

## “Betrayal”: Common Denominator of Cuban Dissidents

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By Arnold August, April 2012

The U.S. State Department document (1960) cited in Chapter 5 outlines its policy of “betrayal” for regime change in Cuba. The State Department goes further in a second Memorandum (1961), in which it adorns itself with the image of social democracy and libertarianism. The goal is to guide dissidents or to lure others into this tendency. This social democratic inclination has been considered a viable alternative to the “Castro regime.” The U.S. has been sympathetic to — and willing to provide funds to — this penchant: “Our job [i.e., that of the U.S.] is to ... show that the essential conflict in Cuba is nothing more or less than between the totalitarian (or communist) and the libertarian (or social democratic) wings of the Cuban Revolution.”<sup>1</sup> Those who were active in the revolution, but who turned against it and were later co-opted by the U.S., have been groomed as prized spokespersons of “betrayal” on behalf of Washington:

We should also try to send to Europe anti-Castro figures of unchallengeable progressive credentials: for example, Rojas, who as Castro Ambassador to Great Britain went around the country in 1959 delivering hot pro-Castro speeches, might now come back to explain the betrayal of the Cuban Revolution.<sup>2</sup>

A formerly secret Memorandum from the President’s [JFK] Special Assistant (Schlesinger) to the Political Warfare Subcommittee of the Cuban Task Force, on May 31, 1962, states that the “CIA is prepared to disseminate leaflets on Castro’s failure to the Cuban population via balloon with a view of increasing instability of the Communist machine ... for ‘the revolution’ he has now betrayed.”<sup>3</sup>

The “betrayal” theme goes hand in hand with the use of the press in the U.S. and internationally focusing on “liberals” and “liberal” media as allies: “We should also make a particular effort to get the stories of Castro terrorism into the hands, not of the [rather ‘conservative’] *New York Journal-American*, but of *liberal* newspapers and columnists.” European media has also been a goal: “politicians, editors and opinion-makers”<sup>4</sup> (emphasis added). Liberals have been a prize catch, as they are more credible against Cuba and serve as an instrument to convert pro-Castro activities into anti-Castro ones: “What we need is the establishment of a Fair

Play for Cubans Committee under *liberal* sponsorship”<sup>5</sup> (emphasis added).

Washington’s persistent attempt to use mass media brings into question the meaning of freedom of the press in the U.S., as well as the role of the “liberals.” Another Memorandum on the same theme of “betrayal” involved Operation Mongoose. This was a CIA-organized operation under President John F. Kennedy to overthrow the Cuban government after the failed U.S.-backed Bay of Pigs invasion. In this Memorandum, the State Department even considered “*Time* magazine [‘liberal press’] dissemination [in Cuba, that] would require operational facilities now not available.”<sup>6</sup>

Once again, it is instructive to ask who might have made the following statement: “Castro and his gang have betrayed the ideals of the Cuban revolution and the hopes of the Cuban people.” Did it emanate from a social democrat, a democratic “socialist” or another variety of left or right dissident? No, it was JFK speaking on October 6, 1960.<sup>7</sup>

Another Memorandum dated July 19, 1962 (this one from an official of Operation Mongoose to another of its representatives) carries a list of actions carried out by an “inter-agency psychological warfare committee.” The very first one on the list is “the failures and betrayed promises of the Castro regime.” Another achievement is the “compilation of material for magazine length articles on Cuba in all languages by Readers [*sic*] Digest.” Yet another is “U.S. television programs on Cuba.”<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Foreign Relations of the United States, Document 208. 1961. “Memorandum From the President’s Special Assistant (Schlesinger) to the Political Warfare Subcommittee of the Cuban Task Force.” United States Government Printing Office (May 8) (1961–63), Vol. x, Washington.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> Op. cit., Document 340. 1962. “Memorandum From the Chief of Operations, Operation Mongoose (Lansdale) to the Special Group (Augmented).” United States Government Printing Office (May 31) (1961–63), Washington.

<sup>4</sup> Op. cit., Document 208. 1961. “Memorandum From the President’s Special Assistant (Schlesinger) to the Political Warfare Subcommittee of the Cuban Task Force.” United States Government Printing Office (May 8) (1961–63), Washington.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

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- <sup>6</sup> Op. cit., Document 340. 1962. “Memorandum From the Chief of Operations, Operation Mongoose (Lansdale) to the Special Group (Augmented).” United States Government Printing Office (May 31) (1961–63), Washington.
- <sup>7</sup> Kennedy, John F. 1960. “Remarks of Senator John F. Kennedy at Democratic Dinner, Cincinnati, Ohio.” JFK Library (October 6). At <<http://www.jfklibrary.org/Research/Ready-Reference/JFK-Speeches/Remarks-of-Senator-John-F-Kennedy-at-Democratic-Dinner-Cincinnati-Ohio-October-6-1960.aspx>>.
- <sup>8</sup> Foreign Relations of the United States, Op. cit., Document 355. 1962. “Memorandum From the Department of State Operations Officer for Operation Mongoose (Hurwitch) to the Chief of Operations, Operation Mongoose (Lansdale).” (July 19) (1961–63), Washington.