Abject poverty seems to have been abolished—an extraordinary accomplishment for a Third World country that relies on a single volatile crop, sugar cane, for 80 percent of its foreign exchange. Even a Yankee must be impressed with how the removal of all traces of destitution improves the quality of life for everyone in a society. In neither the cities nor the countryside of Cuba does one encounter the pitiful shoeless, shirtless urchins who populate much of the globe.

Nor is there evidence of idle people of any age, or of malnutrition, hunger, or begging. Everyone gets a free education, although it's obstructed by the absence of such items as ballpoint pens, which are unavailable, and by a shortage of schools, which means that half the children have to drop out before finishing ninth grade.

No one dies from easily preventable or curable diseases. Cubans frequently volunteer to tell a visitor how well their latest malady was treated at the free clinics. One occasionally encounters people with plaster casts, or modern wheelchairs or crutches; in most countries, such care is available only to the very rich. Cuban infant mortality has been knocked down to the lowest in Latin America, and life expectancy has risen to approximately U.S. levels, both great improvements over the days before the revolution.

Most Cubans believe their lives are getting better, and will continue to get better. They expect their children will find jobs based on ability, not birth station. They argue that despite the Orwellian government snooping, real restrictions on their lives are less now than under previous right-wing dictatorships. On the whole, as a place to live, it beats hell out of Guatemala.

WHATEVER success the Cuban economy has enjoyed isn't the kind that many other countries could easily emulate. The success depends on the Soviet bloc's pumping about $4 billion a year* into Cuba by buying most of the sugar crop for several times the world price and selling oil to Cuba at well below the world price. This is equivalent to about one-third of Cuba's gross

*Another slippery statistic. The Cubans and Soviets, the only ones who might know for sure, won't say. The CIA released figures in 1981, supposedly valid up to 1979, placing the aid and subsidies at $3.11 billion a year, though the CIA tends to underestimate the strength of the Cuban economy, and there are other reasons to believe the amount has increased since 1979. I settled on the $4 billion estimate after long talks with Cuban finance officials, and governmental and nongovernmental authorities in the U.S.

national product. If Fidel Castro hadn't swung his deal with the Soviet Union, the safety net wouldn't be nearly as high as it is, and Cubans wouldn't be nearly as happy as they are.

But he *did* swing the deal, and he deserves credit for it. At home, he gets that credit. He sold his country's political and logistical support to the Soviets and got top dollar. Cuba is held under no force. It can ask the Soviets to go anytime it wants to give up the $4 billion a year and Soviet military protection against a U.S. invasion. But why should it?

Probably no other Third World country has struck such a profitable bargain with a major power. What allowed Castro to do all this? What has kept his people so solidly behind him through all the hardships of an inefficient, luxury-less socialist economy, and all the indignities of a Big Brother police state?

We did. We have.

The animosity of the United States is the mortar that binds the bricks of the Cuban revolution. Cubans were long accustomed to their country's being a little guy. But now they have watched Goliath attack and get beat. Now Cuba isn't just *any* little guy; it's David, victorious, and the people love it. It has galvanized them as nothing else could have.

As long as the U.S. continues to attack, it will likely continue to galvanize them. Cubans are cheerfully willing to work harder, to suffer more adversity, and to complain less. The United States, by playing a mean, boastful, bungling Hertz, has allowed Cuba to play Avis. The Cubans don't have to be number one to feel like winners. All they have to do is hang in there, and they have.

THE Senate Intelligence Committee in 1975 reported finding "concrete evidence of at least eight plots involving the CIA to assassinate" Castro, and another to kill his brother Raul. The plots, the Senate report said, involved devices "which strain the imagination," including Mafia hit men, poisoned cigars, and a diving suit contaminated with disease-causing organisms (the diving suit was to be delivered as a gift by a negotiator on a humanitarian mission to get prisoners released, but the negotiator chose to give Castro a different diving suit).

In addition, the CIA acknowledged nine other assassination attempts against Castro by persons with "operational relationships" with the CIA though "not for the purpose of assassination." In other words, we hired them and sent them to Cuba to spy, or blow up power plants, or some such thing, and we were surprised when they took a shot at the premier.

Senate hearings showed that the CIA tried to drug Castro so he'd talk silly in public, drug the sugar cane workers so the crop would rot, and drug the sugar itself so that it would taste bad. Saboteurs were sent in to blow up industrial installations. The Senate report wasn't news to the Cubans, of

course. They had uncovered many of these plots in thwarting them. The Cuban government had howled about this covert war for years, while the U.S. government denied it was taking place.

Much else was discovered outside the Senate's public hearings, by various reporters.* Among other things, it was learned that:

—CIA agents in Cuba regularly set fire to sugar cane fields. National Security Council staffers remember long discussions on manipulating the world sugar market, and how to persuade Japan and Western Europe not to buy Cuban sugar. (They also remember President Nixon, unhappily receiving a State Department presentation on how to relax tensions with Cuba, then reassuring the NSC, "Never mind, as long as I'm president it won't happen.")

—The CIA tried to cut off the supply of baseballs to Cuba. Agents persuaded suppliers in other countries not to ship them. (U.S. baseballs were already banned by the trade embargo the U.S. had declared.) Some balls got in from Japan, and Cubans continued to play baseball, but the supply was so limited that the government had to ask fans to throw foul balls and home runs back onto the field for continued play.

—In 1964, a shipload of British Leyland buses destined for Cuba was dumped into the Thames River and ruined after the East German freighter carrying them was rammed by a Japanese cargo ship. According to Jack Anderson and his colleague, Joseph Spear, relying on sources at both the CIA and the National Security Agency, the sinking of the buses was arranged by the CIA.

—CIA frogmen blew up boats in Cuban harbors, much as someone did back in 1898 to the battleship *Maine*. (Remember?)

—A CIA team entered a warehouse in Vera Cruz, Mexico, in 1966 and sabotaged a mechanical sugar cane harvester on its way to Cuba. The $45,000 machine, which could do the work of 300 men, had been built in Thibodaux, Louisiana. A man bought it there for shipment to Mexico, not revealing that he was a Cuban agent, or that the machine would be transshipped to Cuba to evade the U.S. trade embargo. The CIA learned of the deal, and intimidated the Thibodaux factory manager into letting operatives take apart an identical machine and copy the operating manuals.

With what they learned in Thibodaux, the CIA team was able to go to Vera Cruz, reverse all the gears on the machine, and substitute forged operating manuals for the real ones, to insure that any attempts to get the machine to work would be futile. When the machine reached Cuba, the Cubans—unable to buy machines in the U.S.—sent it as a prototype to the

*Their information came from interviews with former CIA officers, State Department officials, and other persons who participated in the goings-on. Sufficient of these sources have been located and reinterviewed by this author to confirm what's printed here. One outstanding journalist from that era, who, because of his present job, asked not to be named here, graciously gave me entree to many of his original sources.

Soviet Union, where twenty-six copies were reproduced, and shipped back to Cuba; none of them worked. All this infuriated Edward Lamb, of Toledo, Ohio, who owned the Thibodaux factory. A believer in free trade, Lamb figured the embargo had just cost $2 million in sales of his harvester. He traveled to Cuba and the Soviet Union to piece together the above story.

A RUMOR-MONGERING operation was set up in Cuba by General Edward Lansdale, a specialist in such covert actions.* President Kennedy had personally asked Lansdale to run the secret war against Cuba after the Bay of Pigs invasion failed. Lansdale had perfected his rumor-mongering technique while running covert operations in the Philippines during the 1950s, and later in Vietnam.

CIA agents in Cuba were usually Cubans, often with relatives in the U.S. Recruits were promised that their own transportation to the U.S. would be arranged in time, and that money would be waiting for them when they arrived. They were particularly instructed to spread rumors of shortages of various goods. The intention was to start people complaining while waiting in lines, and to make rationing more difficult to administer.

Lansdale also ordered a campaign to sabotage Cuba's lubricating oil. This was another skill Lansdale had picked up in Vietnam—interestingly enough, back in 1954, when the U.S. supposedly wasn't a combatant in Southeast Asia. Lansdale's secret war was being waged long *before* North Vietnam was accused of having violated the Indochina peace arrangements, justifying overt U.S. military assistance to South Vietnam.

Just as the French were being thrown out, Lansdale sent a team to sabotage the Hanoi bus and rail systems, which the victorious Viet Minh were about to take over. His postaction report said, "The team had a bad moment when contaminating the oil. Fumes from the contaminant came close to knocking them out. Dizzy and weak-kneed, they masked their faces with handkerchiefs and completed the job." By the time of the anti-Cuban campaign, the CIA had determined to come up with a better contaminant.

EDWARD OWEN BENNETT, a professor of biology at the University of Houston, Texas, was and is perhaps the country's leading expert on biodeterioration of petroleum products. He remembers when a CIA officer, flashing a badge, recruited him in 1959. That first approach came in the lobby of the

*In a reinterview in 1983, Lansdale didn't remember particular incidents of rumor-mongering in Cuba that he had mentioned in an interview ten years ago with a very reliable reporter, although Lansdale said it was possible these incidents had taken place and he had forgotten them. He did confirm completely the rest of the episodes recounted here.

old Commodore Hotel in New York City, where Bennett was presenting a paper on lubricants at a scientific conference. "It was a little bit on the weird side, sort of cops and robbers," Bennett recalls. "They said, in essence, 'We have been watching your work and would like to help support it because it may have some applications we're interested in.' That's essentially what they did."

His assignment was to prepare a substance that would contaminate lubricants. He wasn't told at first that Cuba was the target, but he knew that sabotage was the intent. Then, as now, however, Bennett regarded his work as research into how to *improve* lubricants. "We had to understand what makes oil deteriorate in order to make it last longer," he explains. "Once we know the basic mechanisms by which petroleum is broken down, it is not too difficult to control it, or take it the other way."

Eventually, he says, he was able to make a product for sabotage that would make oil "deteriorate 100 times faster than it normally would." When the oil lost its lubricating ability ahead of schedule, of course, the engine or machine that it was lubricating would also deteriorate. "It would destroy the engine," Bennett says. And that was the whole idea.

Bennett says the CIA was great to work for. "They were excellent scientists. The money was generous. There was a minimum of red tape. Many grants, you have to spend half the time filling out papers. They weren't that way. The techniques we worked out, they took to American companies that were cooperating with them and tested them under field conditions to confirm they did indeed do what I said." Only two people at his main place of employment, the Univeristy of Houston, knew the CIA was paying Bennett on the side. But he says that when the payments were revealed in congressional hearings in 1977, only one professor objected.

"I have no apologies for doing my work," Bennett says. "I'm sorry they used it against Cuba. I have mixed emotions about that. Any scientist—say he's developing a nerve gas. He may develop the gas so he can better understand the nervous system. He may not like the idea it can be used in nasty ways. But I am not greatly grieved. If I hadn't done it, someone else would have. I would imagine it's still going on. It was always humorous to me that I had students working on this work who to this day don't know that CIA supported a lot of them."

Though Bennett didn't find out about it until later, his product was dumped into Cuban-bound lubricating oil as it passed through the French port of Marseille. Teams of four and five Cubans were slipped into France to doctor the oil shipments, and were slipped out again. The French government wasn't told. Since right after World War II, the CIA, on its own, had infiltrated the corrupt gangs that control the Marseille docks. The U.S. government had secretly decided that it was America's responsibility to make sure that the French dockside unions remained under the domination of hoodlums, and that they didn't fall into the hands of left-wing labor organizers.

Now this capability was employed in the anti-Cuban campaign. One CIA career officer who helped put the oil sabotage operation together in the U.S., and has since retired, says his bosses were terrified that a team might get caught, which is why the missions were restricted to the CIA's Cuban agents. Discovery by French authorities that U.S. paramilitary forces had sneaked onto French soil to sabotage the legitimate commerical transactions of a French oil company might have damaged relations with our purported ally.

According to Bennett, his substance was also applied by agents in Cuba to sabotage oil already in machines. That is "more insidious," he says, because the adulteration then becomes impossible to detect by sight or smell.

Bennett refuses to say whether he is still working for the CIA. He does say he traveled to South Africa in the late 1970s and early 1980s to help the South African government devise ways of preventing the deterioration of oil in long-term storage. (South Africa is stocking up for a possible cut-off by its Islamic suppliers in event of a war over majority rule.)

As for the Cuban campaign, after the oil and sugar had been sabotaged as well as possible, Lansdale was reduced to ruminating sadly on the limitations of his craft. "Anthracite coal and cement, there's not too much you can do against it," he once said. "How you sabotage anthracite coal, I've never figured out."

EVEN CIA operatives involved in the secret war against Cuba concede they really didn't think they could make the Castro government fall. They say they wanted "to raise the price for the Russians" of keeping a Cuban ally. Of course, they also raised the price for Americans; they estimate that the campaign cost the taxpayers more than $1 billion.

But whatever the dollar cost, it was pale compared to the stain on America's moral fiber. Professors weren't the only professionals called away from their proper pursuits. Nor were Edward Bennett's students the only subordinates who were led unwittingly into working on behalf of a secret, possibly unconstitutional, sabotage campaign.

Attorney General Robert Kennedy's declared war on the national crime syndicate was compromised by the employment of Mafia underbosses to help in the undeclared, but obviously higher-priority, war against Fidel Castro. The president of the United States wound up sleeping with a woman—Judith Exner—who at the same time was sleeping with a Mafia gangster who was working on a hit contract awarded by the U.S. government.

The Cuban immigrants secretly hired and trained by the CIA went wildly out of control, perpetrating shootings, bombings, and vigilante law wherever they went, from Miami to New York. During the 1960s, they received special protection from prosecution, which outraged dedicated law enforcement authorities. When the government tried to pull the reins on these terrorist thugs in the 1970s, it was often too late.

Donald Skelton, recalling his distinguished career with the Dade County, Florida, police, clearly remembers both his first disillusioning episode, and also his last, sixteen years later. "When I was just a rookie, back in 1962," he says, "I stopped Orlando Bosch with a whole truckload of machine guns." Bosch, one of the most violence-prone of the CIA-trained anti-Castro activists, would later lead an explosion-happy group called Acción Cubana. Among other things, in 1976, Bosch's group helped plant the car bomb in Washington, D.C., that killed Orlando Letelier, leader of the exile opposition to the government of Chile; it also killed Letelier's American assistant.

Skelton wanted to lock Bosch up and throw the book at him that night in 1962. Had he been allowed to do so, he might have saved scores of innocent lives in the U.S. and elsewhere. Skelton had found Bosch's gun-laden car in a high-price residential area late at night. "When I reported in the tag number, the CIA was all over my ass in seconds," he recalls. "Several carloads of men in casual clothes" arrived on the scene and took over. Skelton's supervisors explained to him that the CIA was working with Bosch, and others like him. No charges were filed.

Skelton would go on to command the Dade County Department of Public Safety's vigorous war against narcotics trafficking and the crime syndicate. But he quit in 1978, after the CIA again squelched a major case. Skelton had commanded the local half of the investigation into the World Finance Company,* a money-moving network with offices around the world, and with connections to narcotics, fraud, and espionage. It was based in Miami and run by Cuban-exile CIA veterans.

World Finance is the company (discussed in chapter 2) founded with the help of Walter Sterling Surrey, the former U.S. intelligence officer who is now a high-powered Washington lawyer-lobbyist. Surrey's partner, David A. Morse, the former U.S. secretary of labor, orchestrated the St. Regis Hotel meeting on Zaire. Their firm, Surrey & Morse, has obvious influence with government. Until 1976, the year Skelton's investigation started, Surrey was listed as a shareholder and director of World Finance. (He has denied knowing of any illegal activity there.)

Since federal law was apparently being violated, the U.S. Justice Department took control of the World Finance investigation from Skelton's local team. Dozens of FBI and Internal Revenue Service investigators from all over the country were assembled in Miami to handle the case. Then, in 1978, despite what attorneys on the scene considered an overwhelming amount of criminal evidence, the federal government scotched the World Finance investigation.† The big investigative team was called off and sent home right

*Formally restyled WFC Corporation.

†One tax indictment related to World Finance was handed up in 1981, but it ignores most of the issues raised by the investigation.

after the CIA asserted a protective interest in a dozen prime suspects. One, Richard Fincher, was a prominent Florida politician.* Another, a Cuban named Guillermo Hernandez-Cartaya, was the chief executive at World Finance. The CIA had paid $50,000 to get him out of a Cuban jail after he was captured at the Bay of Pigs.† During that time, several government investigators say, he went on hunting and fishing trips with Vice-President Nelson Rockefeller.

Says Skelton now, "It worked fine up to a point where somebody said, 'Hey, this goes all the way up to the White House. We better pull the plug on it.' Then all the boys went home." Skelton himself gave up on the Miami dope wars, and took a job as police chief in a safe, prosperous Atlanta, Georgia, suburb.

The secret war against Cuba still haunts the colleagues he left behind, as they continue to try to pacify Miami. Officer Skip Renganeschi, who worked under Skelton and has stayed on with the Dade County police, complained in 1982, "Cubans kill and bomb and go to jail thinking that the CIA is going to get them out. [They think] they're doing it for their country. There are bombings going on here all the time."

THE backfire from the secret war on Cuba was felt even in the Watergate affair. President Nixon commented in his tape-recorded White House conversations right after the break-in at Democratic headquarters in the Watergate Hotel in 1972, "The problem is, it tracks back to the Bay of Pigs." One of the burglars, Eugenio Martinez, an enthusiastic soldier in the secret war against Castro, was still on the CIA payroll, regularly reporting to an agency higher-up, when he was arrested at the Watergate.

At sentencing, Judge John Sirica asked Martinez why he had broken into the Watergate. Martinez replied, "It pertained toward the Cuban situation. When it comes to Cuba and when it comes to communist conspiracies involving the United States, I will do anything to protect this country against any communist conspiracy."

Potentially the most important backfire by far from the Cuban attacks was the confrontation between the U.S. and U.S.S.R. in October 1962—the Cuban missile crisis. It was the most frightening time yet in the nuclear era, and Americans generally placed the blame for it on a warmongering, adventuring Soviet premier Nikita Khrushchev. Khrushchev later contended in his memoirs that his "main" reason for placing the missiles in Cuba was "to

*Of at least fifteen calls to Fincher's listed telephone, day and evening over several months, only one was ever answered—by a woman who said Mr. Fincher wasn't there and that she knew of no number where he could be reached.

† According to law enforcement and published sources. Hernandez-Cartaya is reported by former associates to be living in Brownsville, Texas, but there is no listed telephone for him in Brownsville, and all efforts to reach him failed.

restrain the United States from precipitous military action against Castro's government." It sounded like propaganda at the time. But Khrushchev and Castro knew what the U.S. public didn't know: Cuba really *was* being invaded. Khrushchev was coming to the defense of an ally under direct foreign attack—a motive that the United States has used to justify more than one war.

Once more, U.S. diplomacy was out of the hands of diplomats. The work done at the State Department sometimes seems like a mammoth (and costly) charade. The real U.S. policymakers, in the White House and at CIA headquarters in Langley, Virginia, apparently made no effort to coordinate their secret war with the officials who bore public responsibility for U.S.-Cuban relations. The three men who served as assistant secretary of state for Latin American affairs from the Johnson years until the secret war supposedly was called off in the early 1970s (Lincoln Gordon, Covey Oliver, and Charles Meyer) all say they were never informed the war was going on—even though their job was to supervise U.S. policy toward Cuba.

IN recent years, the U.S. government has disavowed the acts of the Cubans it hired in the 1960s. But for obvious reasons, Cuba continues to take what they do very seriously. In 1977, a congressional study mission visited Cuba to explore the possibility of improving relations under President Carter. The mission found that Cubans all over the island were profoundly concerned with the October 1976 in-flight bombing of a Cuban airliner. The plane exploded shortly after it took off from Barbados, killing all seventy-three persons on board, including Cuba's Olympic fencing team.

The crash got little publicity in the U.S., and when Castro gave a funeral oration blaming the CIA for the explosion, his remarks were passed off as the usual communist propaganda. Kissinger's denial of responsibility was perfunctory. But the Cuban people were irate. One Cuban told visiting representative Jonathan Bingham (a Democrat from New York), as Bingham's report summed it up, "When eleven [Israeli] athletes were killed by terrorists at the Olympic games in Munich, there was an outpouring of sympathy and outrage from the entire world. But when fifty-seven innocent Cubans were killed by terrorists in Barbados, including Cuba's Olympic fencing team, there was little reaction in the press or from other governments."

The explosion occurred on the second leg of a flight that had begun in Trinidad. Riding the plane from Trinidad to Barbados, and getting off there minutes before the fatal blast, was Hernan Ricardo, a current or former—who knows?—CIA operative who was traveling under a false passport. Ricardo immediately headed back to Trinidad. From there, he telephoned an associate in Caracas, Venezuela, and used euphemistic words to indicate that a mission had been accomplished. The conversation was overheard by authorities.

Not long before he traveled on the doomed plane, Hernan Ricardo had met in the Dominican Republic with Orlando Bosch—the same terrorist leader whom police officer Donald Skelton had wanted to arrest back in 1962, when Bosch was instantly able to summon protection from the CIA. After his meetings in the Dominican Republic with Ricardo and others, Bosch had promised that international acts of terrorism against Cuba would be forthcoming. In fact, groups related to his group specifically mentioned airliner bombings. Ricardo, Bosch, and an associate were captured in Venezuela and jailed for the Barbados tragedy.

Were Ricardo and Bosch killing people on behalf of the CIA in 1976? Probably not. But how can anyone, particularly the Cubans, know that? Ricardo and Bosch apparently *were* killing people with weapons just like the ones the CIA had given them, and trained them how to use. They apparently were killing people in the same spirit the CIA had encouraged as patriotic less than a decade earlier. In his speech that charged the CIA with the airliner bombing, Castro also read off a laundry list of smaller terrorist attacks, some fatal to Cubans, carried out by persons who had been paid, trained, and housed on U.S. soil by the CIA.

Anti-Castro saboteurs still train at bases in Florida. The U.S. government says it is powerless to stop them, though it howls at the Palestine Liberation Organization and other groups, including the Cubans themselves, who harbor terrorist training bases. Boatloads of anti-Castro terrorists are still captured, from time to time, trying to enter Cuba, direct from their Florida camps.

BUT the Cuban revolution has survived. Through Cuba's role as a stalwart, successful underdog, Cubans have won respect and honor throughout the Third World. It is a reverence that constantly irritates the United States foreign policy apparatus, which makes it all the more enjoyable to the Cubans. In 1979, Castro was chosen leader of the large group of "nonaligned" nations, and Cuba, which is hardly "nonaligned," hosted their conferences.

The U.S. government was able to comprehend this tribute only as a naive misunderstanding of communism by the majority of nations of the world. In fact, the general respect for Cuba isn't a tribute to communism at all, but to the ability of one small nation to stand up to a powerful and threatening neighbor. It is the same respect that most Third World countries have tried to show to the less-well-organized Afghan resisters. It is the same respect they would probably also show to Lech Walesa if Poland is ever fortunate enough to gain the same freedom from the Soviet Union that Cuba has gained from the United States.

The two men, Castro and Walesa, really have much in common. Both have faith in utopian socialism. Both have sworn a commitment to bring their peoples independence, despite a history of domination by an overwhelmingly powerful neighbor. And Castro and Walesa also share a stag-

gering physical and moral courage, which allows each of them to wake up every day staring at death and spitting at it in defense of principle.

Yet one man, and his followers, we idolize. And the other, and his followers, we have waged war on for twenty-five years.