

officers on board as observers, doubtless with instructions to have a good look at the passengers.

I tried to pass on the good news to the Chinese but only succeeded in alarming them further. By now, their digestive capacity was exhausted and they had begun to take turns using the toilet for their orgy of destruction. Before the door closed, I could see one of them at the wash basin, frantically rubbing the hard Soviet soap across silk paper into which secret messages must have been encoded. Perhaps they were instructions for the Latin American guerrilla groups, many of whom took their orders directly from Chairman Mao. At any rate, these instructions would reach their destination only verbally. Every five minutes the toilet flushed noisily. We took off again near midnight. That was my first stay on the North American continent. I had not seen much of it except for a tempting piece of the New York skyline and the highway next to the airport.

It was still dark when we finally saw the more propitious sign welcoming us to José Martí Airport in Havana. The adventure was not yet over, however. The Cubans had not been informed of the presence of two American officers on board and there was another lengthy delay during which a decision was taken on whether any of us would be allowed to disembark or whether we should all be flown back to Moscow. Such were the delights of international air travel during the Cold War.

Eventually, Cuban security officers managed to extricate our delegation. The rest of the passengers had to wait. We raced through the night in a roomy Buick. I was enchanted by the old American cars, driven with wild abandon along the stony streets of the capital. We were brought by our driver, Enrico, to a spacious white villa and informed by Umberto, the security man who was to be our minder—clad untropically in dark suit, white shirt, and tie—that the home had belonged to a millionaire before the Revolution. "Before the Revolution" was a phrase we heard dozens of times a day and always contrasted with the advantages that had come with Castro's socialist leadership. Coming from a country that had had communism imposed on it by the Red Army in the wake of the Nazi defeat, I felt a swell of warmth and pride in these people who had taken their fate into their own hands and made their own revolution. Umberto introduced the driver, Enrico, as the best *pistolero* in all Cuba. We need have no fears, said Umberto earnestly, about our safety on the island.

Although we were drooping with fatigue, we could not resist taking a turn in the gardens. The night air had a sweet heaviness about it that was alien and yet beguiling to me. We marveled at the lush vegetation, the velvet darkness of the sky, and the loud chirping of the cicadas. "Imagine,"

said the young man, "I was not quite sure that this was the way to liberate the country."

The day after we saw the statue of José Martí shown the country, the Batista regime in the walls of Moscow and the encouragingly constructed to the province where *Granma* after the liberation. We saw the remains of an

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said the youngest of our team, "socialism, real socialism—and in a place like this!" That was the nearest thing he could imagine to heaven on earth. I was not quite so impressionable, but nonetheless uplifted by the thought that this beautiful, once-oppressed island had managed to find its own way to liberation.

The day after our arrival, like all official visitors we were taken to see the statue of José Martí, the father of Cuban nationalism—and also to be shown the U.S. warships anchored off the coast, a powerful reminder that the country was under constant enemy surveillance. The uprising against the Batista regime was still the stuff of daily recollection, the bullet holes in the walls still fresh. Unlike the predictable receptions I had endured in Moscow and other socialist countries, the Cubans had a disarming way of encouraging foreigners to enter their realm of experience. We were instructed to put on fatigues and taken to Colorado Beach in Oriente province where Castro and his eighty-two followers landed in 1956, in the *Granma* after their passage from Mexico, to start the fight for Cuba's liberation. We visited the Bay of Pigs and were proudly shown the twisted remains of an American B-52 bomber.

I do not need to rehearse here the full incompetence of the CIA's operations in Cuba. Suffice it to say that we were amazed that an organization that had access to the West's top strategic analysts could make such a clumsy mess of an intervention as they did of the exiles' disastrous invasion of Cuba. Moral relativism is always unappealing, but when American journalists ask me in accusing tones about my service's involvement with terrorists in liberation struggles, I have difficulty suppressing the counterquestion as to whether American-backed campaigns of sabotage and arson in Cuba reflect a vision of civil society.

My intelligence partner in Cuba, Manuel Pineiro, came from the ranks of the *barbudos*, the bearded ones who survived Castro's march through the Sierra Maestra and the bitter battles in the mountains before Havana was taken. Raul Castro, Fidel's brother and second-in-command in the politburo, and Ramiro Valdez, then interior minister, were intent on building up a security service that would give them timely, accurate warnings of American intentions toward the island. Valdez, like many others in the Cuban leadership, struck me as less of a statesman than an adventurous operative always ready to have a go. On our journeys he would order the driver and bodyguard into the backseat of his Cadillac, beckon me into the front, and set off at a hundred miles an hour. I would feign terror and cry out "Patria o muerte"—the revolutionary slogan, "My country or death." He loved this pantomime and would drive even faster, until my

fear was real. His passion was baseball and he insisted that we see his team play. When their performance failed to satisfy him, he stormed onto the field, sent off the player he most disapproved of, and took his place on the team for the rest of the afternoon.

Valdez's professional interest was in the gathering and analysis of political and military information. But, embarrassing for me, he also had excessive expectations of the technical help that we could offer. On his desk lay piles of purloined Western catalogues showing the latest designs in bugging and remote-control devices, supersensitive microphones that could pick up sound in the open air across great distances or record conversations through walls, miniature receivers and radio transmitters, mini-weaponry and old but impracticable favorites like poison-spitting pens and knives hidden in the heels of shoes. It was a boyish view of intelligence work, an armory out of his imagination and that had precious little value in determining the actions of a powerful enemy whose technological capacity would always be immeasurably greater than anything Cuba could produce. I tried to explain that a small country must find other ways to win the intelligence war and that in any case, the Soviet Union and not the GDR was responsible for supplying Havana with technical expertise. As our conversation turned in circles, his disappointment in me as a traveling salesman of espionage equipment grew increasingly obvious.

The role of Soviet advisers was kept entirely secret in Cuba in the early years. Valdez never mentioned them and seemed discomfited by my suggestion that he approach them for material help. Unlike the East Germans, who routinely invited Soviet intelligence men to social events and stressed cooperation, the Cubans kept their helpers out of sight, perhaps to strengthen popular support for Castro by implying that he ran everything. So seriously did the Cubans take this secrecy that when I wanted to meet with a KGB man whose name had been given to me in Moscow, the Cubans tried hard to prevent me. In the end I had to shake off a persistent Cuban tail by diverting his attention and suddenly dropping from his sight to make my own way to the Soviet embassy. Later on relations became less strained. A further reason for the Cuban distance toward the Soviets was the distrust sown by the Cuban missile crisis. Valdez spoke bitterly about Khrushchev's decision to withdraw nuclear missiles from Cuba as part of the deal to resolve the crisis. "When it comes down to it," he said, "the superpowers will look after their own interests. We small ones should stick together."

The Cuban Communist Party was still in its infancy in those days, so residual political divisions could not be hidden. Traveling around the is-

land, I became aware of the rift toward Castro and his bearded Communist Party and the workers' distrust of Castro's personality and a wider social base than his. I returned to Havana and met up with it immediately clear to me that the provinces had been reported to the master who spends most of his time on such reports about others. But I said about this practice that it would be a point Valdez referred outright to about the internal stability and he then proceeded to answer me.

We could not resist using a small trick on our hosts. On my colleagues waiting with a they had purloined during of bered my birthday, which I had. Anyway, I had no desire to in which would doubtless consist and happiness. So we had a bed. The next day, Umberto asked about the cause of the unity I told him that we had first East German *Sputnik*. One that had been launched by the swallowed the story whole. He offered a weighty speech about marked—exactly how was left German relations.

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land, I became aware of the many kinds of resentments that still lingered toward Castro and his bearded ones among the ranks of the original Communist Party and the workers movements. Older Communists tended to distrust Castro's personality cult and felt that he needed more support and a wider social base than his ministerial team could provide. When I returned to Havana and met up with Ramiro Valdez or Raul Castro, it was immediately clear to me that the substance of my conversations in the provinces had been reported back. This was an amusing feeling for a spy-master who spends most of his working life collating and analyzing just such reports about others. But the Cubans were so direct and unashamed about this practice that it would have seemed churlish to complain. At one point Valdez referred outright to a question I had posed in the countryside about the internal stability and coherence of Castro's government, which he then proceeded to answer in glowing detail.

We could not resist using the ever-open ears of our companions to play a small trick on our hosts. One evening I returned late to our villa to find my colleagues waiting with a bunch of flowers and a bottle of vodka that they had purloined during our stopover in Moscow. They had remembered my birthday, which I had forgotten in the excitement of the trip. Anyway, I had no desire to indulge in the full Cuban birthday protocol, which would doubtless consist of hour-long speeches about my health and happiness. So we had a few tots of vodka by ourselves and went to bed. The next day, Umberto had done his detective work and insistently asked about the cause of the nocturnal celebration. With suitable solemnity I told him that we had been marking the successful launch of the first East German *Sputnik*. Of course there was only one *Sputnik*, and that had been launched by the Soviets a few years earlier. But Umberto swallowed the story whole, fetched another bottle and glasses, and delivered a weighty speech about the East German space project and how it marked—exactly how was left unclear—a great advance in Cuban–East German relations.

But it was another question that really puzzled him: How had we managed to receive the momentous news without his knowing about it? Swearing him to absolute secrecy, I told him that the news of the *Sputnik* launch had reached us via a special minitransmitter, small enough to fit into a pocket and strong enough to receive signals from East Berlin. I named this fictitious device the "Gogofon" and told the gullible Umberto that its very existence was a state secret of the highest order, that I possessed the only one in the world, and that it was still in the test phase. Umberto swore on his life not to tell a soul.

He managed to keep his word for a full day. The next night, at a dinner given by the interior minister, we were pressed on all sides to give details on anything new at home in East Germany. I replied that we were quite cut off from home in Cuba. There was a short pregnant pause and then Commandante Pineiro burst out, "But what about the Gogofon?" I had to admit to the company that we had played a joke on our minder, after which poor Umberto was known simply as Gogofon.

My contacts with Pineiro deepened over the years. Despite its amateurish beginnings, Cuban foreign intelligence developed quickly and well. My early relationship with Castro's leadership meant that I was occasionally able to use the island when I needed to hide someone. In return I would sometimes procure for Pineiro the listening, decoding, and special photography devices he desired. After the murder of Salvador Allende in Chile in 1973 and the campaign of terror against the Left under the rule of General Augusto Pinochet, we were able to use Cuba as an escape route for Chilean refugees. Erich Honecker's daughter was married to a Chilean, so East Germany exerted itself in helping the opposition there. Honecker liked the idea of East Germany offering humanitarian aid to those in need. Aiding Chile and other Latin American countries where the Left was being purged by military and far-right governments also proved popular with young people in the East. It is not an exaggeration to say that these campaigns in the 1970s strengthened East Germany by giving the beleaguered country a patina of respectability.

Pineiro also told me of his last conversations with the Argentinian Che Guevara before that one-man guerrilla band withdrew from Cuba, bitterly disappointed by the Soviet decision to end the Cuban crisis by withdrawing its missiles. "Che thought he could repeat Cuba elsewhere and take the pressure off us," said Pineiro. "But Cuba was unique, and I think we all knew that even before he went." When Guevara was killed in Bolivia in 1967, a young German woman, Tamara Bunke, died with him. Her parents had emigrated from Germany to Argentina when she was a child. An interpreter who had accompanied an East German youth delegation to Havana, she had remained without permission, had fallen in love with Che, and had run off with him on his last rebellion. This combination of romance and revolution made her a popular idol for East German teenagers. After her death my deputy reminded me of a long-forgotten encounter on our first visit to Havana. He had stopped to exchange a few words with a good-looking young woman in uniform at the entrance to the Cuban Interior Ministry. It had been Tamara. Shortly afterward she disappeared with Che. I take it that at the time of my visit Pineiro was

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helping them prepare their expedition to Bolivia, but Che Guevara was never mentioned to me during my visit to Havana. The Cubans were already observing the first, most important, rule of successful intelligence work: No one must know anything he does not explicitly need to know.

In contrast to Pineiro and Valdez, I found Raul Castro to be a far more steady, well-educated, and statesmanlike figure. Unlike his more emotional colleagues, he took a cool strategic view of Cuba's situation. I never heard anything from him hinting at distance from or disappointment in the Soviet Union. He was the only one there who turned up for appointments on time, a trait highly unusual in Cubans. His friends teased him for his punctuality, and called him The Prussian. He had busied himself with Marxist theories and military theory during his exile in Mexico and was keen to show visitors that despite Cuba's geographical distance from the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe, he was versed in the ideological debates of communism and in military techniques.

In 1985 I visited Managua, Nicaragua, coming from Cuba as a guest of Thomas Borge, the interior minister. We celebrated six years of the Sandinista Revolution and I was impressed by the way the Nicaraguans had managed to combine liberation theology, humanism, and Marxist theories into a coherent government program. I was always moved by the revolutionary energy of Cubans and Nicaraguans who had given so much to change their countries. There was—at that time at least—little of the complaints and blame of others for misfortunes that I so often heard at home. I envied those countries that had made their revolutions themselves, and in my heart of hearts I knew that the countries of Eastern Europe would always resent the Soviet postwar occupation, which forced them to adopt socialist governments.

Return visits by the Cubans to East Berlin were always fraught with anxiety from the point of view of security. Fidel Castro loved foreign travel, and as the burden of his responsibilities at home grew, he was at his most relaxed on visits to friendly countries far from home. Of course, relaxation for the high-spirited Cubans was rather different from the way we solid northern Europeans envisaged it. Staff of the personal-security department responsible for protecting Castro and his delegation during visits to us blanched at the memories of all-night singing and drinking sessions and the Cuban tendency to pick up complete strangers—usually pretty Cuban women studying in East Berlin—and invite them back to their residences to party. I heard that Fidel, frustrated by the attempts of his East German minders to get him to bed early, climbed out of his room and down a drainpipe to rejoin the festivities elsewhere. After that it was

considered best to find some way of entertaining our visitors more satisfactorily. Someone hit on the idea of inviting the girls from the state television ballet company to flirt and dance with the Cubans into the night, which kept them out of trouble. But inconvenience aside, whenever I heard about the Cubans' lust for life and experience it made our existence seem drab, governed as it was by the dual German imperatives of duty and hard work.

We cooperated far less with Nicaragua than with Cuba. The Cubans would complain bitterly to us that Managua leaked like a sieve. In the early days after Nicaragua's revolution, having taken part in the armed struggle was considered proof enough of loyalty. Poor vetting in the security services was one reason the American-backed *contras* were able to make such headway. We tried to seek out partners there among the most stable ranks of the security services. Perhaps aware of their sloppy reputation, they were obsessively secretive in dealing with us and insisted on holding talks in the open air rather than the Interior Ministry headquarters.

Our main contribution to Nicaraguan security was the training of security guards for the president and ministers. This became quite a cottage industry for the East German Ministry of State Security. Our reputation for personal security was high, and country after country in Latin America and Africa requested our experts to train their guards. We generally obliged, relieved to find a way of helping needy allies without having to commit ourselves to major involvement in their internal security operations. We also supplied a small amount of technical backup such as specialized photo developing and enlarging equipment. In contrast to the material we supplied to African countries, these contributions were always beautifully cared for and proudly displayed on return visits.

It was for Chile that we exerted ourselves most. At the time of the September 1973 coup d'état against Salvador Allende, our security services were not represented in Santiago at all. I had closed down our minimal presence of two operatives two years before, although we had not stayed completely out of intelligence. Earlier that year, my service had warned Allende and Luis Corvalan, the Communist Party leader, of an impending military coup, which they disregarded because they believed Chile's armed forces were too deeply rooted in the tradition of civilian control to meddle in politics. Our warning was based on information from West German intelligence, which was well represented in Chile and fully aware of the insurgents' intentions, and the CIA's.

## Cuba

At the height of the fighting, the Unidad Popular sought asylum. A prominent among them was a member of the Socialist Party. East Berlin had offered him asylum a few days ago, which meant that formally he was under the protection of Honecker, anxious at this time to show the West our influence, was determined to keep him. He was married to a fellow activist. His background as a Socialist was of emotional as well as political conviction.

We set in train one of the most difficult operations ever conducted. A team of our best operatives was sent from East Berlin to check out the possibilities of using the airports, at the port at Valparaíso, and the sea. From Argentina, we improvised a route. The men were smuggled out of the country in much the same way that escapees had been getting to get past the Wall. When that route proved to be too risky, we diverted our attention to the prisoners aboard in jute sacks. It took nearly two months to get them out through Argentina to Cuba and then to the West.

Our hard work in Chile did not end there. Negotiating through the American Embassy in Santiago, we got Luis Corvalan for Vladimir Bukovsky, who had been arrested by the Soviets. For Cuba, the operation was a success. Raul Castro told me that the operation was a success in leadership in Havana that the operation was a success and Fidel stopped traveling to the podiums.

When I think about Cuba and the experience of the business for the crumbling of the Berlin Wall, it is a sobering experience to revisit Cuba and the experience of setting foot there. Constant shortages and a country where in a state of evident disillusion and despair, "being left alone and vulnerable to the Americans invade?" asked one of our operatives. Moscow had the heavy burden of the opening to the West meant that the operation was a success. Cuba. As my plane approached the airport, I had to land and stop in New York—I was happy to be home.