

In pursuance of its traditional policy, the United States will contribute to healing the wounds of war and to postwar reconstruction of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam [North Vietnam] and throughout Indochina.

Five days later, 1 February, President Nixon sent a message to the Prime Minister of North Vietnam reiterating and expanding upon this pledge. The first two principles put forth in the President's message were:

- (1) The Government of the United States of America will contribute to postwar reconstruction in North Vietnam without any political conditions.
- (2) Preliminary United States studies indicate that the appropriate programs for the United States contribution to postwar reconstruction will fall in the range of \$3.25 billion of grant aid over 5 years. Other forms of aid will be agreed upon between the two parties. This estimate is subject to revision and to detailed discussion between the Government of the United States and the Government of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam.<sup>62</sup>

Since that time, the only aid given to any Vietnamese people by the United States has been to those who have left Vietnam and those who have been infiltrated back in to stir up trouble.

Are the victims of the Vietnam war also to be found in generations yet unborn? Tens of millions of pounds of herbicide were unleashed over the country; included in this were quantities of dioxin which has been called the most toxic man-made substance known; three ounces of dioxin, it is claimed, in the New York City water supply could wipe out the entire populace. Studies in Vietnam since the war have pointed to abnormally high rates of cancers, particularly of the liver, chromosomal damage, birth defects, long-lasting neurological disorders, etc. in the heavily-sprayed areas. The evidence collected is not yet conclusive. The statistics that have been kept in the devastated land that is Vietnam are not up to the standards of certain developed nations. But thousands of American veterans of Vietnam have fought for years to receive disability compensation, claiming irreparable damage from simply handling the toxic herbicides. In 1984, several herbicide manufacturers finally agreed to a settlement.

After the Second World War, the International Military Tribunal convened at Nuremberg, Germany. Created by the Allies, the Tribunal sentenced to prison or execution numerous Nazis who pleaded that they had been "only following orders". In an opinion handed down by the Tribunal, it declared that "the very essence of the [Tribunal's] Charter is that individuals have international duties which transcend the national obligations of obedience imposed by the individual state."

During the Vietnam war, a number of young Americans refused military service on the grounds that the United States was committing war crimes in Vietnam and that if they took part in the war they too, under the principles laid down at Nuremberg, would be guilty of war crimes.

One of the most prominent of these cases was that of David Mitchell of Connecticut. At Mitchell's trial in September 1965, Judge William Timbers dismissed his defence as "tommyrot" and "degenerate subversion", and found the Nuremberg principles to be "irrelevant" to the case. Mitchell was sentenced to prison.

Conservative columnist William F. Buckley, Jr., not celebrated as a champion of draft resistance, noted shortly afterward:

I am glad I didn't have Judge Timbers' job. Oh, I could have scolded Mr. Mitchell along with the best of them. But I'd have had to cough and wheeze and clear my throat during that passage in my catechism at which I explained to Mr. Mitchell wherein the Nuremberg Doctrine was obviously not at his disposal.<sup>63</sup>

In 1971, Telford Taylor, the chief United States prosecutor at Nuremberg, suggested rather strongly that General William Westmoreland and high officials of the Johnson administration such as Robert McNamara and Dean Rusk could be found guilty of war crimes under criteria established at Nuremberg.<sup>64</sup> Yet every American court and judge, when confronted by the Nuremberg defence, had dismissed it without according it any serious consideration whatever.

The West has never been allowed to forget the Nazi holocaust. For 40 years there has been a continuous outpouring of histories, memoirs, novels, feature films, documentaries, television series... played and replayed, in every Western language; museums, memorials, remembrances, ceremonies... Never again! But who hears the voice of the Vietnamese peasant? Who can read the language of the Vietnamese intellectual? What was the fate of the Vietnamese Anri Frank? Where, asks the young American, is Vietnam?

## 20. Cambodia 1955 to 1973 Prince Sihanouk walks the high-wire of neutralism

John Foster Dulles had called on me in his capacity as Secretary of State, and he had exhausted every argument to persuade me to place Cambodia under the protection of the South-East Asia Treaty Organization. I refused... I considered SEATO an aggressive military alliance directed against neighbors whose ideology I did not share but with whom Cambodia had no quarrel. I had made all this

quite clear to John Foster, an acidy, arrogant man, but his brother [CIA Director Allen Dulles] soon turned up with a briefcase full of documents 'proving' that Cambodia was about to fall victim to 'communist aggression' and that the only way to save the country, the monarchy and myself was to accept the protection of SEATO. The 'proofs' did not coincide with my own information, and I replied to Allen Dulles as I had replied to John Foster: Cambodia wanted no part of SEATO. We would look after ourselves as neutrals and Buddhists. There was nothing for the secret service chief to do but pack up his dubious documents and leave.

*Prince Norodom Sihanouk*, in his memoirs, *My War With The CIA*<sup>1</sup>

The visits of the Brothers Dulles in 1955 appear to have been the opening salvos in a campaign of extraordinary measures aimed at pressuring the charismatic Cambodian leader into aligning his nation with the West and joining The Holy War Against Communism. The coercion continued intermittently until 1970 when Sihanouk was finally overthrown in a coup and the United States invaded Cambodia.

In March 1956, after Sihanouk had visited Peking and criticized SEATO, the two countries which sandwich Cambodia — Thailand and South Vietnam, both heavily dependent upon and allied with the United States — suddenly closed their borders. It was a serious move, for the bulk of Cambodia's traffic with the outside world at that time passed either along the Mekong River through South Vietnam or by railway through Thailand.

The danger to the tiny kingdom was heightened by repeated military provocations. Thai troops invaded Cambodian territory and CIA-financed irregulars began to make commando raids from South Vietnam. Deep intrusions were made into Cambodian air space by planes based in the two countries.

To Sihanouk, these actions "looked more and more like preliminary softening-up probes" for his overthrow. He chose to thrust matters out into the open. At a press conference he scolded the US, defended Cambodia's policy of neutrality, and announced that the whole question would be on the agenda of his party's upcoming national congress. There was the implication that Cambodia would turn to the socialist bloc for aid.

The United States appeared to retreat in the face of this unorthodox public diplomacy. The State Department sent a couple of rather conciliatory messages which nullified a threatened cut-off of certain economic aid and included this remarkable piece of altruism: "The only aim of American policy to Cambodia is to help her strengthen and defend her independence." Two days before the national congress convened, Thailand and South Vietnam opened their frontiers. The local disputes which the two countries had cited as the reasons for the blockade had not been resolved at all.<sup>2</sup>

The measures taken against Cambodia were counter-productive. Not only did Sihanouk continue to attack SEATO, but he established relations with the Soviet Union and Poland and accepted aid from China. He praised the latter lavishly for treating Cambodia as an equal and for providing aid without all the strings which, he felt, came attached to American aid.<sup>3</sup>

Such sentiments should not obscure the fact that Sihanouk was as genuine a neutralist as one could be in such a highly polarized region of the world in the midst of the cold war. He did not shy away from denouncing China, North Vietnam or Communism on a number of occasions when he felt that Cambodia's security or neutrality was being threatened. "I foresee perfectly well," he said at one time, "the collapse of an independent and neutral Cambodia after the complete triumph of Communism in Laos and South Vietnam."<sup>4</sup>

In May 1957, a National Security Council (NSC) paper acknowledged that "the United States has been unable to influence Cambodia in the direction of a stable [sic] government and non-involvement in the communist bloc."<sup>5</sup>

The following year, five battalions of Saigon troops, supported by aircraft, crossed the Cambodian border again, penetrated to a depth of almost 10 miles and began putting up new boundary markers. Sihanouk's impulse was to try and repel the invaders but, to his amazement, he was informed by the American Ambassador to Cambodia, Carl Strom, that American military aid was provided exclusively for the purpose of opposing "communist aggression" and in no case could be used against an American ally. The ambassador cautioned that if a single bullet were fired at the South Vietnamese or a single US-supplied truck used to transport Cambodian troops to a military confrontation with them, this would constitute grounds for cancelling aid.<sup>6</sup>

Ambassador Strom was called back to Washington, told that Sihanouk would now have to go and that US aid would be cut off to precipitate his fall. Strom, however, did not think that this was the wisest move to make at that point and was able to convince the State Department to hold off for the time being.<sup>7</sup>

William Shawcross, in his elaborately-researched book, *Sideshow: Kissinger, Nixon and the Destruction of Cambodia*, notes that "NSC papers of the period cited in the Pentagon papers confirm that Washington saw Thai and Vietnamese pressure across the borders as one of the principal weapons to be used in an effort to move Sihanouk toward a more pro-American position."<sup>8</sup>

In addition to Thai and South Vietnamese troops, the CIA had at its disposal two other forces, the Khmer Serei and the Khmer Krom, composed largely of ethnic Cambodians opposed to Sihanouk's rule, who operated out of the two neighbouring countries. The Khmer Serei ("Free Cambodians") were described by Shawcross as the "Cambodian organization with which American officials had had the closest contact".<sup>9</sup> Sihanouk once equated them to the "free" Cubans the United States maintained in Florida.<sup>10</sup>

These forces — recruited, financed, armed and trained by the CIA and the US Special Forces (Green Berets)<sup>11</sup> — began to infiltrate into Cambodia in the latter part of 1958 as part of a complex conspiracy which included, amongst others, a disloyal Cambodian general named Dap Chhuon who was plotting an armed uprising inside the country. At its most optimistic, the conspiracy aimed at overthrowing Sihanouk.

Sihanouk discovered the plan, partly through reports from Chinese and French intelligence. The French were not happy about the American intrusion into what had been their domain for close to a century.

By February 1959 the conspirators had been apprehended or had fled, including Victor Masao Matsui, a member of the CIA station in Cambodia's capital city Phnom Penh, who hurriedly left the country after Sihanouk accused him of being a party to the plot. Matsui, an American of Japanese descent, had been operating under State Department cover as an attaché at the embassy.

The intrigue, according to Sihanouk, began in September 1958 at a SEATO meeting in Thailand and was carried a step further later that month in New York when he visited the United Nations. While Sihanouk was away in Washington for a few days, a member of his delegation, Slat Peou, held several conferences with Americans in his New York hotel room which he did not mention to any of his fellow delegates. Slat Peou, it happened, was a close friend of Victor Matsui and was the brother of General Dap Chhuon. In the aftermath of the aborted conspiracy, Slat Peou was executed for treason.<sup>12</sup> Sihanouk was struck by the bitter irony of the circumstance that while the CIA was plotting against him in New York, he was in Washington being honoured by President Eisenhower with a 21-gun salute.<sup>13</sup>

In a similar vein, several years later, President Kennedy assured Sihanouk "on his honour" that the United States had played no role in the affairs of the Khmer Serei. "I considered President Kennedy to be an honourable man," wrote Sihanouk, "but, in that case, who really represented the American government?"<sup>14</sup>

The Cambodian leader has attested to several other plots he lays at the doorstep of the CIA. Amongst these was a 1959 effort to murder him which was foiled when the police picked a nervous young man, Rat Vat by name, out of a crowd surrounding Sihanouk. He was found to be carrying a hand grenade and a pistol. Investigation showed, writes Sihanouk, that the would-be assassin was instigated by the CIA and the Khmer Serei.<sup>15</sup> Sihanouk also cites three incidents occurring in 1963: an attempt to blow up a car carrying him and the visiting president of China, Liu Shao Chi; an attempt to smuggle arms into Cambodia in a number of crates addressed to the US Embassy; and a partially successful venture aimed at sabotaging the Cambodian economy and subverting key government personnel through the setting up of a bank in Phnom Penh.<sup>16</sup>

On 20 November of the same year, two days before the assassination of John F. Kennedy, the Cambodian National Congress, at Sihanouk's initiative, voted to "end all aid granted by the United States in the military, economic, technical and cultural fields." It was perhaps without precedent that a country receiving American aid voluntarily repudiated it. But Sihanouk held strong feelings on the subject. Over the years he had frequently recited from his register of complaints about American aid to Cambodia: how it subverted and corrupted Cambodian officials and businessmen who wound up "constituting a clientele necessarily obedient to the demands of the lavish bestower of foreign funds"; and how the aid couldn't be used for state institutions, only private enterprise, nor, as mentioned earlier, used against attacks by US allies.<sup>17</sup>

After some American bombings of Cambodian villages near the South Vietnam border in pursuit of North Vietnamese and Vietcong, the Cambodian government, in October 1964, announced that "in case of any new violation of

Cambodian territory by US ground, air, or naval forces, Cambodia will immediately sever diplomatic relations with the United States". The government did just that the following May when American planes bombed several villages, killing or wounding dozens of peasants.<sup>18</sup> This incident may have been the immediate incitement to breaking relations, but, as we have seen, discontent between the two countries had been simmering for some time.

The pattern over the next few years, as the war in Indochina intensified, was one of repeated forays into Cambodian territory by American, Saigon and Khmer Serei forces in search of Communist supply lines and sanctuaries along the Ho Chi Minh Trail; bombing and strafing, napalming, and placing land mines, with varying numbers of Cambodian civilian casualties; angry accusations by the Cambodian government, followed on occasion by an American apology, promise of an investigation and the taking of "measures to prevent any recurrence of such incidents".<sup>19</sup>

Sihanouk did not at all relish the intrusions into Cambodia by the Vietnamese Communists, nor was he wholly or consistently antagonistic to American pursuit of them, particularly when there was no loss of Cambodian lives. On at least one occasion he disclosed the location of Communist bases which were promptly bombed by the US. However, Sihanouk then went on the radio and proceeded to denounce the bombings.<sup>20</sup> Opportunist that he often revealed himself to be, Sihanouk was nonetheless truly caught between the devil and the deep blue sea, and by the late 1960s his predicament had compelled him to resume American aid and re-establish diplomatic relations with the United States.

Despite all the impulsiveness of his personality and policies, Sihanouk's neutralist high-wire balancing act did successfully shield his country from the worst of the devastation that was sweeping through the land and people of Vietnam and Laos. Cambodia had its own Communist insurgents, the Khmer Rouge, who surely would have unleashed a full-scale civil war if faced with a Cambodian government nestled comfortably in the American camp. This is precisely what later came to pass following the overthrow of Sihanouk and his replacement by the pro-American Lon Nol.

In March 1969, the situation began to change dramatically. Under the new American president, Richard Nixon, and National Security Affairs adviser Henry Kissinger, the isolated and limited attacks across the Cambodian border became sustained, large-scale B-52 bombings — "carpet bombings", in the euphemistic language so dear to the hearts of military men.

Over the next 14 months, no less than 3,630 B-52 bombing raids were flown over Cambodia.<sup>21</sup> To escape the onslaught, the Vietnamese Communists moved their bases further inside the country. The B-52's of course followed, with a concomitant increase in civilian casualties.

The Nixon administration artfully played down the nature and extent of these bombings, going so far as to falsify military records, and was largely successful in keeping it all a secret from the American public, the press and Congress.<sup>22</sup> Not until 1973, in the midst of the Watergate revelations, did a fuller story begin to emerge.

It was frequently argued that the United States had every right to attack Cambodia because of its use as a sanctuary by America's foes in Vietnam. Apropos of this claim, William Shawcross has pointed out that:

During the Algerian war of independence the United States rejected France's claimed right to attack a Tunisian town inhabited by Algerian guerrillas, and in 1964 Adlai Stevenson, at the U.N., condemned Britain for assaulting a Yemeni town used as a base by insurgents attacking Aden. Even Israel had frequently been criticized by the United States for attacks on enemy bases outside its territory.<sup>23</sup>

On 18 March 1970, Sihanouk, while on a trip abroad, was deposed as Head of State by two of his leading ministers, Lon Nol and Sirik Matak. To what extent, if any, the United States played a direct role in the coup has not been established, but there are circumstances and testimony pointing to American complicity, among which are the following:

- According to Frank Snepp, the CIA's principal political analyst in Vietnam at this time, in early 1970 the Agency was cultivating both Lon Nol and Son Ngoc Thanh, leader of the Khmer Serei, as possible replacements for Sihanouk. The CIA believed, he says, that if Lon Nol came to power, "He would welcome the United States with open arms and we would accomplish everything."<sup>24</sup> (This, presumably, meant *carte blanche* to wipe out Vietnamese Communist forces and sanctuaries in Cambodia, as opposed to Sihanouk's extremely equivocal position on the matter.) Both men, as matters turned out, served as prime minister in the new government, for which diplomatic recognition was immediately forthcoming from Washington.

- The United States could seemingly also rely on Sirik Matak, a committed anti-Communist who had been profiled by the Pentagon's Defense Intelligence Agency as "a friend of the West and . . . co-operative with U.S. officials during the 1950s."<sup>25</sup>

- Investigative journalist Seymour Hersh, in his biographic work on Kissinger, states that Sihanouk's immediate overthrow had been for years a high priority of the Green Berets reconnaissance units operating inside Cambodia since the late 1960s. There is also incontrovertible evidence that Lon Nol was approached by agents of American military intelligence in 1969 and asked to overthrow the Sihanouk government. Sihanouk made similar charges in his 1973 memoir, *My War With The CIA*, but they were not taken seriously then.<sup>26</sup>

- Throughout the period surrounding the coup, writes William Shawcross, "various United States agencies were in touch with Lon Nol and Sirik Matak and their associates."<sup>27</sup>

- An opponent of Sihanouk, Prom Thos, who became a minister in the new government, has said that whether Lon Nol had specific promises of

American help before the coup is unimportant: "We all just knew that the United States would help us; there had been many stories of CIA approaches and offers before then."<sup>28</sup>

- The CIA's intimate links to the conspiratorial circle are exemplified by an Agency report prepared six days before the coup, entitled "Indications of Possible Coup in Phnom Penh". It disclosed that anti-Communist demonstrations against the Vietcong and North Vietnamese Embassies in the capital the previous day had been planned by Sirik Matak and Lon Nol as part of a showdown policy against Sihanouk and his followers, and that the two men had put the army on alert "to prepare . . . for a coup against Sihanouk if Sihanouk refused to support" them.<sup>29</sup>

- General William Rosson, deputy to General Creighton Abrams, the Commander of US Forces in Vietnam at the time, has declared that American commanders were informed several days beforehand that a coup was being planned and that United States support was solicited.<sup>30</sup>

- Roger Morris, who was serving under Henry Kissinger on the National Security Council staff when the coup took place, reported that "It was clear in the White House that the CIA station in Phnom Penh knew the plotters well, probably knew their plans, and did nothing to alert Sihanouk. They informed Washington well in advance of the coup . . ."<sup>31</sup>

- William Shawcross asserts that had Sihanouk "returned quickly and calmly to Phnom Penh [following the anti-communist demonstrations] he would most likely have been able to avert disaster." That he did not do so may not have been by chance. Frank Snepp has revealed that the Agency "exacerbated the crisis by throwing up misinformation": it persuaded Sihanouk's mother, the Queen, to send a message to her son abroad reassuring him that the situation was not serious enough to warrant his return; after this, the CIA disseminated worldwide the idea that there was absolutely no chance of Sihanouk returning, although what form this took was not explained.<sup>32</sup>

With Sihanouk and his irritating neutralism no longer an obstacle, American military wheels began to spin. Within hours of the coup, US and South Vietnam forces stationed in border districts were directed to establish communication with Cambodian commanders on the other side and take steps toward military co-operation. The next day, the Cambodian army called in an American spotter plane and South Vietnamese artillery during a sweep of a Vietcong sanctuary by a battalion of Cambodian troops inside Cambodia. The *New York Times* declared that "The battle appeared to be the most determined Cambodian effort yet to drive the Vietcong out of border areas."<sup>33</sup> The Great Cambodian War had begun. It was to persist for five terrible years.

Before long, the enemy confronting the United States and its Saigon and Phnom Penh allies was not simply the North Vietnamese and the Vietcong. The Cambodian Communists, the Khmer Rouge, had entered the conflict, as had sundry Cambodian supporters of Prince Sihanouk. In an effort to enlist peasant

support, Lon Nol exploited the Cambodians' traditional fear and hatred of Vietnamese by unleashing a bloodbath against the many ethnic Vietnamese in the country, branding them all as Vietcong.<sup>34</sup>

On 30 April 1970, the first full-scale American invasion of the new war was launched. It produced a vast outcry of protest in the United States, rocking university campuses from coast to coast. Perhaps even more extraordinary were the angry resignations of four men from Henry Kissinger's National Security Council staff, including Roger Morris. (Kissinger labelled the resignations as "the cowardice of the Eastern establishment".)<sup>35</sup>

William Shawcross has vividly captured one aspect of the invasion:

All that day United States and South Vietnamese troops, tanks and planes churned across the earth and the air into the provinces of Ratanakiri, Mondolkiri, Kompong Cham and Svay Rieng. Reporters flying westward by helicopter to cover the invasion noticed that the unmarked border was easily discerned. On the South Vietnamese side the buffalo grazed calmly, well used to the noise of the war above and around them. In Cambodia the animals ran into each other and scattered, terrified.<sup>36</sup>

By the end of May, scores of villages were reduced to rubble and ashes by US air power; hundreds of innocent civilians had been bombed, burned and machine-gunned to death by American and Saigon troops; the long train of Cambodian refugees had begun their march; by autumn, Cambodia's traditional economy had almost vanished.

Three years and a hundred thousand tons of bombs later, 27 January 1973 to be precise, an agreement was signed in Paris putting an end to a decade of American warfare in Vietnam. The bombing of Cambodia, however, continued.

Prior to the Paris agreement, the official position of the Nixon administration, repeatedly asserted, was that the sole purpose of bombing Cambodia was to protect American lives in Vietnam. Yet now, the US not only did not cease the bombing, it increased it, in a last desperate attempt to keep the Khmer Rouge from coming to power. During March, April and May, the tonnage of bombs unloosed over Cambodia was more than double that of the entire previous year. The old Cambodia was being destroyed forever.

It does appear rather ludicrous, in the light of this application of brute force, that the CIA was at the same time carrying out the most subtle of psychological tactics. As an example, to spread dissatisfaction about the exiled Sihanouk amongst the Cambodian peasantry who revered him, a CIA sound engineer, using sophisticated electronics, fashioned an excellent counterfeit of the Prince's distinctive voice and manner of speaking — breathless, high-pitched, and full of giggles. This voice was beamed from a clandestine radio station in Laos with messages artfully designed to offend any good Khmer. In one of the broadcasts, "Sihanouk" exhorted young women to aid the cause by sleeping with the valiant Vietcong.<sup>37</sup>

In a farewell press conference in September, 1973, the American Ambassador

to Cambodia, Emory Swank, called what had taken place there "Indochina's most useless war".<sup>38</sup>

Later, Californian Congressman Pete McClosky, following a visit to Cambodia, had harsher words. He was moved to declare that what the United States had "done to the country is greater evil that we have done to any country in the world, and wholly without reason, except for our own-benefit to fight against the Vietnamese."<sup>39</sup>

Incredibly, the victorious Khmer Rouge were later to inflict yet more misery upon that unhappy land; although, knowing what we do of the CIA's extraordinary ability to orchestrate world news coverage — what former Agency official Frank Wisner proudly referred to as his "mighty Wurlitzer" — we have to approach the claims of the extent of Khmer Rouge mass executions with caution; to the CIA, the issue was "a natural". Most ironically, the United States later wound up supporting the Khmer Rouge, both at the United Nations and in the field, in their struggle with the Vietnamese.

## 21. Laos 1957 to 1973 L'Armée Clandestine

For the past two years the US has carried out one of the most sustained bombing campaigns in history against essentially civilian targets in northeastern Laos . . . Operating from Thai bases and from aircraft carriers, American jets have destroyed the great majority of villages and towns in the northeast. Severe casualties have been inflicted upon the inhabitants . . . Refugees from the Plain of Jars report they were bombed almost daily by American jets last year. They say they spent most of the past two years living in caves or holes.  
*Far Eastern Economic Review*, Hong Kong, 1970<sup>1</sup>

[The Laos operation] is something of which we can be proud as Americans. It has involved virtually no American casualties. What we are getting for our money there . . . is, I think, to use the old phrase, very cost effective . . .  
*U. Alexis Johnson*, US Under Secretary of State, 1971<sup>2</sup>

The United States undertook the bombing campaign because its ground war against the Pathet Lao had failed.

The ground war had been carried out because the Pathet Lao were led by people whom the State Department categorized as "communist", no more, no less.

The Pathet Lao (re)turned to warfare because of their experiences in "working within the system".

In 1957 the Pathet Lao held two ministerial posts in the coalition "government of national union". This was during John Foster Dulles' era, and if there was anything the fanatic Secretary of State hated more than neutralism it was a coalition with communists. This government featured both. There could be little other reason for the development of the major American intervention into this impoverished and primitive land of peasants. The American Ambassador to Laos at the time, J. Graham Parsons, was to admit later: "I struggled for sixteen months to prevent a coalition."<sup>3</sup>

In addition to its demand for inclusion in the coalition government, the Pathet Lao had called for diplomatic relations with the countries of the Soviet bloc and the acceptance of aid from them. "Agreement to these conditions," said Washington, "would have given the Communists their most significant gains in Southeast Asia since the partition of Indochina."<sup>4</sup> Others would say that the Pathet Lao's conditions were simply what neutralism is all about.

In May 1958, the Pathet Lao and other leftists, running a campaign based on government corruption and indifference, won 13 of 21 contested seats for the National Assembly and wound up controlling more than one-third of the new legislature.<sup>5</sup> Two months later, however, Prime Minister Souvanna Phouma, a man universally categorized as a neutralist, "resigned" to form a new government which would exclude the Pathet Lao ministers.<sup>6</sup> (He subsequently claimed that he was forced to resign due to continued American opposition to Laotian neutrality; as it happened, one Phoui Sananikone, backed by the US, became premier in the reorganized government.)<sup>7</sup> Then, in January 1959, the non-left majority in the National Assembly voted, in effect, to dissolve the Assembly in order "to counteract communist influence and subversion". The left was now altogether excluded from the government, and the elections scheduled for December were cancelled.<sup>8</sup>

If this wasn't enough to disenchant the Pathet Lao — or anyone else — with the Laotian political process, there was, in the late 1950s and early 1960s, the spectacle of a continuous parade of coups and countercoups, of men overthrown winding up in the new government; regimes headed by men who had sided with the French in their war against Indochinese independence (while the Pathet Lao had fought against the colonialists);<sup>9</sup> government-rigged elections, with the CIA stuffing ballot boxes;<sup>10</sup> different regimes cum warlords governing simultaneously from different "capitals", their armies fighting each other, switching allies and enemies when it suited them; hundreds of millions of US dollars pouring into a tiny kingdom which was 99 percent agricultural, with an economy based more on barter than money, the result being "unimaginable bribery, graft, currency manipulation and waste".<sup>11</sup>

The CIA and the State Department alone could take credit for engineering coups, through force, bribery or other pressures, at least once in each of the years 1958, 1959 and 1960, if not in others.<sup>12</sup> "By merely withholding the monthly payment to the troops," wrote Roger Hilsman (whose career encompassed both agencies, perhaps simultaneously), "the United States

could create the conditions for toppling any Lao government whose policies it opposed: As it turned out, in fact, the United States used this weapon twice — to bring down the government of one Lao leader and to break the will of another."<sup>13</sup>

The American wheeling and dealing centred around giving power to the CIA's hand-picked rightist strongman Phoumi Nosavan, ousting Souvanna Phouma and other neutralists, and jailing Pathet Lao leaders, including the movement's head, Souphanouvong (the half-brother of Souvanna Phouma, both being princes of the royal family). Souphanouvong insisted that neither he nor the Pathet Lao were communist, but were rather "ultra-nationalist".<sup>14</sup> Crucial to understanding his statements, of course, is the question of exactly what he meant by the term "communist". This is not clear, but neither is it clear what the State Department meant when it referred to him as such. Semantics aside, the Pathet Lao were the only sizable group in the country serious about social change.

In August 1960, Kong Le, a military officer with his own troop following, staged a coup and set up a neutralist government under Souvanna Phouma, rejecting Pathet Lao help.<sup>15</sup> But when this government became a casualty of a CIA coup in December, Kong Le allied himself with the Pathet Lao; later he turned to the United States for aid and fought against the Pathet Lao; such was the way of the Laotian circus.

No study of Laos of this period appears to have had notable success in untangling the muddle of who exactly replaced whom, and when, and how, and why. After returning from Laos, writer Norman Cousins stated in 1961 that "if you want to get a sense of the universe unraveling, come to Laos. Complexity such as this has to be respected."<sup>16</sup>

One thing that comes through unambiguously, however, is the determination of the CIA and the State Department to save Laos from communism and neutralism. To this end, the CIA set about creating its famous Armée Clandestine, a process begun by the US Army in the mid-1950s when it organized Meo hill-tribesmen (the same ethnic group organized in Vietnam). Over the years, other peoples of Laos were added, reaching as many as 40,000 in the mid-1960s, 15,000 of them more or less full-time soldiers . . . 15,000 more from Thailand . . . hundreds of other Asians came on board, South Vietnamese, Filipinos, Taiwanese, South Koreans, men who had received expert training from their American mentors in their home countries, now being recycled. An army, said the *New York Times*, "armed, equipped, fed, paid, guided, strategically and tactically, and often transported into and out of action by the United States" . . . trained and augmented by the CIA, by men of every branch of the US military with their multiple specialties, the many pilots of the CIA's Air America, altogether some 2,000 Americans in and over Laos, and thousands more Americans in Asia helping with the logistics. A Secret Army, secret, that is, from the American people and Congress — US military personnel were there under various covers, some as civilians in mufti, having "resigned" from the service for the occasion and been hired by a private company created by the CIA; others served as embassy attaches; CIA pilots

were officially under contract to the Agency for International Development (AID); Americans who were killed in Laos were reported to have died in Vietnam<sup>17</sup> . . . all this in addition to the "official" government forces, the Royal Laotian Army, greatly expanded and totally paid for by the US government as well. . . .<sup>18</sup>

Laos was an American plantation, a CIA playground. During the 1960s, the Agency roamed over much of the land at will, building an airstrip, a hangar, or a base here, a warehouse, barracks, or a radar site there;<sup>19</sup> relocating thousands of people, entire villages, whole tribes, to suit strategic military needs; recruiting warriors "through money and/or the threat or use of force and/or promises of independent kingdoms which it had no intention of fulfilling, and then keeping them fighting long beyond the point when they wished to stop."<sup>20</sup> The "legendary" pilots of Air America roamed far and wide as well, hard drinking, daredevil flying, death defying, great stories to tell the guys back home, if you survived.<sup>21</sup>

At the same time, the hearts and minds of the Laotian people, at least of those who could read, were not overlooked. The US Information Agency was there to put out a magazine with a circulation of 43,000; this, in a country where the circulation of the largest newspaper was 3,300; there were as well USIA wall newspapers, films, leaflet drops, and radio programmes.<sup>22</sup>

In the face of it all, the Pathet Lao more than held their own. The CIA was over-extended, and, unlike the motley band of Asians assembled by the Agency, the soldiers of the Pathet Lao had some idea of what they were fighting for. The Soviet Union, aware of what the United States was doing in Laos, even if Americans were not, acceded to a cold-war knee-reflex by sending military supplies to the Pathet Lao, though nothing on the order of the US commitment.<sup>23</sup>

Beginning in the early 1960s, the North Vietnamese were aiding them as well. Hanoi's overriding interest in Laos was not necessarily the creation of a Communist state, but the prevention of a belligerent government on its border. In January 1961, the *New York Times* reported that "Many Western diplomats in Vientiane [capital of Laos] . . . feel the Communists would have been content to leave Laos alone provided she remained neutral and outside the United States sphere of influence."<sup>24</sup>

Hanoi was concerned not only by the American political and military operations in Laos, but by the actions of US Special Forces teams which were entering North Vietnam to engage in espionage, sabotage, and assassination,<sup>25</sup> and by the bombings of the country being carried out by the US Air Force<sup>26</sup> at a time when the war in South Vietnam was still but a shadow of what was to come. Later, as the wars in Vietnam and Laos became intertwined, Laos formed part of the Ho Chi Minh Trail, the principal route by which Hanoi supplied its comrades in South Vietnam, and the North Vietnamese fought to protect it as well as attacking American radar installations in Laos used to aid US bombing of North Vietnam.

The nature and extent of North Vietnam's aid to the Pathet Lao before this period is difficult to ascertain from Western sources, because such charges

typically emanated from the Laotian government or the State Department, and their credibility on the subject is questionable. On a number of occasions, their report of a North Vietnamese military operation in Laos turned out to be a fabrication. William Lederer and Eugene Burdick, in *A Nation of Sheep*, summarized one of these non-events:

In the summer of 1959 . . . The people of the United States were led to believe that Laos physically had been invaded by foreign Communist troops from across its northern border. Our Secretary of State called the situation grave; our ambassador to the U.N. called for world action; our press carried scare headlines; our senior naval officer implied armed intervention and was seconded by ranking Congressmen . . .

The entire affair was a fraud. No military invasion of Laos had taken place. . . . There seemed no doubt that a war embracing thousands of troops, tanks, planes, and mass battles, was raging. Regardless of how the accounts were worded, this was the picture given the nation.<sup>27</sup>

It had all been a ploy to induce Congress not to reduce aid for Laos, something seriously being considered because of the pervasive corruption which had been exposed concerning the aid programme.<sup>28</sup> The Laotian government and the large American establishment in Laos, each for their own reasons, were not about to let the golden goose slip away that easily.

On the last day of 1960, the Laotian government announced to the world that seven battalions of North Vietnamese troops had invaded the country. By all accounts, and by the utter lack of evidence, this claim as well cannot be taken seriously.<sup>29</sup>

And in 1962, reported Bernard Fall, the renowned French scholar on Indochina: after a battle between government forces and the Pathet Lao, in spite of the fact that Col. Edwin Elder, the American commander in the area of the battle, immediately stated that there was

'no evidence to show that Chinese or [North] Vietnamese had participated in the attack', the Laotians — and much of the U.S. press, and official Washington with them — immediately claimed that they were again faced with a large-scale 'foreign invasion'.<sup>30</sup>

Shortly after Kennedy became president in January 1961, he had made a sustained diplomatic effort to establish a coalition government in Laos, precisely what the Eisenhower Administration and the CIA had done their best to sabotage. Although he sometimes fell back on conventional cold-war rhetoric when speaking of Laos, one part of John F. Kennedy realized the absurdity of fighting for the backward country, a land he considered not "worthy of engaging the attention of great powers".<sup>31</sup> Soviet Premier Khrushchev, for his part, was reportedly "bored" with the question of Laos, and irritably asked Kennedy's emissary why Washington bothered so much about the country.<sup>32</sup>

Eventually, in July 1962, a multi-nation conference in Geneva signed an agreement for a coalition government in Laos. But in the mountains and plains

of the country, this was no longer a viable option. The CIA had too much time, effort, material and emotion invested in its Secret Army; it was the best war the Agency had going anywhere; it was great adventure. And the Pathet Lao were much stronger now than a few years earlier. They were not about to buy such shopworn, suspect goods again, although everyone went through the motions.

Both sides regularly accused each other of violating the agreement, and not without justification. The North Vietnamese, for example, did not withdraw all of their troops from Laos, while the US left behind all manner of military personnel, American and Asian, who remained under AID and other civilian cover, but this was nonetheless a violation of the agreement. Moreover, Christopher Robbins, in his study of Air America, has noted that US "Military advisers and CIA personnel moved across the border into Thailand, where they were flown in every day [to Laos] like commuters by Air America, whose entire helicopter operation was based in Udorn [Thailand]." <sup>33</sup> Air America, by the early 1970s, had no less than 4,000 employees in Thailand. <sup>34</sup>

Thus it was that the fighting dragged on, though only sporadically. In April 1964, the coalition government, such as it was, was overthrown by the right-wing, with the CIA's man Phoumi Nosavan emerging as part of a rightist government headed by the perennial survivor Souvanna Phouma to give it a neutralist fig leaf. <sup>35</sup> The Pathet Lao were once again left out in the cold. For them it was the very last straw. The fighting greatly intensified, the skirmishes were now war; the Pathet Lao offensive soon scored significant advances. Then the American bombing began.

Between 1965 and 1973, more than two million tons of bombs rained down upon the people of Laos, <sup>36</sup> considerably more than the US had dropped on both Germany and Japan during the Second World War, albeit for a shorter period. For the first few years, the bombing was directed primarily at the provinces controlled by the Pathet Lao. Of the bombing, Fred Branfman, a former American community worker in Laos, wrote: "village after village was leveled, countless people burned alive by high explosives, or burnt alive by napalm and white phosphorous, or riddled by anti-personnel bomb pellets" <sup>37</sup> . . . "The United States has undertaken," said a Senate report, ". . . a large-scale air war over Laos to destroy the physical and social infrastructure of Pathet Lao held areas and to interdict North Vietnamese infiltration . . . throughout all this there has been a policy of subterfuge and secrecy . . . through such things as saturation bombing and the forced evacuation of population from enemy held or threatened areas — we have helped to create untold agony for hundreds of thousands of villagers." <sup>38</sup>

The American military, however, kept proper records. AID could report to Congress that wounds suffered by civilian war casualties were as follows:

1. Type: Soft tissue, 39 percent. Compound fracture, 30 percent. Amputation, 12 percent. Intra-abdominal, 10 percent. Intra-thoracic, 3 percent. Intra-cranial, 1 percent.
2. Location: Lower extremities, 60 percent. Upper extremities, 15 percent. Trunk, 18 percent. Head, 7 percent. <sup>39</sup>

The fledgling society that the United States was trying to make extinct — the CIA dropped millions of dollars in forged Pathet Lao currency as well, in an attempt to wreck the economy <sup>40</sup> — was one which Fred Branfman described thus:

The Pathet Lao rule over the Plain of Jars begun in May 1964 brought its people into a post-colonial era. For the first time they were taught pride in their country and people, instead of admiration for a foreign culture; schooling and massive adult literacy campaigns were conducted in Laotian instead of French; and mild but thorough social revolution — ranging from land reform to greater equality for women — was instituted. <sup>41</sup>

Beginning in the late 1960s, the Ho Chi Minh Trail in southern Laos became the principal target of American bombing, though the people of the north were still hurting. In October 1971, for example, one could read in *The Guardian* of London . . .

although US officials deny it vehemently, ample evidence exists to confirm charges that the Meo villages that do try to find their own way out of the war — even if it is simply by staying neutral and refusing to send their 13-year-olds to fight in the CIA army — are immediately denied American rice and transport, and ultimately bombed by the US Air Force. <sup>42</sup>

Following on the heels of events in Vietnam, a ceasefire was arrived at in Laos in 1973, and yet another attempt at coalition government (this one lasted until 1975, at which time the Pathet Lao took over full control of the country). Laos had become a land of nomads, without villages, without farms; a generation of refugees; hundreds of thousands dead, many more maimed. When the US Air Force closed down its radio station, it signed off with the message: "Good-by and see you next war." <sup>43</sup>

Thus it was that the worst of Washington's fears had come to pass: all of Indochina — Vietnam, Cambodia and Laos — had fallen to the communists. During the initial period of US involvement in Indochina in the 1950s, John Foster Dulles, Dwight Eisenhower and others regularly issued doomsday pronouncements of the type known as the "Domino Theory", warning that if Indochina should fall, other nations in Asia would topple over as well. In one instance, President Eisenhower listed no less than Taiwan, Australia, New Zealand, the Philippines and Indonesia amongst the anticipated "falling dominos" <sup>44</sup>

Such warnings were repeated periodically over the next decade by succeeding administrations and other supporters of US policy in Indochina as a key argument in defence of such policy. The fact that these ominous predictions have turned out to have no basis in reality has not deterred Washington officialdom from promulgating the same dogma to the present day about almost each new world "trouble-spot", testimony to their unshakable faith in the existence and inter-workings of the International Communist Conspiracy.

were the most likely candidates to be part of an invasion of their homeland. The Castro government readily admitted that the raiding party had come from Cuba but denied that the government had known or approved of it. This claim would seem rather hollow were it not for the fact that the Cuban coast guard had thwarted a similar undertaking in April.<sup>10</sup>

The first members of the American military mission had arrived in Haiti in January, largely in response to another invasion attempt the previous July (originating probably in the Dominican Republic). Regardless of all the horror stories about the Haitian regime — such as the one Col. Heim tells of his twelve-year-old son being arrested when he was overheard expressing sympathy for a group of hungry peasants he saw — Duvalier was Washington's man. After all was said and done, he could be counted upon to keep his black nation, which was usually accorded the honour of being Latin America's poorest, from turning red.

## 22. Haiti 1959 The Marines land, again

"Duvalier has performed an economic miracle," remarked a Haitian of his country's dictator. "He has taught us to live without money . . . to eat without food . . . to live without life."<sup>1</sup>

And when Duvalier's voodoo magic wore thin, he could always turn to the US Marines to continue his people's education.

During the night of 12-13 August 1959, a boat landed on the northern coast of Haiti with a reported 30 men, Haitians and Cubans and perhaps others, aboard. The men had set sail from Cuba some 50 miles away. Their purpose was to overthrow the tyrannical Haitian government, a regime whose secret police, it was said, outnumbered its army.

In short-order, the raiding party, equipped with heavy weapons, captured a small army post and began to recruit and arm villagers for the cause.<sup>2</sup> The government reported that about 200 persons had joined them.<sup>3</sup> Haitian exiles in Venezuela, in an apparently co-ordinated effort, broadcast appeals to their countrymen to aid the invaders. They set at 120 the number of men who had landed in Haiti, although this appears to be an exaggeration.<sup>4</sup>

The initial reaction of the Duvalier government was one of panic, and the police began rounding up opposition sympathizers.<sup>5</sup> It was at this point that the US military mission, in Haiti to train Duvalier's forces, stepped in. The Americans instituted an air and sea reconnaissance to locate the rebels. Haitian soldiers, accompanied by US Marines, were airlifted to the area and went into the field to do battle with them.<sup>6</sup> Two other US Navy planes and a helicopter arrived from Puerto Rico.<sup>7</sup>

According to their commander, Col. Robert Debs Heinl, Jr., the American Marines took part in the fighting which lasted until 22 August.<sup>8</sup> The outcome was a complete rout of the rebel forces.

Information about the men who came from Cuba derives almost exclusively from the Haitian government and the American mission. These sources claim that the raiding party was composed of about 30 men and that, with the exception of one or two Haitians who led them, they were all Cubans. Another report, referred to in the *New York Times*, stated that there were ten Haitians and two Venezuelans amongst the 30 invaders.<sup>9</sup> The latter ratio is probably closer to the truth, for there was a considerable number of Haitian exiles living in Cuba, many of whom had gained military experience during the revolution; for obvious reasons of international politics and fighting incentive, such men

## 23. Guatemala 1960 One good coup deserves another

In November 1960, as John F. Kennedy was preparing to succeed Dwight Eisenhower, the obsessive priority of American foreign policy — to invade Cuba — proceeded without pause. On the beaches and in the jungles of Guatemala, Nicaragua and Florida, the Bays of Pigs invasion was being rehearsed.

On the 13th of the month, five days after Kennedy's victory, Guatemalan military personnel broke out in armed rebellion against the government of General Miguel Ydigoras Fuentes, seizing two military bases and the port city of Puerto Barrios. Reports of the number of officers involved in the uprising vary from 45 to 120, the latter figure representing almost half the Guatemalan Army's officer corps. The officers commanded as many as 3,000 troops, a significant percentage of the armed forces. Their goals, it later developed, were more nationalistic than ideological. The officers were fed up with the corruption in the Ydigoras regime and in the army, and were particularly incensed about the use of their country by a foreign power as a springboard for an invasion of Cuba; some of them admired Castro for his nationalist policies. One of the dissident officers later characterized the American training base in Guatemala as "a shameful violation of our national sovereignty. And why was it permitted? Because our government is a puppet."<sup>11</sup>

The rebellion was crushed within a matter of days, reportedly by the sole power of the Guatemalan Air Force. Some years later, a truer picture was to emerge.

The rebels were a force to be reckoned with. The ease with which they had taken over the two garrisons and the real possibility of their mutiny spreading to other bases set alarms ringing at the CIA base, a large coffee plantation in a remote corner of south-western Guatemala, where the Agency and the US Air Force were training the army of Cuban exiles who were to launch the attack upon their homeland. The CIA feared, and rightly so, that a new regime would send them, the Cubans, and the whole operation packing.

In Washington, President Eisenhower ordered US naval and air units to patrol the Caribbean coast and "shoot if necessary" to prevent any "communist-led" invasion of Guatemala or Nicaragua.<sup>2</sup> Eisenhower, like Ydigoras, saw the hand of international communism, particularly Cuba, behind the uprising, although no evidence of this was ever presented.<sup>3</sup> It was all most ironic in light of the fact that it was the conspiracy of the two leaders to overthrow Cuba that was one of the reasons for the uprising; and that the US naval fleet ordered into action was deployed from Guantanamo Naval Base in Cuba, an American military installation present in that country against the vociferous objections of the Cuban government.

In Guatemala, meanwhile, the CIA decided upon a solution to the dilemma that was remarkably simple and close at hand: American and Cuban pilots took off from their training ground and bombed and strafed rebel headquarters outside Guatemala City, and bombed the town and airfield of Puerto Barrios. Caught completely by surprise, and defenceless against this superior force, the rebels' insurrection collapsed.<sup>4</sup>

Back at the coffee plantation, the CIA resumed the function which had been so rudely interrupted, the preparation for the overthrow of the Cuban government.

No announcement about the bombings was made in Washington, nor did a report appear in the American press.

The CIA actions were probably not widely known about in Guatemala either, but it became public knowledge that President Ydigoras had asked Washington for the naval and air support, and had even instructed the Guatemalan Ambassador in Washington to "Get in touch immediately with [Assistant Secretary of State for Inter-American Affairs] Thomas Mann to coordinate your action."<sup>5</sup> Thus it was that the Guatemalan president, needing afterward to distance himself a little from so much Yankee protection, was moved to state that countries like Guatemala are at a disadvantage because "Cuba is a satellite of powerful Russia", but "we are not a satellite of the United States."<sup>6</sup>

The final irony was that some of the dissident officers who went into hiding became more radicalized by their experience. During their revolt they had spurned offers of support from some of the peasants — though this would necessarily have been very limited in any case — because fighting for social change was not at all what the officers had in mind at the time. But as fugitives, they were moved by the peasants' pressing need for land and for a way out of

their miserable existence.<sup>7</sup> In 1962, several of the officers were to emerge as leaders of a guerrilla movement which incorporated "November Thirteen" as part of its name. In their opening statement, the guerrillas declared:

Democracy vanished from our country long ago. No people can live in a country where there is no democracy. That is why the demand for changes is mounting in our country. We can no longer carry on in this way. We must overthrow the Ydigoras government and set up a government which represents human rights, seeks ways and means to save our country from its hardships, and pursues a serious self-respecting foreign policy.<sup>8</sup>

A simple sentiment, stated even simpler, but, as we shall see, a movement fated to come up against the wishes of the United States. For if Washington could casually do away with an elected government in Guatemala, it could be moved by a guerrilla army only as rocks by waves or the moon by howling wolves.

## 24. France/Algeria 1960s L'état, c'est la CIA

When John F. Kennedy assumed office in January 1961, he was confronted with a CIA at the zenith of its power and credibility. In the Agency's first 14 years, no formal Congressional investigation of it had taken place, nor had any "watchdog" committee been established; four investigations by independent task forces during this period had ensured that everything relating to things covert remained just that; with the exception of the U-2 incident the year before, no page-one embarrassments, scandals, or known failures; what had received a measure of publicity — the coups in Guatemala and Iran — were widely regarded as CIA success stories.

It is probable that the CIA had more staff officers overseas, under official and unofficial covers, than the State Department, and this in addition to its countless paid agents. Often the CIA Chief of Station had been in a particular country longer than the American Ambassador, had more money at his disposal, and exerted more influence. When it suited their purposes, Agency officers would completely bypass the ambassador and normal protocol to deal directly with the country's head of state and other high officials.

The CIA had its own military capabilities, including its own air force, for all intents and purposes, its own foreign service with, indeed, its own foreign policy, though never at cross-purposes with fundamental US cold-war, anti-communist ideology and goals.

It was all very heady stuff for the officers of the CIA, playing their mens' games with their boys' toys. They recognized scarcely any limitation upon their freedom of action. British colonial governors they were, and all the world was India.

Then, in mid-April, came the disaster at the Bay of Pigs in Cuba. The international repercussions had barely begun to subside, when the CIA was again catapulted into world headlines. On 22 April four French generals in Algeria seized power in an attempt to maintain the country's union with France. The *putsch*, which held out but four days, was a direct confrontation to French President Charles de Gaulle who had dramatically proclaimed a policy leading "not to an Algeria governed from France, but to an Algerian Algeria".

The next day, the leftist Italian newspaper, *Il Paese*, stated that "It is not by chance some people in Paris are accusing the American secret service headed by Allen Dulles of having participated in the plot of the four 'ultra' generals . . ." <sup>1</sup>

Whether *Il Paese* was the original source of this charge remains a mystery. Dulles himself later wrote that the Italian daily was "one of the first to launch it". (Emphasis added.) He expressed the opinion that "This particular myth was a Communist plant, pure and simple."<sup>2</sup>

The *New York Times* reported that the rumours apparently began circulating by word of mouth on the day of the *putsch*,<sup>3</sup> a report echoed by the *Washington Star* which added that some of the rumours were launched "by minor officials at the Elysée Palace itself" who gave reporters "to understand that the generals' plot was backed by strongly anti-communist elements in the United States Government and military services."<sup>4</sup>

Whatever its origins, the story spread rapidly around the world, and the French Foreign Office refused to refute the allegation. *Le Monde* asserted in a front-page editorial on 28 April that "the behaviour of the United States during the recent crisis was not particularly skillful. It seems established that American agents more or less encouraged Challe [the leader of the *putsch*] . . . President Kennedy, of course, knew nothing of all this."<sup>5</sup>

Reports from all sources were in agreement that if the CIA had indeed been involved in the *putsch*, it had been so for two reasons: 1) The concern that if Algeria were granted its independence, "communists" would soon come to power, being those in the ranks of the National Liberation Front (NLF) which had been fighting the French Army in Algeria for several years — the legendary Battle of Algiers; it was with the NLF that de Gaulle was expected to negotiate a settlement; 2) The hope that it would precipitate the downfall of de Gaulle, an end desired because the French President was a major stumbling block to US plans to build an integrated military command under NATO: de Gaulle refused to incorporate French troops into the alliance. By all accounts, it appears that the rebel officers had counted on support from important military and civilian quarters in France to extend the rebellion to the home country and overthrow de Gaulle. Fanciful as this may sound, the fact remains that the French government took the possibility seriously — French Premier Michel Debré went on television to warn the nation of an imminent paratroop invasion of the Paris area and to urge mass opposition.<sup>6</sup>

Reaction in the American press to the allegations had an unmistakable motley quality. *Washington Post* columnist Marquis Childs said that the French were so shocked by the generals' coup that they had to find a scapegoat. At the same time he quoted "one of the highest officials of the French government" as saying:

Of course, your government, neither your State Department nor your President, had anything to do with this. But when you have so many hundreds of agents in every part of the world, it is not to be wondered at that some of them should have got in touch with the generals in Algiers.<sup>7</sup>

*Time* magazine discounted the story, saying too that the United States was being made a scapegoat and that the CIA had become a "favorite target in recent weeks".<sup>8</sup>

James Reston wrote in the *New York Times* that the CIA:

was involved in an embarrassing liaison with the anti-Gaullist officers who staged last week's insurrection in Algiers . . . [the Bay of Pigs and Algerian events have] increased the feeling in the White House that the CIA has gone beyond the bounds of an objective intelligence-gathering agency and has become the advocate of men and policies that have embarrassed the Administration.<sup>9</sup>

However, C.L. Sulzberger, who had been the man at the *New York Times* closest to the CIA since its founding, stated flatly that "No American in Algeria had to do with any insurrectional leader . . . No consular employee saw any rebel." (A few days later, Secretary of State Dean Rusk disclosed that an emissary of the rebellious French generals had visited the US Consulate in Algiers to request aid but had been summarily rebuffed.)

The affair, wrote Sulzberger, was "a deliberate effort to poison Franco-American relationships" begun in Moscow but abetted by "anti-American French officials" and "naive persons in Washington". "When one checks, one finds all this began in a Moscow *Izvestia* article April 25."<sup>10</sup> This last, as we have seen, was incorrect.

Dean of American columnists, Walter Lippmann, who had seen de Gaulle in Paris shortly before the *putsch*, wrote:

the reason why the French Government has not really exculpated the CIA of encouraging the Algerian rebel generals is that it was already so angry with the CIA for meddling in French internal politics. The French grievance, justified or not, has to do with recent French legislation for the French nuclear weapon, and the alleged effort of CIA agents to interfere with that legislation.<sup>11</sup>

*Newsweek* repeated the claim that it was "French officials" who had been "the main sources" of the rumours in the first place. When challenged by the American administration the French denied their authorship and tended to soften the charges. Some French officials eventually declared the matter to be closed, though they still failed to explicitly rule out the allegations about American involvement.<sup>12</sup>

In early May 1961, *L'Express*, the widely-read French liberal weekly, published what was perhaps the first detailed account of the mysterious affair.

Their Algerian correspondent, Claude Krief reported:<sup>13</sup>

Both in Paris and Washington the facts are now known, though they will never be publicly admitted. In private, the highest French personalities make no secret of it. What they say is this: "The CIA played a direct part in the Algiers coup, and certainly weighed heavily on the decision taken by ex-general Challe to start his *putsch*."

Not long before, Challe had held the position of NATO Commander-in-Chief, Allied Forces, Central Europe, as a result of which he had been in daily contact with US military officers.<sup>14</sup> Krief wrote that certain American officials in NATO and the Pentagon encouraged Challe, and that the general had had several meetings with CIA officers who told him that "to get rid of de Gaulle would render the Free World a great service". Krief noted that Challe, despite an overweening ambition, was very cautious and serious-minded: "All the people who know him well, are deeply convinced that he had been encouraged by the CIA to go ahead."

At a luncheon in Washington the previous year, Jacques Soustelle, the former Governor-General of Algeria who had made public his disagreement with de Gaulle's Algeria policy, had met with CIA officials, including Richard Bissell, head of covert operations. Soustelle convinced the Agency officials, according to Krief, that Algeria would become, through de Gaulle's blundering, "a Soviet base". This luncheon became something of a *cause célèbre* in the speculation concerning the CIA's possible role. The *New York Times* and others reported that it had been given by the Agency for Soustelle.<sup>15</sup> US officials, however, insisted that the luncheon had been arranged by someone at the French Embassy at Soustelle's request. This French official, they said, had been present throughout the meeting and thus there could have been no dark conspiracy.<sup>16</sup> Why the French Embassy would host a luncheon for a prominent and bitter foe of de Gaulle, a man who only two months earlier had been kicked out of de Gaulle's cabinet for his "ultra" sympathies, was not explained. Nor, for that matter, why in protocol-minded Washington of all places, the CIA would attend. In any event, it seems somewhat fatuous to imply that this was the only chance Soustelle and the CIA had to talk during his stay in the United States which lasted more than a week.

A clandestine meeting in Madrid also received wide currency within the controversy. Krief dates it 12 April 1961, and describes it as a meeting of "various foreign agents, including members of the CIA and the Algiers conspirators, who disclosed their plans to the CIA men". The Americans were reported to have angrily complained that de Gaulle's policy was "paralyzing NATO and rendering the defense of Europe impossible", and assured the generals that if they and their followers succeeded, Washington would recognize the new Algerian Government within 48 hours.

It may well be that the French Government did have evidence of the CIA's involvement. But in the unnatural world of international diplomacy, this would

not necessarily lead to an unambiguous public announcement. Such a move could result in an open confrontation between France and the United States, a predicament both sides could be expected to take pains to avoid. Moreover, it would put the French in the position of having to do something about it. And what could they do? Breaking relations with the United States was not a realistic option; neither were the French in any position to retaliate economically or militarily. But French leaders were too angry to simply let the matter pass into obscurity. Thus, to complete the hypothetical scenario, they took the backdoor approach with all its shortcomings.

In a similar vein, the Soviet Union knew about the American U-2 flights over its territory for years before making it public. The Soviets were not prepared to admit that they were unable to do anything about the incessant overhead espionage. And the United States knew that the Russians, for at least one year, were intercepting telephone calls in the US of governmental and congressional officials, but said nothing publicly because it was unable to end the practice for technical reasons.<sup>17</sup>

Between 1958 and the middle of the 1960s, there occurred some 30 serious assassination attempts upon the life of Charles de Gaulle, in addition to any number of planned attempts which didn't advance much beyond the planning stage.<sup>18</sup> A world record for a head of state, it is said. In at least one of the attempts, the CIA may have been a co-conspirator.

In 1975, the *Chicago Tribune* featured a story on page one which read in part:

Congressional leaders have been told of Central Intelligence Agency involvement in a plot by French dissidents to assassinate the late French President Charles De Gaulle. Within the last two weeks, a CIA representative disclosed sketchy details of the scheme . . . Sometime in the mid-1960s — probably in 1965 or 1966 — dissidents in the De Gaulle government are said to have made contact with the CIA to seek help in a plot to murder the French leader. Which party instigated the contact was not clear . . . According to the CIA briefing officer, discussions were held on how best to eliminate De Gaulle, who by then had become a thorn in the side of the Johnson administration because of his ouster of American military bases from French soil and his demands that United States forces be withdrawn from the Indochina War. Thus the following plan is said to have evolved after discussions between CIA personnel and the dissident French. There is, however, no evidence the plot got beyond the talking stage.

A hired assassin, armed with a poison ring, was to be slipped into a crowd of old soldiers of France when General De Gaulle was to be the host at a reception for them. The killer would make his appearance late in the day when it could be presumed De Gaulle's hand would be weary and perhaps even numb from shaking hundreds of hands. The assassin would clasp the general's hand in lethal friendship and De Gaulle would fail to detect the tiny pin prick of poison as it penetrated his flesh. The executioner would stroll off to become lost in the crowd as the poison began coursing through De Gaulle's veins either to his heart or brain, depending on the deadly poison used. How quickly death would come was

not divulged, if that was even-discussed at the time . . .

In the outline presented to the congressional leaders, there is no hint of what the CIA's actual role might have been had the plot reached fruition.<sup>19</sup>

The dissidents involved in the alleged plot were embittered French army officers and former Algerian settlers who still bore deep resentment toward de Gaulle for having "sold out French honour" by his retreat from the North African colony.

There was no mention in the reported CIA testimony about any involvement of Lyndon Johnson, although it was well known that there was no love lost between Johnson and de Gaulle. The French leader was firmly convinced that the United States was behind the failure of his trip to South America in 1964. He believed that the CIA had used its network of agents in South America to prevent a big turnout of crowds.<sup>20</sup> There is some evidence to indicate that the General was not just paranoid. In 1970, Dr Alfred Stepan, a professor of political science at Yale, testified before Congress about his experience in South America in 1964 when he was a journalist for *The Economist*:

When De Gaulle was going to make his trip through Latin America, many of the Latin Americans interviewed [officers of various embassies] said that they were under very real pressure by various American groups not to be very warm towards De Gaulle, because we considered Latin America within the United States area of influence.<sup>21</sup>

After the appearance of the *Chicago Tribune* story, CIA Director William Colby confirmed that "foreigners" had approached the Agency with a plot to kill de Gaulle. The Agency rejected the idea, Colby said, but he did not know if the French government had been advised of the plot.<sup>22</sup> It is not clear whether the incident referred to by Colby was related to the one discussed in the *Tribune*.

In the early evening of Monday, 9 November 1970, Charles de Gaulle died peacefully at the age of 80, sitting in his armchair watching a sentimental television serial called "Nanou".

## 25. Ecuador 1960 to 1963

### A textbook of dirty tricks

If the *Guinness Book of World Records* included a category for "cynicism", one could suggest the CIA's creation of "leftist" organizations which condemned poverty, disease, illiteracy, capitalism, and the United States in order to attract committed militants and their money away from legitimate leftist organizations.

The tiny nation of Ecuador in the early 1960s was, as it remains today, a classic of banana-republic underdevelopment; virtually at the bottom of the economic heap in South America; a society in which one percent of the population received an income comparable to United States upper-class standards, while two-thirds of the people had an average family income of about \$10 per month — people simply outside the money economy, with little social integration or participation in the national life; a tale told many times in Latin America.

In September 1960, a new government headed by José María Velasco Ibarra came to power. Velasco had won a decisive electoral victory, running on a vaguely liberal, populist, something-for-everyone platform. He was no Fidel Castro, he was not even a socialist, but he earned the wrath of the US State Department and the CIA by his unyielding opposition to the two stated priorities of American policy in Ecuador: breaking relations with Cuba, and clamping down hard on activists of the Communist Party and those to their left.

Over the next three years, in pursuit of those goals, the CIA left as little as possible to chance. A veritable text book on covert subversion techniques unfolded. In its pages could be found the following, based upon the recollections of Philip Agee, the CIA officer who spent this period in Ecuador.<sup>1</sup>

Almost all political organizations of significance, from the far left to the far right, were infiltrated, often at the highest levels. Amongst other reasons, the left was infiltrated to channel young radicals away from support to Cuba and from anti-Americanism; the right, to instigate and co-ordinate activities along the lines of CIA priorities. If, at a point in time, there was no organization that appeared well-suited to serve a particular need, then one would be created.

Or a new group of "concerned citizens" would appear, fronted with noted personalities, which might place a series of notices in leading newspapers denouncing the penetration of the government by the extreme left and demanding a break with Cuba. Or one of the noted personalities would deliver a speech prepared by the CIA, and then a newspaper editor would praise it, or a well-known columnist would do the same, both gentlemen being on the CIA payroll.

Some of these fronts had an actual existence; for others, even their existence was phoney. On one occasion, the CIA Officer who had created the non-existent "Ecuadorean Anti-Communist Front" was surprised to read in his morning paper that a real organization with that name had been founded. He changed the name of his organization to "Ecuadorean Anti-Communist Action".

Wooing the working class came in for special emphasis. An alphabet-soup of labour organizations, sometimes hardly more than names on stationery, were created, altered, combined, liquidated, and new ones created again, in an almost frenzied attempt to find the right combination to compete with existing left-oriented unions and take national leadership away from them. Union leaders were invited to attend various classes conducted by the CIA in Ecuador or in the United States, all expenses paid, in order to impart to them the dangers of communism to the union movement and to select potential agents.

This effort was not without its irony either. CIA agents would sometimes jealously vie with each other for the best positions in these CIA-created labour organizations; and at times Ecuadorean organizations would meet in "international conferences" with CIA labour fronts from other countries, with almost all of the participants blissfully unaware of what was actually going on.

In Ecuador, as throughout most of Latin America, the Agency planted phoney anti-communist news items in co-operating newspapers. These items would then be picked up by other CIA stations in Latin America and disseminated through a CIA-owned news agency, a CIA-owned radio station, or through countless journalists being paid on a piece-work basis, in addition to the item being picked up unwittingly by other media, including those in the United States. Anti-communist propaganda and news distortion (often of the most far-fetched variety) written in CIA offices would also appear in Latin American newspapers as unsigned editorials of the papers themselves.

In virtually every department of the Ecuadorean government could be found men occupying positions, high and low, who collaborated with the CIA, for money as well as, perhaps, their own particular motivation. At one point, the Agency could count amongst this number the men who were second and third in power in the country.

These government agents would receive the benefits of information obtained by the CIA through electronic eavesdropping or other means, enabling them to gain prestige and promotion, or consolidate their current position in the rough-and-tumble of Ecuadorean politics. A high-ranking minister of leftist tendencies, on the other hand, would be the target of a steady stream of propaganda from any or all sources in the CIA arsenal; staged demonstrations against him would further increase the pressure on the president to replace him.

The Postmaster-General, along with other post office employees, all members in good standing of the CIA Payroll Club, regularly sent mail arriving from Cuba and the Soviet bloc to the Agency for its perusal, while the Director of Immigration and customs officials kept the Agency posted on who went to or came from Cuba. When a particularly suitable target returned from Cuba, he would be searched at the airport and documents prepared by the CIA would be "found" on him. These documents, publicized as much as possible, might include instructions on "how to intensify hatred between classes", or some provocative language designed to cause a split in Communist Party ranks; generally, the documents "verified" the worst fears of the public about communist plans to take over Ecuador under the masterminding of Cuba or the Soviet Union; at the same time, perhaps, implicating an important Ecuadorean leftist whose head the Agency was after. Similar revelations, staged by CIA stations elsewhere in Latin America, would be publicized in Ecuador as a warning that Ecuador might be next.

Agency financing of conservative groups in a quasi-religious campaign against Cuba and "atheistic communism" helped to seriously weaken President Velasco's power among the poor, primarily Indians, who had voted overwhelmingly for him, but who were even more deeply committed to their religion. If the CIA wished to know how the president was reacting to this campaign it need

only turn to his physician, its agent, Dr Felipe Ovalle, who would report that his patient was feeling considerable strain as a result.

CIA agents would bomb churches or right-wing organizations and make it appear to be the work of leftists. They would march in left-wing parades displaying signs and shouting slogans of a very provocative anti-military nature, designed to antagonize the armed forces and hasten a coup.

During the election campaign, on 19 March 1960, two senior colonels who were the CIA's main liaison agents within the National Police had participated in a riot aimed at disrupting a Velasco demonstration. CIA officer Bob Weatherwax had been in the forefront directing the police during the riot in which five Velasco supporters were killed and many wounded. When Velasco took office, he had the two colonels arrested and Weatherwax was asked to leave the country.

All these CIA-supported activities were carried out without the knowledge of the American Ambassador. When the Cuban Embassy publicly charged the Agency with involvement in various anti-Cuban activities, the American Ambassador issued a statement that "had everyone in the [CIA] station smiling." Stated the Ambassador: "The only agents in Ecuador who are paid by the United States are the technicians invited by the Ecuadorean government to contribute to raising the living standards of the Ecuadorean people."

Finally, in November 1961, the military acted. Velasco was forced to resign and was replaced by Vice-President Carlos Julio Arosemana. There were at this time two prime candidates for the vice-presidency. One was the vice-president of the Senate, a CIA agent. The other was the rector of Central University, a political moderate. The day that Congress convened to make their choice, a notice appeared in a morning paper announcing support for the rector by the Communist Party and a militant leftist youth organization. The notice had been placed by a columnist for the newspaper who was the principal propaganda agent for the CIA's Quito station. The rector was compromised rather badly, the denials came too late, and the CIA man won. His Agency salary was increased from \$700 to \$1,000 a month.

Arosemana soon proved no more acceptable to the CIA than Velasco. All operations continued, particularly the campaign to break relations with Cuba, which Arosemana steadfastly refused to do. The deadlock was broken in March 1962 when a military garrison, led by Col. Aurelio Naranjo, gave Arosemana 72 hours to send the Cubans packing and fire the leftist Minister of Labour. (There is no need to point out here who Naranjo's financial benefactor was.) Arosemana complied with the ultimatum, booting out the Czech and Polish delegations as well at the behest of the new cabinet which had been forced upon him.

At the CIA station in Quito there was a champagne victory celebration. Elsewhere in Ecuador, angry, desperate people took to arms. But on this occasion, like others, it amounted to naught . . . a small band of people, poorly armed and trained, infiltrated by agents, their every move known in advance — confronted by a battalion of paratroopers, superbly armed and trained by the United States. That was in the field. In press reports, the small band grew to

hundreds; armed not only to the teeth, but with weapons from "outside the country" (read Cuba), and the whole operation very carefully planned at the Communist Party Congress the month before.

On 11 July 1963 the Presidential Palace in Quito was surrounded by tanks and troops. Arosemana was out, a junta was in. Their first act was to outlaw communism; "communists" and other "extreme" leftists were rounded up and jailed, the arrests campaign being facilitated by data from the CIA's Subversive Control Watch List (standard at many Agency stations);\* civil liberties were suspended; the 1964 elections cancelled; another tale told many times in Latin America.

And during these three years, what were the American people told about this witch's brew of covert actions carried out, supposedly, in their name? Very little, if anything, if the *New York Times* is any index. Not once during the entire period, up to and including the coup, was any indication given in any article or editorial on Ecuador that the CIA or any other arm of the US government had ever played any role whatever in any event which had ever occurred in that country. This is the way the writings read even if one looks back at them with the advantage of hindsight and reads between the lines.

There is a solitary exception. Following the coup, we find a tiny announcement on the very bottom of page 20 that Havana radio had accused the United States of instigating the military takeover.<sup>2</sup> The Cuban government had been making public charges about American activities in Ecuador regularly, but this was the first one to make the *New York Times*. The question must be asked: Why were these charges deemed unworthy of reporting or comment, let alone investigation?

## 26. The Congo 1960 to 1964 The assassination of Patrice Lumumba

Within days of its independence from Belgium on 30 June 1960, the land long known as the Belgian Congo, and later as Zaire, was engulfed in strife and chaos as multiple individuals, tribes and political groups struggled for dominance. For

\* This list would include not only the subject's name, but the names and addresses of his relatives and friends and the places he frequented — anything to aid in tracking him down when the time came.

the next several years the world press chronicled the train of Congolese governments, the endless confusion of personalities and conspiracies, exotic place names like Stanleyville and Leopoldville, stories of white mercenaries and European hostages, the brutality and the violence from all quarters with its racist overtones.

Into this disorder the Western powers were "naturally" drawn, principally Belgium to protect its vast mineral investments, and the United States, mindful of the fabulous mineral resources as well, and obsessed, as usual, with fighting "communism".

Successive American administrations of Eisenhower, Kennedy and Johnson, looking through cold-war binoculars perceived an East-West battleground. The CIA station in the Congo cabled Washington in August that "Embassy and station believe Congo experiencing classic communist effort [to] takeover government."<sup>1</sup> And CIA Director Allen Dulles cabled a warning of a "... communist takeover of the Congo with disastrous consequences... for the interests of the free world..."<sup>2</sup> At the same time, Dulles authorized a crash-programme fund of up to \$100,000 to replace the existing government of Patrice Lumumba with a "pro-western group".<sup>3</sup>

In actuality the lines were never so sharply drawn, although the Soviet Union at times seemed caught up in the same cold-war "logic".

Patrice Lumumba was the most prominent of the handful of leftist-sounding leaders of the time, the Congo's first prime minister, who called for the nation's economic as well as political liberation and did not shy away from contact with socialist countries. When the United States and the United Nations refused to supply him with transport for his troops to put down the secession in Katanga province, Lumumba turned to the Soviet Union for aid, and received it.<sup>4</sup>

It is entirely inconclusive, however, what radical convictions and perceptions lay behind the rhetoric of the flamboyant Lumumba (a man who "played with Marxist verbiage", wrote a senior State Department official)<sup>5</sup> for he lasted but two months in office before being deposed; a step taken by President Joseph Kasavubu, with the CIA's encouragement,<sup>6</sup> "despite the strong support for Lumumba in the Congolese Parliament."<sup>7</sup>

During the early 1960s, according to a highly-placed CIA officer, the Agency "regularly bought and sold Congolese politicians".<sup>8</sup> It would be surprising if Kasavubu, the only high official to hold power continuously throughout this entire period, was not one of the recipients.

American authorities were apprehensive about even a Lumumba out of office: his "talents and dynamism appear [to be the] overriding factor in reestablishing his position each time it seems half lost"... "Lumumba was a spellbinding orator with the ability to stir masses of people to action"... "if he... started to talk to a battalion of the Congolese Army he probably would have had them in the palm of his hand in five minutes" were their succinct comments.<sup>9</sup>

In September, the CIA sent one of its scientists, Joseph Scheider, to the Congo carrying "lethal biological material" (a virus) specifically intended for use in Lumumba's assassination. The virus, which was supposed to produce a

fatal disease indigenous to the Congo area of Africa, was transported via diplomatic pouch.<sup>10</sup>

In 1975, the US Senate committee which investigated intelligence activities ("The Church Committee") went on record with the conclusion that Allen Dulles had ordered Lumumba's assassination as "an urgent and prime objective" (Dulles' words).<sup>11</sup> After hearing the testimony of several officials who believed that the order to kill the African leader had emanated originally from President Eisenhower, the committee decided that there was a "reasonable inference" that this was indeed the case.<sup>12</sup>

As matters evolved in the Congo, the virus was never used. The committee observed, however, that the CIA station in Leopoldville "continued to maintain close contact with Congolese who expressed a desire to assassinate Lumumba. CIA officers encouraged and offered to aid these Congolese in their efforts against Lumumba, although there is no evidence that aid was ever provided for the specific purpose of assassination."<sup>13</sup>

Fearing for his life, Lumumba was on the run until he was taken into custody on 1 December 1960 by troops of Joseph Mobutu, the Army strongman who had taken over the government after Lumumba had been ousted. A 28 November CIA cable indicates that the Agency was involved in tracking down the charismatic Congo leader. The cable spoke of the CIA station working with the Congolese government to get the roads blocked and troops alerted to close a possible escape route of Lumumba's.<sup>14</sup>

Mobutu — whom author and CIA-confidant Andrew Tully describes as having been "discovered" by the CIA<sup>15</sup> — kept Lumumba prisoner until 17 January 1961, the date of his murder as determined by the United Nations Commission of Investigation. On that day, Mobutu transferred Lumumba into the hands of Moïse Tshombe of Katanga province, Lumumba's bitter enemy.

In 1978, former CIA Africa specialist John Stockwell related in his book how a ranking Agency officer had told him of driving around with Lumumba's body in the trunk of his car, "trying to decide what to do with it".<sup>16</sup> What he did do with it has not yet been made public.

During the period of Lumumba's imprisonment, US diplomats in the Congo were pursuing a policy of "deploring" his beatings and trying to secure "humane treatment" for him, albeit due to "considerations of international opinion and not from tender feelings toward him".<sup>17</sup> The immediate and the long-term effect of Lumumba's murder was to make him the martyr and symbol all over Africa and elsewhere in the Third World which such American officials had feared.

Less than two weeks after independence, the copper-rich province of Katanga under Moïse Tshombe announced that it was seceding from the rest of the Congo. The fighting which quickly erupted as a consequence of this development revealed the perplexity of American-policy-makers when treading in terrain that lacked a clearcut "communist" enemy.

On the one hand, the Eisenhower administration officially opposed the secession and supported the military steps undertaken by the United Nations to end it. John F. Kennedy, who came into power on 20 January 1961, echoed this policy. On the other hand, Tshombe had outspoken support in the American Congress. Sentiment amongst officials at the State Department and the White House mirrored this division.<sup>18</sup>

Similarly, US Air Force C-130s were flying Congolese troops and supplies against the Katangese rebels; at the same time, however, the CIA and its covert colleagues in the Pentagon put together an air armada of heavy transport aircraft, along with mercenary units, to aid the very same rebels.<sup>19</sup>

Soviet policy in the Congo reflected a touch of schizophrenia as well. The Soviets supported Lumumba in his drive to end the Katanga secession, but after Lumumba was out of the picture, they condemned the United States and the United Nations for pursuing the same goal. The Russians accused the UN of following a "colonialist" line, and the US for using the UN as a means of getting a military foot-in-the-door of the Congo.

American foreign-policy makers were more in unison when another potential "communist", Antoine Gizenga, achieved a measure of prominence in the continuous, bloody musical-chairs game of Congolese politics. Gizenga, though vice-premier in the central government in Leopoldville, was the leader of a rebel force which had set up a regime in the Stanleyville area which it proclaimed as the legitimate government of the entire Congo. He fancied himself the political and spiritual successor to Lumumba.

The Soviet Union may have believed him, for apparently they were sending him arms and money, using Sudan, which borders the Congo on the north, as a conduit. When the CIA learned that a Czech ship was bound for Sudan with a cargo of guns disguised as Red Cross packages for refugee relief in the Congo, the Agency turned to its most practiced art, bribery, to persuade a crane operator to let one of the crates drop upon arrival. On that day, the dockside was suddenly covered with the new Soviet Kalashnikov rifles, adding to the enlightenment of Sudanese port officials.

Through an equally clever ploy at the Khartoum (Sudan) airport, the CIA managed to separate a Congolese courier from his suitcase of Soviet money destined for Gizenga.<sup>20</sup>

The State Department, meanwhile, was, in its own words, urging Adoula [the new prime minister] to . . . dismiss Gizenga and declare him in rebellion against the national government so that police action can now be taken against him. We are also urging the U.N. to take military action to break his rebellion . . . We are making every effort to keep Gizenga isolated from

\* This marked at least the third instance of the CIA in military opposition to another arm of the US Government: Costa Rica in 1955 (cf. this chapter); and Burma in 1970, if not also earlier, when the US military aided the Burmese air force to mount strikes against Burmese rebels, while the CIA was assisting the rebels from its operation in Laos.

potential domestic and foreign support . . . We have taken care to insure that this [US] aid has been channelled through the central government in order to provide the economic incentive to encourage support for that government.<sup>21</sup>

In January 1962, United Nations forces with strong American backing ousted Gizenga and his followers from Stanleyville, and a year later forced Tshombe to end his secession in Katanga. These actions were carried out in the name of "uniting the Congo", as if this were a matter to be decided by other than Congolese. In any event, the operations served only to temporarily slow down the dreary procession of changing leaders, attempted coups, autonomous armies, shifting alliances, and rebellions.

Shortly after the UN actions, Allen Dulles informed a television audience that the United States had "overrated the danger" of Soviet involvement . . . "it looked as though they were going to make a serious attempt at takeover in the Belgian Congo, well it did not work out that way at all."<sup>22</sup>

Nonetheless, by the middle of 1964, when rebellion was more widespread and furious than ever and the collapse of the central government appeared as a real possibility, the United States was pouring in a prodigious amount of military aid to the Leopoldville regime, reaching, by one estimate, "a million dollars a day for a sustained period."<sup>23</sup>

The government was now headed by none other than Moise Tshombe, a man called "Africa's most unpopular African" for his widely-recognized role in the murder of the popular Lumumba and for his use of white mercenaries, many of them South Africans and Rhodesians, during his secession attempt in Katanga. Tshombe defended the latter action by explaining that his troops would not fight without white officers.<sup>24</sup>

In addition to providing arms and planes, the United States dispatched some 200 military personnel to the Congo to train government troops,<sup>25</sup> while Congolese officers were undergoing training at Fort Knox, Kentucky in what the Defense Department at the time called techniques for protecting "legally constituted governments against subversion and domestic disorder".<sup>26</sup> Yet Lumumba's government had been at least as "legally constituted" as Tshombe's. Lumumba had been chosen prime minister by the newly-elected National Assembly. Tshombe was appointed to his office by President Kasavubu.

Tshombe once again called upon his white mercenary army, numbering 400-500 men, and the CIA called upon its own mercenaries as well, a band which included Americans. Cuban-exile veterans of the Bay of Pigs, Rhodesians, and South Africans, the latter having been recruited with the help of the South African government. "Bringing in our own animals" was the way one CIA operative described the operation. The Agency's pilots carried out regular bombing and strafing missions against the insurgents, although some of the Cubans were reported to be troubled at being ordered to make indiscriminate attacks upon civilians.<sup>27</sup> Looking back at the affair in 1966, the *New York Times* credited the CIA with having created "an instant air force" in the Congo.<sup>28</sup>

When China protested to the United States about the use of American pilots in the Congo, the State Department issued an explicit denial, then publicly reversed itself, but insisted that the Americans were flying "under contract with the Congolese government". The next day, the Department said that the flights would stop, after having obtained assurances from "other arms of the [U.S.] Government", although it still held to the position that the matter was one between the Congolese government and civilian individuals who were not violating American law.<sup>29</sup>

Three weeks later, the Soviet Union lodged an official protest at the United Nations about the air operations being carried out by the United States. By this time, the CIA reportedly was using only Cuban pilots.<sup>30</sup>

The Congolese against whom this array of military might was brought to bear were a coalition of forces. Some of the leading figures had spent time in Eastern Europe, the Soviet Union or China and were receiving token amounts of arms and instruction from those quarters; but they were never in the Communist camp any more than the countless Third Worlders who have gone to university in the United States and have been courted afterwards are necessarily in the Western/capitalist camp. (This does not hold for professional military officers who, unlike students, are a particularly homogeneous group — conservative, authoritarian, and anti-Communist.)

Africa scholar M. Crawford Young has observed that amongst the coalition leadership, "The destruction of the [Leopoldville] regime, a vigorous reassertion of Congolese control over its own destiny, and a vague socialist commitment were recurrent themes. But at bottom it appeared far more a frame of mind and a style of expression, than an interrelated set of ideas."<sup>31</sup> The rebels had no revolutionary programme they could, or did, proclaim.

Co-existing with this element within the coalition were currents of various esoteric churches, messianic sects, witch-finding movements, and other occult inspirations (many believed that the magic of their witch doctors would protect them against bullets), as well as plain opportunists. The insurgents were further divided along tribal lines and were rent by debilitating factionalism. No single group or belief could dominate.<sup>32</sup>

"Rebel success created the image of unified purpose and revolutionary promise," wrote Young. "Only in its subsequent phase of decay and disintegration" did the coalition's "dramatic lack of cohesion" and "disparity in purpose and perception" become fully evident.<sup>33</sup>

In the coalition-controlled area of Stanleyville, between 2,000 and 3,000 white foreigners found themselves trapped by the war. Rebel leader Christopher Gbenye conditioned their safe release upon various military concessions, principally a cessation of American bombing, but negotiations failed to produce an agreement.<sup>34</sup>

Instead, on 24 November 1964, the United States and Belgium staged a dramatic rescue mission in which over 500 Belgian paratroopers were dropped at dawn into Stanleyville from American transport planes. Much chaos followed, and the reports are conflicting, but it appears that more than 2,000 hostages were rescued, in the process of which the fleeing rebels massacred

about 100 others and dragged several hundred more into the bush.

American and Belgian officials took great pains to emphasize the purely "humanitarian" purpose of the mission. However, the rescuers simultaneously executed a key military manoeuvre when they "seized the strategic points of the city and coordinated their operation with the advancing columns of Tshombe's mercenary army that was moving swiftly towards the city."<sup>35</sup> Moreover, in the process of the rescue, the rescuers killed dozens of rebels and did nothing to curtail Tshombe's troops when they reached Stanleyville and began an "orgy of looting and killing".<sup>36</sup>

Tshombe may have provided a reminder of the larger-than-humanitarian stake at hand in the Congo when, in the flush of the day's success, he talked openly with a correspondent of *The Times* of London who reported that Tshombe "was confident that the fall of Stanleyville would give a new impetus to the economy and encourage investors. It would reinforce a big development plan announced this morning in collaboration with the United States, Britain and West Germany."<sup>37</sup>

The collapse of the rebels' stronghold in Stanleyville marked the beginning of the end for their cause. By spring 1965 their fortune was in sharp decline, and the arrival of about 100 Cuban revolutionaries, amongst whom was Che Guevara himself, had no known effect upon the course of events. Several months later, Guevara returned to Cuba in disgust at the low level of revolutionary zeal exhibited by the Congolese guerrillas and the local populace.<sup>38</sup>

The concluding tune for the musical chairs was played in November, when Joseph Mobutu overthrew Tshombe and Kasavubu. Mobutu, later to adopt the name Mobutu Sese Seko, has ruled with a heavy dictatorial hand ever since.

In the final analysis, it mattered precious little to the interests of the US government whether the forces it had helped defeat were really "communist" or not, by whatever definition. The working premise was that there was now fixed in power, over a more-or-less unified Congo, a man who would be more cooperative with the CIA in its African adventures and with Western capital, and less accessible to the socialist bloc, than the likes of Lumumba, Gizenga, et al. The CIA has chalked this one up as a victory.

What the people of the Congo (now Zaire) have won is not clear. Under Mobutu, terror and repression are facts of daily life, civil liberties and other human rights are markedly absent. The country remains one of the poorest to be found anywhere despite its vast natural riches. Mobutu, however, is reputed to be one of the richest heads of state in the world. (See Zaire chapter.)

William Atwood, US Ambassador to Kenya in 1964-65, who played a part in the hostage negotiations, also saw the US role in the Congo in a positive light. Bemoaning African suspicions toward American motives there, he wrote: "it was hard to convince people that we had provided the Congo with \$420 million in aid since independence just to prevent chaos; they couldn't believe any country could be that altruistic."<sup>39</sup>

Atwood's comment is easier to understand when one realizes that the word "chaos" has long been commonly used by American officials to refer to a situation over which the United States has insufficient control to assure that someone distinctly pro-Western will remain in, or come to, power. When President Eisenhower, for example, decided to send troops into Lebanon in 1958, he saw it as a move, he later wrote, "to stop the trend towards chaos".<sup>40</sup>

## 27. Brazil 1961 to 1964 Introducing the marvellous new world of death squads

When the leading members of the US diplomatic mission in Brazil held a meeting one day in March 1964, they arrived at the consensus that President João Goulart's support of social and economic reforms was a contrived and thinly veiled vehicle to seize dictatorial power.<sup>1</sup>

The American Ambassador, Lincoln Gordon, informed the State Department that "a desperate lunge [by Goulart] for totalitarian power might be made at any time."<sup>2</sup>

The army chief of staff, General Humberto de Alencar Castelo (or Castello) Branco, provided the American Embassy with a memorandum in which he stated his fear that Goulart was seeking to close down Congress and initiate a dictatorship.<sup>3</sup>

Within a week after the expression of these sentiments, the Brazilian military, with Castelo Branco at its head, overthrew the constitutional government of President Goulart, the culmination of a conspiratorial process in which the American Embassy had been intimately involved. The military then proceeded to install and maintain for two decades one of the most brutal dictatorships in all of South America.

What are we to make of all this? The idea that men of rank and power lie to the public is commonplace, not worthy of debate. But do they as readily lie to each other? Is their need to rationalize their misdeeds so great that they provide each other a moral shoulder to lean on? "Men use thoughts only to justify their wrongdoings," wrote Voltaire, "and speech only to conceal their thoughts."

The actual American motivation in supporting the coup was something rather less heroic than preserving democracy, even mundane as such matters go. American opposition to Goulart, who became president in August 1961, rested upon a familiar catalogue of complaints:

US Defense Secretary Robert McNamara questioned Brazil's neutral stand in foreign policy. The Brazilian Ambassador in Washington, Roberto Campos, responded that "neutrality" was an inadequate term and explained that "what was involved was really a deep urge of the Brazilian people to assert their personality in world affairs."<sup>4</sup>

American officials did not approve of some of the members of Goulart's cabinet, and said so. Ambassador Campos pointed out to them that it was "quite inappropriate" for the United States "to try to influence the composition of the cabinet."<sup>5</sup>

Attorney-General Robert Kennedy met with Goulart and expressed his uneasiness about the Brazilian president allowing communists ("communists") to hold positions in government agencies. (Bobby was presumably acting on the old and very deep-seated American belief that once you welcome one or two communists into your parlour, they take over the whole house and sign the deed over to Moscow.) Goulart did not see this as a danger. He replied that he was in full control of the situation, later remarking to Campos that it was as if he had been told that he had no capacity for judging the men around him.<sup>6</sup>

The American Defense Attaché in Brazil, Col. Vernon Walters, reported that Goulart showed favouritism towards "ultra-nationalist" military officers over "pro-U.S." officers. Goulart saw it as promoting those officers who appeared to be most loyal to his government. He was, as it happens, very concerned about American-encouraged military coups and said so explicitly to President Kennedy.<sup>7</sup>

Goulart considered purchasing helicopters from Poland because Washington was delaying on his request to purchase them from the United States. Ambassador Gordon told him that he "could not expect the United States to like it".<sup>8</sup>

The Goulart administration, moreover, passed a law limiting the amount of profits multinationals could transmit out of the country, and a subsidiary of IIT was nationalized. Compensation for the takeover was slow in coming because of Brazil's precarious financial position, but these were the only actions of significance taken against US corporate interests.

Inextricably woven into all these complaints, yet at the same time standing apart, was Washington's dismay with Brazil's "drift to the left" . . . the communist/leftist influence in the labour movement . . . leftist "infiltration" wherever one looked . . . "anti-Americanism" among students and others (the American Consul General in Sao Paulo suggested to the State Department that the United States "found competing student organizations") . . . the general erosion of "U.S. influence and the power of people and groups friendly to the United States"<sup>9</sup> . . . one might go so far as to suggest that Washington officials felt unloved, were it not for the fact that the coup, as they well knew from much past experience, could result only in intensified anti-Americanism all over Latin America.

Goulart's predecessor, Janio da Silva Quadros, had also irritated Washington. "Why should the United States trade with Russia and her satellites but insist that Brazil trade only with the United States?" he asked, and proceeded to

negotiate with the Soviet Union and other Communist countries to (re)establish diplomatic and commercial relations. He was, in a word, independent.<sup>10</sup>

Quadros was also more-or-less a conservative who clamped down hard on unions, sent federal troops to the north-east hunger dens to squash protest, and jailed disobedient students.<sup>11</sup> But the American Ambassador at the time, John Moors Cabot, saw fit to question Brazil's taking part in a meeting of "uncommitted" (non-aligned) nations. "Brazil has signed various obligations with the United States and American nations," he said. "I am sure Brazil is not going to forget her obligations . . . It is committed. It is a fact. Brazil can uncommit itself if it wants."<sup>12</sup>

In early 1961, shortly after Quadros took office, he was visited by Adolf Berle, Jr., President Kennedy's adviser on Latin American affairs and formerly ambassador to Brazil. Berle had come as Kennedy's special envoy to solicit Quadros' backing for the impending Bay of Pigs invasion. Ambassador Cabot was present and some years later described the meeting to author Peter Bell. Bell has written:

Ambassador Cabot remembers a 'stormy conversation' in which Berle stated the United States had \$500 million in reserve for Brazil and in effect 'offered it as a bribe' for Brazilian cooperation . . . Quadros became 'visibly irritated' after Berle refused to heed his third 'no'. No Brazilian official was at the airport the next day to see the envoy off.<sup>13</sup>

Quadros, who had been elected by a record margin, was, like Goulart, accused of seeking to set up a dictatorship because he sought to put teeth into measures unpopular with the oligarchy, the military, and/or the United States, as well as pursuing a "pro-communist" foreign policy. After but seven months in office he suddenly resigned, reportedly under military pressure, if not outright threat. In his letter of resignation, he blamed his predicament on "reactionaries" and "the ambitions of groups of individuals, some of whom are foreigners . . . the terrible forces that arose against me."<sup>14</sup> A few months later, Quadros reappeared, to deliver a speech in which he named Berle, Cabot, and US Treasury Secretary Douglas Dillon as being among those who had contributed to his downfall. Dillon, he said, sought to mix foreign policy with Brazil's needs for foreign credits.<sup>15</sup> (Both Berle and Cabot had been advocates of the 1954 overthrow of Guatemalan President Arbenz, whose sins, in Washington's eyes, were much the same as those Goulart was now guilty of.)<sup>16</sup> At the same time, Quadros announced his intention to lead a "people's crusade" against the "reactionaries, the corrupt and the Communists".<sup>17</sup>

As Quadros' vice president, Goulart succeeded to the presidency in August 1961 despite a virtual coup and civil war initiated by segments of the military to block him because he was seen as some sort of dangerous radical. Only the intervention of loyalist military units and other supporters of the constitutional process allowed Goulart to take office.<sup>18</sup> The military opposition to Goulart arose, it should be noted, before he had the opportunity to exhibit his alleged tendencies toward dictatorship. Indeed, as early as 1954, the military had demonstrated its antipathy toward him by forcing President Vargas to fire him

from his position as Minister of Labor.<sup>19</sup> The American doubts about Goulart also predated his presidency. In 1960, when Goulart was elected vice president, "concern at the State Department and the Pentagon turned to panic" according to an American official who served in Brazil.<sup>20</sup>

Goulart tried to continue Quadros' independent foreign policy. Speaking before the US Congress in April 1962, he affirmed Brazil's right to take its own stand on some of the cold-war issues. He declared that Brazil identified itself "with the democratic principles which unite the peoples of the West", but was "not part of any politico-military bloc".<sup>21</sup> His government went ahead with resumption of relations with socialist countries, and at a meeting of the Organization of American States in December 1961 Brazil abstained on a vote to hold a special session aimed at discussing "the Cuban problem", and stood strongly opposed to sanctions against the Castro government.<sup>22</sup>

*Time* magazine, in common with most US media, had (has) a difficult time understanding the concept and practice of independence amongst America's allies. In November 1961, the magazine wrote that Brazil's domestic politics were "confused" and that the country was "also adrift in foreign affairs. Goulart is trying to play the old Quadros game of international 'independence', which means wooing the East while panhandling from the West." *Time* was critical of Goulart in that he had sought an invitation to visit Washington and on the same day he received it he "called in Communist Poland's visiting Foreign Minister, Adam Rapacki, [and] awarded him the Order of the Southern Cross — the same decoration that Quadros hung on Cuba's Marxist mastermind, Che Guevara."<sup>23</sup>

Former *Time* editor and Latin America correspondent, John Gerassi, commented that every visiting foreign dignitary received this medal, the *Cruzeiro do Sul*, as part of protocol. He added:

Apparently *Time* thinks that any President who wants to visit us must necessarily hate our enemies as a consequence, and is "confused" whenever this does not occur. But, of course, *Time* magazine is so unused to the word 'independent' that an independent foreign policy must be confusing indeed. In South America, where everyone would like to follow an independent foreign policy but where only Brazil has, at times, the courage, no one was confused.<sup>24</sup>

Goulart, a millionaire land-owner and a Catholic who wore a medal of the Virgin around his neck,<sup>25</sup> was no more a communist than was Quadros, and he strongly supported the United States during the "Cuban Missile Crisis" of October 1962. He offered Gordon a toast "To the Yankee Victory!",<sup>26</sup> perhaps unaware that only three weeks earlier, during federal and state elections in Brazil, CIA money had been liberally expended in support of anti-Goulart candidates. Former CIA officer Philip Agee states that the Agency spent between 12 and 20 million dollars on behalf of hundreds of candidates.<sup>27</sup> Lincoln Gordon says the funding came to no more than five million.<sup>28</sup> In addition to the direct campaign contributions, the Agency dipped into its bag of dirty tricks to torment the campaigns of leftist candidates,<sup>29</sup> and the Agency for

International Development (AID), at the express request of President Kennedy, allocated monies to projects aimed at benefiting chosen gubernatorial candidates.<sup>30</sup> (While Goulart was president, no new US economic assistance was given to the central government, while regional assistance was provided on a markedly ideological basis. When the military took power, this pattern was sharply altered.)<sup>31</sup>

Agee adds that the CIA carried out a consistent propaganda campaign against Goulart which dated from at least the 1962 election operation and which included the financing of mass urban demonstrations, "proving the old themes of God, country, family and liberty to be as effective as ever" in undermining a government.<sup>32</sup>

CIA money also found its way to a chain of right-wing newspapers, *Diarias Associadas*, to promote anti-communism; to the distribution of 50 thousand books of similar politics to high school and college students; to the formation of women's groups with their special Latin mother's emphasis on the godlessness of the communist enemy. The women and other CIA operatives also went into the rumour-mongering business, spreading stories about outrages Goulart and his cronies were supposed to be planning, such as altering the constitution so as to extend his term, and gossip about Goulart being a cuckold and a wife-beater.<sup>33</sup>

The intraservice confrontation which had attended Goulart's accession to power apparently kept a rein on coup-minded officers until 1963. In March of that year the CIA informed Washington, but not Goulart, of a plot by conservative officers.<sup>34</sup> During the course of the following year, the plots thickened. Brazilian military officers could not abide by Goulart's attempts at populist social reforms, though his programme was timid, his rhetoric generally mild, and his actions seldom matched either. (He himself pointed out that General Douglas MacArthur had carried out a more radical distribution of land in Japan after the Second World War than anything planned by the Brazilian Government.) The military men were particularly incensed at Goulart's support of a weakening of military discipline and his attempts to build up a following among non-commissioned officers.<sup>35</sup> This the president was genuinely serious about because of his "paranoia" about a coup.

Goulart's wooing of NCO's and his appeals to the population over the heads of a hostile congress and state governors (something Ronald Reagan has done on several occasions) were the kind of tactics his enemies chose to label as dictatorial.

In early 1964, disclosed *Fortune* magazine after the coup, an emissary was sent by some of the military plotters "to ask U.S. Ambassador Lincoln Gordon back the U.S. position would be if civil war broke out". The emissary "reported what that Gordon was cautious and diplomatic, but he left the impression that if the [plotters] could hold out for forty-eight hours they would get U.S. recognition and help."<sup>36</sup>

The primary American contact with the conspirators was Defense Attaché Vernon Walters who arrived in Brazil after having been apprised that President

Kennedy would not be averse to the overthrow of João Goulart.<sup>37</sup> Walters, who later became Deputy Director of the CIA, had an intimacy with leading Brazilian military officers, particularly General Castelo Branco, going back to World War Two when Walters had served as interpreter for the Brazilian Expeditionary Force then fighting in Italy with the Allies. Brazil was the only Latin American country to send ground combat troops to the war, and it allowed the United States to build huge aircraft staging bases on its territory.<sup>38</sup> The relationship between US and Brazilian officers was continued and enhanced after the war by the creation of the Higher War College (*Escola Superior de Guerra*) in Rio de Janeiro in 1949. Latin America historian Thomas E. Skidmore has observed:

Under the U.S.-Brazilian military agreements of the early 1950s, the U.S. Army received exclusive rights to render assistance in the organization and operation of the college, which had been modeled on the National War College in Washington. In view of the fact that the Brazilian War College became a rallying point for leading military opponents of civilian populist politicians, it would be worth examining the extent to which the strongly anti-Communist ideology — bordering on an anti-political attitude — [of certain officers] was reinforced (or moderated?) by their frequent contacts with United States officers.<sup>39</sup>

There was, moreover, the ongoing US Military Assistance Program which Ambassador Gordon described as a “major vehicle for establishing close relationships with personnel of the armed forces” and “a highly important factor in influencing [the Brazilian] military to be pro-US.”<sup>40</sup>

A week before the coup, Castelo Branco, who emerged as the leader of the conspirators, gave Walters a copy of a paper he had written which was in effect a justification for a military coup, another variation on the theme of upholding the constitution by preventing Goulart from instituting a dictatorship.<sup>41</sup>

To Lincoln Gordon and other American officials, civil war appeared a real possibility as the result of a coup attempt. As the scheduled day approached, contingency plans were set up.

A large quantity of petroleum would be sent to Brazil and made available to the insurgent officers, an especially vital commodity if Goulart supporters in the state oil union were to blow up or control the refineries.<sup>42</sup>

A US Navy task force would be dispatched to Brazilian coastal waters, the presence of which would deliver an obvious message to opponents of the coup.<sup>43</sup>

Arms and ammunition would be sent to Branco's forces to meet their fighting needs.<sup>44</sup>

Concerned that the coup attempt might be met by a general strike, Washington discussed with Gordon the possible need “for the U.S. to mount a large material program to assure the success of the takeover.”<sup>45</sup> The conspirators

\* From a cable sent by Gordon to Washington. In this and following quotations from cables, I have inserted missing articles and prepositions for the sake of readability.

had already requested economic aid from the United States, in the event of their success, to get the government and economy moving again, and had received a generally favourable response.<sup>46</sup>

At the same time, Gordon sent word to some anti-Goulart state governors emphasizing the necessity, from the American point of view, that the new regime have a claim to legitimacy. The Ambassador also met with former president Juscelino Kubitschek to urge him to take a stronger position against Goulart and to use his considerable influence to “swing a large congressional group and thereby influence the legitimacy issue”.<sup>47</sup>

Of the American contingency measures, indications are that it was the naval show of force — which, it turned out, included an aircraft carrier, destroyers, and guided missiles — which most encouraged the Brazilian military plotters or convinced those still wavering in their commitment.<sup>48</sup>

Another actor in the unfolding drama was the American Institute for Free Labor Development. The AIFLD came formally into being in 1961 and was technically under the direction of the American labour movement (AFL-CIO), but was soon being funded almost exclusively by the US government (AID) and serving consistently as a CIA instrument in most countries of Latin America. In May 1963, the AIFLD founded the *Instituto Cultural Trabalho* in Brazil which, over the next few years, gave courses to more than 7,000 union leaders and members.<sup>49</sup> Other Brazilians went to the United States for training. When they returned to Brazil, said AIFLD executive William Doherty, some of them

became intimately involved in some of the clandestine operations of the revolution before it took place on April 1. What happened in Brazil on April 1 did not just happen — it was planned — and planned months in advance. Many of the trade union leaders — some of whom were actually trained in our institute — were involved in the revolution, and in the overthrow of the Goulart regime.<sup>50</sup>

Doherty did not spell out any details of the AIFLD role in the coup (or revolution as he called it), although *Reader's Digest* later reported that one of the AIFLD-trained labour leaders set up courses for communication workers in combating communism in the labour movement in Brazil, and “After every class he quietly warned key workers of coming trouble and urged them to keep communications going no matter what happened.”<sup>51</sup> Additionally, Richard Martinez, an unwitting CIA contract employee, who was sent to Brazil to work with the Agency's Post, Telegraph and Telephone Workers International (formerly Doherty's domain), has revealed that his field workers in Brazil burned down Communist Party headquarters at the time of the coup.<sup>52</sup>

The coup began on 31 March 1964 with the advance upon Rio of troops and tanks. Officers obtained the support of some units of enlisted men by telling them they were heading for the city to secure it against Goulart's enemies.<sup>53</sup> But at the main air force base pro-Goulart enlisted men, hearing of the move toward Rio, seized the base and put their officers under arrest. Indecision and cold feet intervened however, and what might have reversed the course of events instead came to nought.<sup>54</sup>

Here and there a scattering of workers went out on strike; several short-lived, impromptu demonstrations took place, but there was little else. A number of labour leaders and radicals were rounded up on the orders of certain state governors; those who were opposed to what was happening were not prepared for violent resistance; in one incident a group of students staged a protest — some charged up the stairs of an Army organization, but the guard fired into their midst, killing two of them and forcing the others to fall back.<sup>55</sup>

Most people counted on loyal armed forces to do their duty, or waited for the word from Goulart. Goulart, however, was unwilling to give the call for a civil war; he did not want to be responsible, he said, for bloodshed amongst Brazilians, and fled to Uruguay.<sup>56</sup>

Lincoln Gordon cabled Washington the good news, suggesting the “avoidance of a jubilant posture”. He described the coup as “a great victory for the free world”, adding, in a remark that might have had difficulty getting past the lips of even John Foster Dulles, that without the coup there could have been a “total loss to the West of all South American Republics”. Following a victory parade in Rio on 2 April by those pleased with the coup — a March of Family with God for Liberty — Gordon informed the State Department that the “only unfortunate note was the obviously limited participation in the march of the lower classes.”<sup>57</sup>

His cable work done, the former Harvard professor turned his attention back to trying to persuade the Brazilian Congress to bestow a seal of “legitimacy” upon the new government.<sup>58</sup>

Two years later, Gordon was to be questioned by a senator during hearings to consider his nomination as Secretary of State for Inter-American Affairs. “I am particularly concerned,” said the senator, “with the part you may have played, if any, in encouraging, promoting, or causing that overthrow.” Said Lincoln Gordon: “The answer to that, senator, is very simple. The movement which overthrew President Goulart was a purely, 100 percent — not 99.44 — but 100 percent purely Brazilian movement. Neither the American Embassy nor I personally played any part in the process whatsoever.”<sup>59</sup>

Gordon artfully combined fast talk with omission of certain facts of life about Brazilian politics — his summary of Goulart’s rise and fall made no mention at all of a key event: the military’s move to keep him from taking office in 1961 — to convince the assembled senators that Goulart was indeed seeking to set up a personal dictatorship.<sup>62</sup> Depending on the setting, either “saving Brazil from dictatorship” or “saving Brazil from communism” has been advanced as the rationale for what took place in 1964. (General Andrew O’Meara, head of the US Southern (Latin America) Command, had it both ways. He told a House

\* Dean Rusk, when asked about Cuban charges that the United States was behind the coup, responded: “Well, there is just not one iota of truth in this. It’s just not so in any way, shape, or form.”<sup>60</sup> Robert Kennedy’s view of the affair, stated to Gordon, was: “Well, Goulart got what was coming to him. Too bad he didn’t follow the advice we gave him when I was there.”<sup>61</sup>

committee that “The coming to power of the Castelo Branco government in Brazil last April saved that country from an immediate dictatorship which could only have been followed by Communist domination.”<sup>63</sup>

The rescue-from-communism position has been especially difficult to support, the problem being that the communists in Brazil did not, after all, do anything which the United States could point to. Moreover, the Soviet Union was scarcely in the picture; early in 1964, reported a Brazilian newspaper, Russian leader Khrushchev told the Brazilian Communist Party that the Soviet government did not wish either to give financial aid to the Goulart regime or to tangle with the United States over the country.<sup>64</sup> In his reminiscences — albeit, as mentioned earlier, not meant to be a serious work of history — in its 1,100 pages, Khrushchev does not so much as mention Brazil. A year after the coup, trade between Brazil and the USSR was running at \$120 million per year and a Brazilian mission was planning to go to Moscow to explore Soviet willingness to provide a major industrial plant.<sup>65</sup> The following year, the Russians invited the new Brazilian president-to-be, General Costa e Silva, to visit the Soviet Union.<sup>66</sup>

Washington is willing to accept this type of independence from a conservative government, even the occasional nationalization of American property, when it knows that the government will keep the left suppressed at home and that it can be relied upon to do its bit in the vital cold-war, anti-communist confrontations abroad. In 1965, Brazil sent 1,100 troops to the Dominican Republic in support of the US invasion, the only country in Latin America to send more than a token force. And in 1971 and 1973, the Brazilian military and intelligence apparatuses contributed to the American efforts in overthrowing the governments of Bolivia and Chile.

The United States did not rest on its laurels. CIA headquarters immediately began to generate hemisphere-wide propaganda, as only the Agency’s far-flung press-asset network could, in support of the new Brazilian government and to discredit Goulart.<sup>67</sup> Dean Rusk, concerned that Goulart might be received in Uruguay as if he were still Brazil’s president on the grounds that he had not resigned, cabled the American Embassy in Montevideo that “it would be useful if you could quietly bring to the attention of appropriate officials the fact that despite his allegations to the contrary Goulart has abandoned his office.”<sup>68</sup>

At the same time, the CIA station in Uruguay undertook a programme of surveillance of Brazilian exiles who had fled from the military takeover, to prevent them from instigating any kind of insurgency movement in their

\* For an excellent example of what American anti-communist propaganda is, and has been, all about, one must read “The Country That Saved Itself” in the *Reader’s Digest* of November 1964. The innumerable lies about what occurred in Brazil, fed without shame to its millions of readers, undoubtedly played no small role in preparing the American public for the great anti-communist crusade in Vietnam just picking up steam at the time.

homeland. It was a simple matter for the Agency to ask their (paid) friend, the head of Uruguayan intelligence, to place his officers at the residences of Goulart and other key Brazilians. The officers would keep logs of visitors while posing as personal security men for the exiles, although it is unlikely that the exiles swallowed the story.<sup>69</sup>

In the first few days following the coup, "several thousand" Brazilians were arrested, "communist and suspected communist" all.<sup>70</sup> AIFLD graduates were promptly appointed by the new government to purge the unions.<sup>71</sup> Though Ambassador Gordon had assured the State Department before the coup that the armed forces "would be quick to restore constitutional institutions and return power to civilian hands,"<sup>72</sup> this was not to be. Within days, General Castelo Branco assumed the presidency and over the next few years his regime initiated all the features of military dictatorship which Latin America has come to know and love: Congress was shut down, political opposition was reduced to virtual extinction, habeas corpus for "political crimes" was suspended, criticism of the president was forbidden by law, labour unions were taken over by government interventors, mounting protests were met by police and military firing into crowds, the use of systematic "disappearance" as a form of repression came upon the stage of Latin America . . . peasants' homes burned down, priests brutalized . . . the government had a name for its programme: the "moral rehabilitation" of Brazil.

Then there was the torture and the death squads, both largely undertakings of the police and the military, both underwritten by the United States.<sup>73</sup> In the chapters on Guatemala and Uruguay, particularly the latter, we shall see how the US Office of Public Safety (OPS), the CIA and AID combined to provide the technical training, the equipment, and the indoctrination which supported the horrors in those countries. It was no less the case in Brazil. Dan Mitrione of the OPS, whom we shall encounter in his full beauty in Uruguay, began his career in Brazil in the 1960s. By 1969, OPS had established a national police force for Brazil and had trained over 100,000 policemen in the country, in addition to 523 receiving more advanced instruction in the United States.<sup>74</sup> About one-third of the students' time at the police academies was devoted to lectures on the communist menace and the need to battle with it;<sup>75</sup> the "bomb school" and techniques of riot control were other important aspects of their education.

Tortures range from simple but brutal blows from a truncheon to electric shocks. Often the torture is more refined: the end of a reed is placed in the anus of a naked man hanging suspended downwards on the *pau de arara* [parrot's perch] and a piece of cotton soaked in petrol is lit at the other end of the reed. Pregnant women have been forced to watch their husbands being tortured. Other wives have been hung naked beside their husbands and given electric shocks on the sexual parts of their body, while subjected to the worst kind of obscenities. Children have been tortured before their parents and vice versa. At least one child, the three month old baby of Virgilio Gomes da Silva was reported to have

died under police torture. The length of sessions depends upon the resistance capacity of the victims and have sometimes continued for days at a time. *Amnesty International*<sup>76</sup>

Judge Agamenon Duarte indicated that the CCC [Commandos to Hunt Communists, a death squad armed and aided by the police] and the CIA are implicated in the murder of Father Henrique Neto. He admitted that . . . the American Secret Service (CIA) was behind the CCC . . . *Journal do Brazil*<sup>77</sup>

In 1970, a US Congress study group visited Brazil. It gave this summary of statements by American military advisers there:

Rather than dwell on the authoritarian aspects of the regime, they emphasize assertions by the Brazilian armed forces that they believe in, and support, representative democracy as an ideal and would return government to civilian control if this could be done without sacrifice to security and development. This withdrawal from the political arena is not seen as occurring in the near future. For that reason they emphasize the continued importance of the military assistance training program as a means of exerting U.S. influence and retaining the current pro-U.S. attitude of the Brazilian armed forces. Possible disadvantages to U.S. interests in being so closely identified with an authoritarian regime are not seen as particularly important.<sup>78</sup>

The CIA never rests . . . A footnote: the *New York Times* reported in 1966 . . .

When the CIA learned last year that a Brazilian youth had been killed in 1963, allegedly in an auto accident, while studying on a scholarship at the Lumumba University in Moscow, it mounted a massive publicity campaign to discourage other South American families from sending their youngsters to the Soviet Union.<sup>79</sup>

## 28. Peru 1960 to 1965 Fort Bragg moves to the jungle

It was a CIA dream come true. A commando raid by anti-Castro Cubans upon the Cuban Embassy in Lima had uncovered documentary proof that Cuba had paid out "hundreds of thousands" of dollars in Peru for propaganda to foster favourable attitudes toward the Cuban revolution and to promote Communist activities within the country.

This was no standard broad-brush, cold-war accusation, for the papers disclosed all manner of details and names — the culprits who had been on the

receiving end of the tainted money; men in unions and universities and in politics; men who had secretly visited Cuba, all expenses paid.<sup>1</sup> To top it all off, these were men the CIA looked upon as enemies.

The only problem — and it wasn't really a problem — was that some of the documents were counterfeit. The raid had certainly taken place, on 8 November 1960 to be exact. And documents had indeed been seized, at gunpoint. But the most incriminating of the documents, presented a month later with the authentic ones, had been produced by the experts of the CIA's Technical Services Division.<sup>2</sup>

It was a propaganda windfall. The story received wide media coverage in Latin America and the United States, accompanied by indignant anti-communist articles and editorials. *The Wall Street Journal* was moved to run an extremely long, slightly hysterical piece, obviously based on Washington handouts, strikingly unquestioned, which warned that "mountainous stacks of intelligence data from the 20 nations stretching from Mexico to Argentina tell of a widening Communist push into the hemisphere."<sup>3</sup>

To be sure, the Cubans insisted that the documents were not genuine, but that was only to be expected. The affair was to cast a shadow over Castro's foreign relations for some time to come.

The most propitious outcome, from the CIA's standpoint, was that within days after the disclosure the Peruvian government broke diplomatic relations with Cuba. This was a major priority of the Agency in Lima, as in most other CIA stations in Latin America, and led further to the Cuban news agency, *Prensa Latina*, being barred from operating in Peru. The news agency's dispatches, declared the Peruvian authorities, were "controlled from Moscow."<sup>4</sup> If true, this did indicate rather flexible deadlines.

A week later, there was further welcome fallout from the incident. The government enacted legislation making it easier to arrest members of the Communist Party, although this was repealed a year later. During its deliberations the Peruvian legislature accepted a sworn statement from one Francisco Ramos Montejo, a recent defector from the Cuban Embassy who had been present during the raid, who "confirmed" that all the documents were genuine. Ramos, who was now living in Miami and working for the CIA, added fresh revelations that there had been detailed plans for the assassination of Peruvian officials and for the overthrow of the government, and that arms had been smuggled into Peru from Bolivia and Ecuador, presumably for these purposes.<sup>5</sup> Of such stuff is the battle for the hearts and minds of Latin Americans made.

The political history of Peru has been of the classic South American mould — an oligarchy overthrown by a military coup replaced by another oligarchy . . . periodically punctuated by an uprising, sporadic violence from the forgotten below to remind those above that they are still alive, albeit barely. Veteran Latin America newsman John Gerassi described the state of those below in the Peru of the early 1960s:

In Lima, the capital, whose colonial mansions enveloped by ornate wooden balconies help make it one of the most beautiful cities in the world, half of the 1.3 million inhabitants live in rat-infested slums. One, called El Monton, is built around, over, and in the city dump. There, when I visited it, naked children, some too young to know how to walk, competed with pigs for a few bits of food scraps accidentally discarded by the garbage men . . . [The peasants] chew cocaine-producing coca leaves to still hunger pains, and average 500 calories a day. Where there is grass, the Peruvian Andes Indian eats it — and also the sheep he kills when it gets so hungry that it begins tearing another sheep's wool off for its food. The peons who work the land of the whites average one sol (4 cents) a day, and . . . labor from sunup to sundown . . .<sup>6</sup>

During this period, a movement led by Hugo Blanco organized peasants into unions, staged strikes and seized land. The movement engaged in little which could be termed guerrilla warfare, using its meagre arms to defend the squatters, and was easily and brutally put down by the police and army, apparently without significant American assistance other than the "routine" arming and training of such forces.

By 1965, however, several guerrilla groups had evolved in the eastern slopes of the Andes, cognizant of the bare truth that organizing peasants was, by itself, painfully inadequate; some would say suicidal. Inspired by the Cuban revolution, impressed with the social gains which had followed, and, in some cases, trained by the Cubans, these sons of the middle class met in May to plan a common strategy. Guerrilla warfare began in earnest the following month. By the end of the year, however, a joint Peruvian-American counter-insurgency operation had broken the back of three rebel groups, two of them in less than two months. Those guerrillas who remained alive and active were reduced to futile and impotent skirmishes over the next year or so.<sup>7</sup>

The role of the CIA in this definitive military mop-up has been concisely depicted by the former high official of the Agency, Victor Marchetti:

Green Berets participated . . . in what was the CIA's single large-scale Latin American intervention of the post-Bay of Pigs era. This occurred in the mid-1960s, when the agency secretly came to the aid of the Peruvian government, then plagued by guerrilla troubles in its remote eastern regions. Unable to cope adequately with the insurgent movement, Lima had turned to the U.S. government for aid, which was immediately and covertly forthcoming.

The agency financed the construction of what one experienced observer described as 'a miniature Fort Bragg' in the troubled Peruvian jungle region, complete with mess halls, classrooms, barracks, administrative buildings, parachute jump towers, amphibious landing facilities, and all the other accoutrements of paramilitary operations. Helicopters were furnished under cover of official military aid programs, and the CIA flew in arms and other combat equipment. Training was provided by the agency's Special Operations Division personnel and by Green Beret instructors on loan from the Army.<sup>8</sup>

Typically, and ironically, such training would have included instilling in the Peruvian officers the motivation for doing battle with the insurgents in the first

place. As US-military-affairs scholar Michael Klare has pointed out:

Many Latin American military officers would rather command elite units like jet fighter squadrons, naval flotillas, or armored brigades than slug it out with the guerrillas in long, unspectacular jungle campaigns. U.S. training programs are designed, therefore, to emphasize the importance of counterinsurgency operations (and to suggest, thereby, that the United States will reward those officers who make a good showing at this kind of warfare).<sup>9</sup>

The extent to which American military personnel engaged directly in combat is not known. They did, however, set up their headquarters in the centre of an area of heavy fighting, in the village of Mazanari, and in September 1965 the *New York Times* reported that when the Peruvian army opened a major drive against the guerrillas, "At least one United States Army counter-insurgency expert was said to have helped plan and direct the attack."<sup>10</sup>

In the urban areas a concurrent round-up of guerrilla supporters was carried out, based materially on CIA intelligence: the list of "subversives" regularly compiled by Agency stations throughout the world for just such occasions.<sup>11</sup> The CIA is usually in a much better position to collect this information than the host government, due to its superior experience in the field, funds available for hiring informants, technical equipment for eavesdropping, and greater motivation.

While this was taking place the war in Vietnam and the militant protest against it had already captured the front pages of American newspapers, and the isolated dispatch referred to above easily passed into oblivion. Yet, the American objective in Peru — to crush a movement aimed at genuine land reform and the social and political changes inevitably "threatening" thereby — was identical to its objective in Vietnam, and the methods employed were very similar: burning down peasants' huts and villages to punish support for the guerrillas, defoliating the countryside to eliminate guerrilla sanctuaries, saturation bombing with napalm and high explosives, even throwing prisoners out of helicopters.<sup>12</sup> The essential difference, one which spelled disaster for the Peruvian insurgents, was that their ranks were not augmented in any appreciable number by the Indian peasants, a group with little revolutionary consciousness and even less daring; four centuries of dehumanization had robbed them of virtually all hope and the sense of a right to revolt; and when this sense stirred even faintly, such as under Hugo Blanco, it was met head-on by the brick wall of official violence.

As common in the Third World as it is ludicrous, the bulk of the armed forces employed to keep the peasants pacified were soldiers of peasant stock themselves. It is a measure of the ultimate cynicism of the Peruvian and American military authorities that soldiers were stationed outside their home areas to lessen their resistance when the order was given to shoot.<sup>13</sup>

But it all worked. It worked so well that more than a decade was to pass before desperate men took to arms again in Peru.

## 29. Dominican Republic 1960 to 1966 Saving democracy from communism by getting rid of democracy

On the night of 30 May 1961, Generalissimo Rafael Trujillo, mass murderer, torturer par excellence, absolute dictator, was shot to death on a highway in the outskirts of the capital city, Ciudad Trujillo.

The assassination set off a chain of events over the next five years which featured remarkably gross and sustained intervention into the internal affairs of the Dominican Republic by the United States, the likes of which had not been seen in Latin America since the heyday of American gunboat diplomacy.

The United States had been an accomplice in the assassination itself of the man it had helped to climb to power and endure for some 30 years. This marks one of the rare occasions that the US government has acted to overthrow a right-wing despot, albeit anti-communism was still the motivating force.

Whatever repugnance individual Washington policy makers may have felt toward Trujillo's incredible violations of human rights over the years, his fervent adherence to American policies, his repression of the left, and, as a consequence, the vigorous support he enjoyed in Congress and in other influential American circles, were enough to keep successive United States administrations looking the other way.

When, in January 1959, Fulgencio Batista fell before the forces of Fidel Castro in nearby Cuba, a reconsideration of this policy was thrust upon Washington's agenda. This historic event seemed to suggest that support of right-wing governments might no longer be the best way of checking the rise of revolutionary movements in Latin America, but rather might be fostering them. Indeed, in June a force of Dominican exiles launched an invasion of their homeland from Cuba. Although it was as much a disaster as the Bay of Pigs was to be two years later, it could only serve to heighten Washington's concern.

'Batista is to Castro as Trujillo is to \_\_\_\_\_', was the implicit assumption, and Washington wanted to ensure that it could help fill in the blank," is the way one analyst has formulated the problem. "As a result, the United States began to cast about for a way to get rid of Trujillo and at the same time to ensure a responsible successor."<sup>14</sup> Ironically, it was to Trujillo's Dominican Republic that Batista had fled.

The decision to topple Trujillo was reinforced in early 1960 when the United States sought to organize hemispheric opposition to the Castro regime. This

policy ran head-on into the familiar accusation that the United States opposed only leftist governments, never those of the right, no matter how tyrannical. The close association with Trujillo, widely regarded as Washington's "protégé", was proving increasingly to be an embarrassment. The circumstances were such that President Eisenhower was led to observe that "it's certain that American public opinion won't condemn Castro until we have moved against Trujillo."<sup>2</sup> (The president's apparent belief in the independence of the American mind may have been overly generous, for the American public knew nothing definite of any American move against Trujillo until 1975, yet fell readily into line in condemning Castro even before Trujillo's assassination.)

As early as 1958, the then-CIA chief of station in the Dominican Republic, Lear Reed, along with several Dominicans, had plotted an assassination of Trujillo, one which never got off the ground.<sup>3</sup> What the Agency's motivation was, and whether it was acting on its own or at the behest of higher echelons in Washington, is not known. However, in February 1960 the National Security Council's Special Group in Washington gave consideration to a programme of covert aid to anti-Trujillo Dominicans.<sup>4</sup> Two months later, Eisenhower approved a contingency plan which provided, in part, that if the situation deteriorated still further: "... the United States would immediately take political action to remove Trujillo from the Dominican Republic as soon as a suitable successor regime can be induced to take over with the assurance of U.S. political, economic, and — if necessary — military support."<sup>5</sup>

Seemingly unaware of the currents swirling about him, Trujillo continued to live up to his gangster reputation. In June, his henchmen blew up a car carrying Venezuelan President Romulo Betancourt, an outspoken critic of the Dominican dictator. As a result, Washington came under renewed pressure from several of the more democratic Caribbean countries for action against Trujillo. Betancourt, who had survived the blast, told US Secretary of State Christian Herter: "If you don't eliminate him, we will invade."<sup>6</sup>

For a full year, the dissidents and various American officials played cloak-and-dagger games: there were meetings in New York and Washington, in Ciudad Trujillo and Venezuela; Americans living in the Dominican Republic were enlisted for the cause by the CIA; schemes to overthrow Trujillo were drawn up at different times by the State Department, the CIA, and the dissidents, some approved by the Special Group. A training camp was set up in Venezuela for Dominican exiles flown there from the United States and Puerto Rico by the CIA; the dissidents made numerous requests for weapons, from sniper rifles to remote-control detonating devices, for the understood purpose of assassinating Trujillo and other key members of his regime. Several of the requests were approved by the State Department or the CIA; support for the dissidents was regularly reiterated at high levels of the US government... yet, after all was said and done, none of the ambitious plans was even attempted (the actual assassination was essentially a spur of the moment, improvised affair), only three pistols and three carbines were ever passed to the anti-Trujillistas, and it is not certain that any of these arms were used in the assassination.<sup>7</sup>

In the final analysis, the most significant aid received by the dissidents from

the United States was the assurance that the "Colossus to the North" would not intervene militarily to prevent the assassination and would support them afterwards if they set up a "suitable" government. In Latin America this is virtually a *sine qua non* for such undertakings, notably in the Dominican Republic where American marines have landed on four separate occasions in this century, the last intervention having created a centralized Dominican National Guard which the US placed under the control of a young officer it had trained named Rafael Trujillo.

The gap between the word and the deed of the American government concerning the assassination appears to have been the consequence of a growing uncertainty in Washington about what would actually take place in the wake of Trujillo's demise — would a pro-Castro regime emerge from the chaos? A secondary consideration, perhaps, was a reluctance to engage in political assassination, both as a matter of policy and as a desire to avoid, as one State Department official put it, "further tarnishing in the eyes of the world" of the "U.S. moral posture".<sup>8</sup> This was particularly the expressed feeling of President John Kennedy and others in his administration who had assumed office in January 1961, although they were later to undertake several assassination attempts against Castro.

The dismal failure of the Bay of Pigs invasion in April further dampened the enthusiasm of Washington officials for any Caribbean adventure (except against Cuba in revenge) and induced them to request a postponement of the assassination. The plotters, however, were well past the point of no return.

The Dominicans who pulled the trigger and their fellow conspirators were in no way revolutionaries. They came from the ranks of the conservative, privileged sectors of Dominican society and were bound together primarily by an intense loathing of Trujillo, a personal vendetta — each of them, or someone close to them, had suffered a deep humiliation at the hands of the diabolical dictator, if not torture or murder.

Their plan as to what would follow the elimination of Trujillo was only half-baked, and even this fell apart completely. As matters turned out, the day after the assassination, Rafael ("Ramfis") Trujillo, Jr. rushed home from his playboy's life in Paris to take over the reins of government. Little had been resolved, either in the Dominican Republic or in Washington. The Kennedy administration was confronted with the same ideological questions which had caused it so much indecision before the assassination, as they had the Eisenhower administration. To wit: What is the best way of preventing the establishment of left-wing governments intent upon radical social change? The traditional iron fist of right-wing dictatorship, or a more democratic society capable of meeting many of the legitimate demands of the populace? How much democracy? Would too much open the door for even greater, and unacceptable, demands and provide the left with a legal platform from which to sway ("dupe", Washington would call it) the public? And if it is a dictatorship that is to be supported, how are liberal American leaders to explain this to the world and to their own citizens?

John F. Kennedy and his men from Harvard tended to treat such policy

questions in a manner more contemplative than American political figures are usually inclined to do; on occasion, it might be said, they even *agonized* over such questions. But in the end, their Latin American policy was scarcely distinguishable from that of conservative American administrations. A leader who imposed "order" with at least the facade of democracy, who kept the left submerged without being notoriously brutal about it; in short, the anti-communist liberal, still appeared to be the safest ally for the United States; if such an ally were not available, said Kennedy, then a Trujillo would do in preference to a Castro.<sup>9</sup>

Rafael Trujillo, Jr. was clearly not ideal. Besides bearing the inescapable stigma of his name and family, he carried out a bloodbath of revenge over the next six months.<sup>10</sup> But, unlike his father in his last years, Ramfis could be prodded by Washington into making a few token reforms, and both parties might have been content to continue in this fashion indefinitely had not many people of the Dominican Republic felt terribly cheated by the turn of events. Their elation over the assassination had soured in the face of business-as-usual.

Resentment spilled over into the streets. By October, the protests were occurring daily and were being put down by tanks; students were shot dead by government troops. The following month, when Ramfis elected to return to the pleasure temples of Europe and his two uncles made their move to continue the Trujillo oligarchy, the United States decided to take the initiative. The situation in the streets and high places of the government was anarchic enough, Washington feared, to provide an opening for the proverbial "communist takeover", although, in fact, the left in the Dominican Republic was manifestly insignificant from years of repression.

American diplomats met in the capital city with the Trujillos and Dominican military leaders and bluntly told them that US military power would, if necessary, be used to compel the formation of a provisional government headed by Joachim Balaguer until elections could be held. Balaguer had been closely tied to the Trujillo family for decades, was serving as president under Trujillo at the time of the assassination, and had remained in the same capacity under Ramfis, but he was not regarded as a threat to continue the tyranny. As Kennedy put it: "Balaguer is our only tool. The anticommunist liberals aren't strong enough. We must use our influence to take Balaguer along the road to democracy."<sup>11</sup> Just how committed John F. Kennedy was to democracy in the Dominican Republic we shall presently see.

To make certain that the Dominicans got the message, a US naval task force of eight ships with 1,800 Marines aboard appeared off the Dominican coast on 19 November, just outside the three-mile limit but in plain sight of Ciudad Trujillo. Spanish-language broadcasts from the offshore ships warned that the Marines were prepared to come ashore, while overhead, American jet fighters streaked along the coastline. Brigadier General Pedro Rodriguez Echevarria, a key military figure, was persuaded by the United States presence to put aside any plans for a coup he may have been harbouring and to support the American action. Rodriguez proceeded to order the bombing of the air base outside the

capital where Trujillistas had been massing troops. Over the next two days, "the wicked uncles" and many other Trujillistas left for the good life in Florida.<sup>12</sup>

However, when Balaguer proved to be a major obstacle to beginning the process of democratization and indicated that he did not regard his regime as temporary, the United States added its own special pressure to that of Balaguer's domestic opposition to force him to resign after only two months in office. Washington then turned around and issued a stern warning to Rodriguez and mounted another naval show-of-force to help other military officers overturn the general's attempt to seize power.<sup>13</sup>

While a seven-man "Council of State" then administered the affairs of government, the US continued to treat the Dominican Republic as its private experiment in the prevention of communism. The American Ambassador, John Bartlow Martin, pressed the Council to curb left-wing activity. By his own admission, Martin urged the use of "methods once used by the police in Chicago": harassment of suspects by repeated arrests, midnight raids on their homes, beatings, etc.<sup>14</sup>

When street disturbances erupted, US Attorney General Robert Kennedy arranged for riot-control equipment to be sent to Santo Domingo (the original name of the capital, now restored). The equipment came complete with two Spanish-speaking Los Angeles detectives to impart to their Dominican counterparts the fine art of quelling such uprisings that they had acquired in the Mexican barrios of east Los Angeles. In a few weeks, Ambassador Martin could report that the Council had "re-won the streets, thanks almost entirely to those two detectives".<sup>15</sup>

This riot-control unit remained as a permanent part of the Santo Domingo police force. Known as the *Cascos Blancos* (white helmets), they came to be much hated by the populace. Shortly afterwards, the US military undertook a long-range programme to transform the country's armed forces into what was hoped would be an efficient anti-guerrilla organization, although guerrillas were as rare on the Caribbean island as members of the Trujillo family.<sup>16</sup>

Finally, in December 1962, elections were held, under terms dictated in large part by Ambassador Martin to the two major candidates. His purpose was to introduce into the Dominican Republic some of the features that Americans regard as necessary to a viable and democratic electoral system, but Martin's fiat was inescapably a highly condescending intrusion into the affairs of a supposedly sovereign nation. His instructions extended down to the level of what the loser should say in his concession speech.

Further, under an "Emergency Law", the United States and the Council arranged for the deportation of some 125 Trujillistas and "Castro communists" to the United States, from where they were not allowed to leave until after the election in order "to help maintain stability so elections could be held".<sup>17</sup>

The winner, and first more-or-less democratically elected president of the Dominican Republic since 1924, was Juan Bosch, a writer who had spent many years in exile while Trujillo reigned. Here at last was Kennedy's liberal anti-communist, non-military and legally elected by a comfortable majority as well.

Bosch's government was to be the long-sought-after "showcase of democracy" that would put the lie to Fidel Castro. Bosch was given the grand treatment in Washington shortly before he took office in February 1963.

He was true to his beliefs. He called for land reform, including transferring some private land to the public sector as required; low-rent housing; modest nationalization of business; an ambitious project of public works, serving mass needs more than vested interests; a reduction in the import of luxury items; at the same time, he favoured incentives to private enterprise and was open to foreign investment provided it was not excessively exploitive of the country — all in all, standard elements in the programme of any liberal, Third World leader serious about social change. He was likewise serious about the thing called civil liberties: Communists or those labelled as such, or anyone else, were not to be persecuted unless they actually violated the law.

A number of American officials and congressmen expressed their discomfort with Bosch's plans, as well as his stance of independence from the United States. Land reform and nationalization are always touchy issues in Washington, the stuff that "creeping socialism" is made of. In several quarters of the US press Bosch was red-baited and compared with Castro, and the Dominican Republic with Cuba. (Castro, for his part, branded Bosch a "Yankee puppet".) Some of the press criticism was clearly orchestrated, in the manner of many CIA campaigns.<sup>18</sup>

In both the United States and the Dominican Republic, the accusation most frequently cast at Bosch was the one typically used against Latin American leaders who do not vigorously suppress the left (cf. Arbenz and Goulart): Bosch was allowing "communists" to "infiltrate" into the country and into the government, and he was not countering "communist subversion", the latter referring to no more than instances of people standing up for their long-denied rights. Wrote a reporter for the *Miami News*: "Communist penetration of the Dominican Republic is progressing with incredible speed and efficiency." He did not, however, name a single communist in the Bosch government.<sup>19</sup>

The CIA made a contribution to this atmosphere. Ambassador Martin has reported that the Agency "gave rumors [about communists] a credibility far higher than I would have . . . In reporting a Castro/Communist plot, however wildly implausible, it is obviously safer to evaluate it as 'could be true' than as nonsense."<sup>20</sup>

John F. Kennedy also soured on Bosch, particularly for his refusal to crack down on radicals. Said the president to Ambassador Martin one day: "I'm wondering if the day might not come when he'd [Bosch] like to get rid of some of the left. Tell him we respect his judgment, we're all for him, but the time may come when he'll want to deport 30 or 50 people, when it'd be better to deport them than to let them go. I suppose he'd have to catch them in something . . ."<sup>21</sup>

When the United States failed to commit any new economic assistance to the Dominican Republic and generally gave the indication that Juan Bosch was a doomed venture, right-wing Dominican military officers could only be encouraged in their craving to be rid of the president and his policies. Sam Halper, former Caribbean Bureau Chief of *Time* magazine, later reported that

the military coup ousting Bosch went into action "as soon as they got a wink from the U.S. Pentagon".<sup>22</sup>

In July, a group of officers formally presented Bosch with an ultimatum: their loyalty to his regime was conditioned upon his adoption of a policy of rigorous anti-communism. Bosch reacted by going on television and delivering a lecture about the apolitical role required of the military in a democratic society, surely an occult subject to these products of 31 years of Trujilloism.

The beleaguered president could see that a premature demise lay ahead for his government. His speech on television sounded very much like a farewell. The failure of Washington to intervene on his behalf could only enlarge the writing on the wall. Indeed, Bosch and some of his aides strongly suspected that the US military and the CIA were already conspiring with the Dominican officers. Several American military officers had disregarded diplomatic niceties by expressing their reservations about Bosch's politics loud enough to reach his ears.<sup>23</sup>

A week before the inevitable coup, the CIA-created union federation in the Dominican Republic, CONATRAL, which had been set up to counter and erode Bosch's support in the labour movement, placed an ad in a leading newspaper urging the people to put their faith in the army to defend them against communism.<sup>24</sup>

The end came in September, a scant seven months after Bosch had taken office. He had not had the time to accomplish much that was worthwhile in this hopelessly corrupt society before the military boots marched, as they have always marched in Latin America.

The United States did nothing to stand in the way of the coup. There would be no display of military might this time — although Bosch asked for it — "unless a Communist takeover were threatened," said the State Department.<sup>25</sup>

"Democracy", said *Newsweek* magazine, "was being saved from Communism by getting rid of democracy."<sup>26</sup>

There were the customary expressions of regret in Washington about the death of democracy, and there was the *de rigueur* withholding of recognition of the new regime. But two months later, when opposition to the repressive dictatorship began to manifest itself noticeably, the junta yelled "communist" and was quickly embraced by the United States with recognition and the other perquisites which attach to being a member in good standing of the "Free World".<sup>27</sup>

Nineteen months later, a revolution broke out in the Dominican Republic which promised to put the exiled Bosch back in power at the hands of a military-civilian force that would be loyal to his programme. But for the fifth time in the century, the American Marines landed and put an abrupt end to such hopes.

In the early morning of Saturday, 24 April 1965, a group of young army officers of middle rank, acting in concert with civilian Bosch partisans, declared themselves in revolt against the government. The "constitutionalists", as they

called themselves, were soon joined by other officers and their units. Spurred by ecstatic radio proclamations, thousands of Dominicans poured into the streets shouting "Viva Bosch" and grabbed up the arms handed out by the rebel military forces.

The television station was taken over and for two days a "potpourri of politicians, soldiers, women, children, adventurers, hoodlums and anyone who wished to, shouted against the status quo."<sup>28</sup>

The participants in the uprising were a mixed bag, not all of them sympathetic to Bosch or to social reform; there were others, to the right, with their own varied motivations. But the impetus clearly lay with the constitutionalists and the uprising was thus viewed with alarm by the rest of the military, and the US Embassy, as a movement to restore Bosch to power with all that that implied.

Philip Geyelin of the *Wall Street Journal* (and formerly with the CIA) who had access to the official embassy cables and the key actors in the drama has written:

What the record reveals, in fact, is that from the very outset of the upheaval, there was a concerted U.S. Government effort, if not actually a formal decision, to checkmate the rebel movement by whatever means and at whatever cost.

By Sunday, April 25 . . . the Santo Domingo embassy had clearly cast its lot with the 'loyalist' military cabal and against the rebellion's original aim: the return of Juan Bosch . . . Restoration of the Bosch regime would be 'against U.S. interests,' the embassy counseled. Blocking Bosch could mean further bloodshed, the embassy conceded. Nonetheless, Washington was advised, the embassy military attaches had given 'loyalist' leaders a go-ahead to do 'everything possible' to prevent what was described as the danger of a 'Communist take-over'.<sup>29</sup>

The attachés as well as the US Consul made emergency visits to several still-uncommitted Dominican military commanders to persuade them, apparently with notable success, to support the government.<sup>30</sup>

A bloody civil war had broken out in the streets of Santo Domingo. During the first few days, the momentum of battle swung to one side, then the other. By the night of 28 April, however, the military and police inside Santo Domingo had collapsed, and the constitutionalists were preparing to attack the military's last bastion, San Isidro, their main base about 10 miles away.<sup>31</sup>

"The Generals at San Isidro were dejected, several were weeping, and one was hysterically urging 'retreat,'" read the cable sent by the American Ambassador W. Tapley Bennett to Washington in the early evening of the 28th. (Bennett, as we shall see, was given to hyperbole of the worst sort, but the Dominican military certainly were isolated and demoralized.) Bennett added, whether in the same cable or another one is not clear, that if US troops did not immediately land, American lives would be lost and "Castro-type elements" would be victorious.<sup>32</sup>

Within hours, the first 500 US Marines were brought in by helicopter from ships stationed a few miles off the coast. Two days later, American forces numbered over 4,000. At the peak, some 23,000 troops, marine and army, were

to take up positions in the beleaguered little Caribbean country, with thousands more standing by on a 35-ship task force offshore.

The American action was in clear violation of several international agreements, including the Charter of the Organization of American States (OAS) which prohibited intervention "directly or indirectly, for any reason whatever, in the internal or external affairs of any other state".

During the entire course of the US military occupation, American pronouncements would have had the world believe that its forces were in the Dominican Republic in a "neutral" capacity: to protect the lives of Americans and other foreigners, establish a ceasefire, ensure free elections, etc. As we have seen, however, the United States had committed itself to one side from the start of hostilities. This continued to be the case. The morning after the landing of the first Marines, Ambassador Bennett was instructed by the State Department that US military officers should be used "to help San Isidro develop operational plans to take the rebel stronghold downtown".<sup>33</sup>

Within a few days, American troops were deployed in an armed corridor through the centre of Santo Domingo so as to divide the constitutionalist's zone and cut off their main body from access to the rest of the country, bottling them up in a small downtown area with their backs to the sea. Other American forces were stationed throughout the countryside. The rebel offensive against San Isidro had been prevented. It was the end of their revolution.

The American forces came to the aid of the Dominican military in a number of ways, supplying them with equipment, food and even their salaries, but it was the direct military involvement that was most telling. On one striking occasion, the sea of American troops parted to allow the Dominican military to pass through and brutally attack and mop up the northern section of the rebel zone while the main rebel force in the south remained helplessly blocked behind the American line. This "smashing victory" the *New York Times* reported, was "visibly aided by United States troops". Other American journalists also reported that US troops took part in the fighting, although Washington officials angrily denied it.<sup>34</sup>

The rebels were reduced to little more than sniping attacks on American soldiers, for which they paid a heavy price. US forces blasted apart a building in downtown Santo Domingo from which sniper fire was coming; advancing into a constitutionalist zone, again after sniper fire, they killed some 67 rebels and bystanders; American paratroops were seen firing at rebels who were retreating, and the constitutionalists' Minister of Justice and Police was "reported to have been killed by United States machine-gun fire as he attempted to capture the empty Presidential Palace in midtown with a squad of his troops."<sup>35</sup>

When the Johnson administration was not denying such actions outright, it was claiming that they were either contrary to orders, "individual indiscretions", or "isolated incidents".

A covert team of Green Berets arrived at one point to help assure the safety of American civilians. But when they discovered that some of the Americans were assisting rebel forces, "their main objective shifted from protecting their

fellow countrymen to spying on them".<sup>36</sup>

The Green Berets also found the time to lay the groundwork for the assassination of one of the leading constitutionalist leaders, Col. Francisco Caamaño. The plot was cancelled at the last moment due to the excessive risk involved.<sup>37</sup>

Another group of American visitors was that of some leaders of the National Student Association, ostensibly come to the Dominican Republic to talk with their counterparts about educational matters, but actually there at the behest of the CIA to gather information on local students. This was still two years before the exposé of the long-lasting relationship between the CIA and the prominent student organization.<sup>38</sup>

Throughout this period, the communication guns of the US government were aimed at the people of the United States, the Dominican Republic and the world to convince them that "communists" were a dominant element amongst the constitutionalists, that they represented a threat to take over the movement, or that they had already taken it over, with frightening consequences for all concerned.

At various times the Johnson administration released lists of "communists and Castroites" in the ranks of the rebels. These lists totalled 53 or 58 or 77 names and became a *cause célèbre* as well as an object of media ridicule. Besides the laughably small numbers involved (in a rebellion of tens of thousands with numerous leaders), several of those on the lists, it turned out, were in prison while others were out of the country.

The American Embassy in Santo Domingo assured reporters that if they went to rebel headquarters, they would see the named communist agents in the flesh. The newspaper went and looked but could find no identifiable communists (however one identifies a communist). Subsequently, administration officials explained that the reason that newspaper had seen such little evidence of communist activity was that the American landings had scared the reds into hiding.

Eventually, officials admitted their doubt that they could prove that communists had gained control of the constitutionalists, although President Johnson had pressed the CIA and FBI into an intensive search for evidence.<sup>39</sup>

Former CIA officer Philip Agee, stationed in Uruguay at the time, wrote later that the new password at his station became "Fifty-eight trained communists". The proper reply was "Ten thousand marines".<sup>40</sup>

The embassy, and Ambassador Bennett in particular, poured forth "a rising stream of hysterical rumors, atrocity stories, and alarmist reports"<sup>41</sup> about the rebels, reminiscent of the Bolshevik horror stories which had filled the pages of the American press following the Russian revolution: embassies being ransacked... "Castroite-style mass executions"... rebels parading in the streets with the heads of their victims on poles...

\* A CIA cable to Washington on 25 April 1965 reported that the Communist Party (Partido Socialista Dominicano) had been "unaware of the coup attempt".

President Johnson made reference to the "atrocities" in public statements, but none of the stories were ever proven, for none were true; no one ever located any of the many headless Dominicans; and American officials, in a monument to *chutzpah*, later denounced the press for reporting such unverified rumours.<sup>42</sup>

Meanwhile, the CIA, the Defense Intelligence Agency and the US Information Agency were conducting their own intensive propaganda campaign in the Dominican Republic to give credence to the American position and discredit Dominican groups opposed to it. Experts on psychological warfare arrived to ply their trade, radio stations and newspapers were covertly set up, rebel radio stations jammed, leaflets airdropped in the countryside. The USIA also secretly subsidized the publication of pro-administration material aimed for distribution in the United States.<sup>43</sup>

From all the wild charges and the frequent contradictory statements made by American officials, the expression "credibility gap" entered the American popular language and soon came to haunt the Johnson presidency.<sup>44</sup>

Historian Richard Barnett has noted another interesting side to the American propaganda effort:

To justify the intervention, which had aroused violent opposition from traditional friends of the United States because of its crudeness and the swathe of lies in which it was wrapped... [Washington] began a direct assault on the concept of non-intervention, the rhetorical foundation stone of Latin-American policy enshrined in numerous treaties, declarations, and Pan-American Day speeches... Under Secretary Thomas Mann told newspaper correspondents that the OAS and UN charters were drawn up in '19th-century terms'... Averell Harriman remarked in Montevideo that the principle of non-intervention was becoming 'obsolete'. By a vote of 315 to 52 the House of Representatives passed a resolution... justifying the unilateral use of force on foreign territory by any nation which considers itself threatened by 'international communism, directly or indirectly'... the President [declared in a speech]: 'The first reality is that old concepts and old labels are largely obsolete. In today's world, with enemies of freedom talking about "Wars of national liberation," the old distinction between "Civil War" and "International War" has already lost much of its meaning... The moment of decision must become the moment of action.'

This is the essence of the Johnson Doctrine — a virtually unlimited claim of legitimacy for armed intervention in civil strife.<sup>45</sup>

The last American troops did not leave the Dominican Republic until September 1966. The interim period witnessed a succession of ceasefires, broken truces, and protracted negotiations under provisional governments.

In June 1966, elections were held in which Joaquin Balaguer defeated Juan Bosch by a surprisingly large margin. Yet, it was not all that surprising. For five long years the people of the Dominican Republic had lived under a cloud of chaos and violence. The experience had instilled in them a deep longing for return to "normalcy", to order, without foreign intervention, without soldiers patrolling their streets, without curfews, tear gas and bloodshed. With the US Army still very much in evidence and the American distaste for Bosch well

known . . . with the ubiquitous American propaganda hammering home fear of The Red Menace and associating the constitutionalists, and thus Bosch, with communism . . . with the Dominican military still largely Trujillista in personnel and ideology . . . a victory for Bosch would be seen by many voters as a danger that all the horrors would rain down upon their heads once more. Bosch, who had returned several months prior to the election, was himself so fearful for his personal safety that he never left his home during the campaign.

Joachim Balaguer remained in office for 12 years, ruling his people in the grand Latin American style: the rich became richer and the poor had babies, hungry babies; democracy remained an alien concept; the police and military regularly kidnapped, tortured and murdered opponents of the government and terrorized union organizers.<sup>46</sup>

But the man was not, personally, the monster that Trujillo was. There was relative calm and peace. No "communist threat" hovered over the land. The pot was sweetened for foreign investors, and American corporations moved in with big bucks. There was stability and order. And the men who ran the United States looked and were satisfied. Perhaps some of them had come to the realization that the anti-communist liberal government was an impossible ideal; for any movement seeking genuine democracy and social reform would invariably attract individuals whom the United States would invariably categorize as "communist"; the United States would then feel driven to discredit, subvert and eventually overturn the movement. A Catch 22.

## 30. Cuba 1959 to 1980s The unforgivable revolution

The existence of a revolutionary socialist government with growing ties to the Soviet Union only 90 miles away, insisted the United States Government, was a situation which no self-respecting superpower should tolerate, and in 1961 it undertook an invasion of Cuba.

But less than 50 miles from the Soviet Union sat Pakistan, a close ally of the United States, a member since 1955 of the South-East Asia Treaty Organization (SEATO), the US-created anti-communist alliance. On the very border of the Soviet Union was Iran, an even closer ally of the United States, with its relentless electronic listening posts, aerial surveillance, and infiltration into Russian territory by American agents. And alongside Iran, also bordering the Soviet Union, was Turkey, a member of the Russians' mortal enemy, NATO, since 1951.

In 1962 during the "Cuban Missile Crisis", Washington, seemingly in a state of near-panic, informed the world that the Russians were installing "offensive" missiles in Cuba — a "quarantine" of the island was instituted: a powerful show of naval and marine forces in the Caribbean would stop and search all vessels heading towards Cuba; any found to contain military cargo would be forced to turn back.

But the United States had missiles and bomber bases already in place in Turkey and other missiles in Western Europe pointed toward the Soviet Union. Russian leader Nikita Khrushchev later wrote that . . .

The Americans had surrounded our country with military bases and threatened us with nuclear weapons, and now they would learn just what it feels like to have enemy missiles pointing at you; we'd be doing nothing more than giving them a little of their own medicine . . . After all, the United States had no moral or legal quarrel with us. We hadn't given the Cubans anything more than the Americans were giving to their allies. We had the same rights and opportunities as the Americans. Our conduct in the international arena was governed by the same rules and limits as the Americans.<sup>1</sup>

At one point during the confrontation, Khrushchev offered to remove the missiles and jet bombers from Cuba if the United States would do the same in Turkey. President Kennedy categorically refused, insisting that the Soviets must first dismantle their missiles in Cuba as a condition for negotiations on "wider" questions. The Soviets complied. The American missiles in Turkey are still there.

Lest anyone misunderstand, as Khrushchev apparently did, the standards under which Washington was operating, *Time* magazine was quick to explain. "On the part of the Communists," the magazine declared, "this equating [of U.S. and Soviet missiles and bases] had obvious tactical motives. On the part of neutralists and pacifists [who welcomed the offer of mutual dismantling] it betrayed intellectual and moral confusion." The confusion lay, it seems, in not seeing clearly who were the good guys and who were the bad guys, for "The purpose of the U.S. bases [in Turkey] was not to blackmail Russia but to strengthen the defense system of NATO, which had been created as a safeguard against Russian aggression. As a member of NATO, Turkey welcomed the bases as a contribution to her own defense." Cuba, which had been invaded only the year before, could have, it seems, no such concern. *Time* continued its sermon:

Beyond these differences between the two cases, there is an enormous moral difference between U.S. and Russian objectives . . . To equate U.S. and Russian bases is in effect to equate U.S. and Russian purposes . . . The U.S. bases, such as those in Turkey, have helped keep the peace since World War II, while the Russian bases in Cuba threatened to upset the peace. The Russian bases were intended to further conquest and domination, while U.S. bases were erected to preserve freedom. The difference should have been obvious to all.<sup>2</sup>

Equally obvious was the right of the United States to maintain a military base on Cuban soil — Guantanamo Naval Base by name, a vestige of colonialism

staring down the throats of the Cuban people which the United States, to this day, refuses to vacate despite the vehement protest of the Castro government. By way of contrast — apart from the (obvious) American reaction to a Soviet or Cuban base in the United States — Washington has been insisting for over a decade that Cuban military forces leave Angola, though they are there at the express request of the Angolan government to defend the country against attacks by South Africa.

In the American lexicon, in addition to good and bad bases and missiles, there are good and bad revolutions. The American and French Revolutions were good. The Cuban Revolution is bad. It must be bad because so many people have left Cuba as a result of it.

But at least 100,000 people left the British colonies in America during and after the American Revolution. These Tories could not abide by the political and social change, both actual and feared, particularly that which attends all revolutions worthy of the name: those looked down upon as inferiors no longer know their place. (Or as the US Secretary of State put it after the Russian Revolution: the Bolsheviks sought “to make the ignorant and incapable mass of humanity dominant in the earth.”)<sup>3</sup>

The Tories fled to Nova Scotia and Britain carrying tales of the godless, dissolute, barbaric American revolutionaries. Those who remained and refused to take an oath of allegiance to the new state governments were denied virtually all civil liberties. Many were jailed, murdered, or forced into exile. After the American Civil War, thousands more fled to South America and other points, again disturbed by the social upheaval. How much more is such an exodus to be expected following the Cuban Revolution? — a true social revolution, giving rise to changes much more profound than anything in the American experience. How many more would have left the United States if 90 miles away lay the world's wealthiest nation welcoming their residence and promising all manner of benefits and rewards?

After the Cuban Revolution in January 1959, we learned that there are also good and bad hijackings. On several occasions Cuban planes and boats were hijacked to the United States but they were not returned to Cuba, nor were the hijackers punished. Instead, some of the planes and boats were seized by US authorities for non-payment of debts claimed by American firms against the Cuban government.<sup>4</sup> But then there were the bad hijackings — planes forced to fly from the United States to Cuba. When there began to be more of these than flights in the opposite direction, Washington was obliged to reconsider its policy.

It appears that there are as well good and bad terrorists. When the Israelis bombed PLO headquarters in Tunis in 1985, Ronald Reagan expressed his approval. The president asserted that nations have the right to retaliate against terrorist attacks “as long as you pick out the people responsible”.<sup>5</sup>

But if Cuba were to bomb any of the headquarters of the anti-Castro exiles in Miami or New Jersey, Ronald Reagan would likely go to war, though for 25

years the Castro government has been on the receiving end of an extraordinary series of terrorist attacks carried out in Cuba, in the United States, and in many other countries by the exiles and their CIA mentors. (We shall not discuss the consequences of Cuba bombing CIA headquarters.)

Bombing and strafing attacks of Cuba by planes based in the United States began in October 1959, if not before.<sup>6</sup> In early 1960, there were several fire-bomb air raids on Cuban cane fields and sugar mills, in which American pilots also took part — at least three died in crashes and two others were captured. The State Department acknowledged that one plane which crashed, killing two Americans, had taken off from Florida, but insisted that it was against the wishes of the US government.<sup>7</sup>

In March a French freighter unloading munitions from Belgium exploded in Havana taking 75 lives and injuring 200, some of whom subsequently died. The United States denied Cuba's accusation of sabotage but admitted that it had sought to prevent the shipment.<sup>8</sup>

And so it went . . . reaching a high point in April of the following year in the infamous CIA-organized invasion of Cuba at the Bay of Pigs. Over 100 exiles died in the attack as well as four Americans flying for the CIA. Close to 1,200 other exiles were taken prisoner by the Cubans.\*

The Bay of Pigs assault had relied heavily on the Cuban people rising up to join the invaders,<sup>10</sup> but this was not to be the case. As it was, the leadership and ranks of the exile forces were riddled with former supporters and henchmen of Fulgencio Batista, the dictator overthrown by Castro, and would not have been welcomed back by the Cubans under any circumstances.

Despite the fact that the Kennedy administration was acutely embarrassed by the unmitigated defeat — indeed, *because* of it — a campaign of smaller-scale attacks upon Cuba was initiated almost immediately. Throughout the 1960s, the Caribbean island was subjected to countless sea and air commando raids by exiles, at times accompanied by their CIA supervisors, inflicting damage upon oil refineries, chemical plants and railroad bridges, cane fields, sugar mills and sugar warehouses; infiltrating spies, saboteurs and assassins . . . anything to damage the Cuban economy and promote disaffection, taking the lives of Cuban militia members and others in the process . . . pirate attacks on Cuban fishing boats and merchant ships, bombardments of Soviet vessels docked in Cuba, an assault upon a Soviet army camp with twelve Russian soldiers reported wounded . . . a hotel and a theatre shelled from offshore because Russians and East Europeans were supposed to be present there . . .<sup>11</sup>

\* After the invasion, Castro appeared on a TV show in which he questioned, argued, and sometimes good-naturedly took abuse from about a thousand of the prisoners. “Now be honest,” he said to one of them. “You must surely realize that you are the first prisoner in history who has the privilege of arguing in front of the whole population of Cuba and the entire world with the head of a government which you came to overthrow.” The prisoners were returned to the United States in exchange for some \$62 million worth of medical supplies.<sup>9</sup>

These actions were not always carried out on the direct order of the CIA or with its foreknowledge, but the Agency could hardly plead "rogue elephant". It had created an operations headquarters in Miami that was truly a state within a city — over, above, and outside the laws of the United States, not to mention international law, with a permanent staff in excess of 300 Americans directing a few thousand Cuban agents in just such types of actions, with a budget of more than \$50 million a year.<sup>12</sup>

Title 18 of the US Code declares it to be a crime to launch a "military expedition or enterprise" from the United States against a country with which the United States is not (officially) at war. Although US authorities now and then aborted an exile plot or impounded a boat — employing a selectiveness, the criteria of which is unclear — no Cubans were prosecuted under this act. This was no more than to be expected inasmuch as Attorney-General Robert Kennedy had determined after the Bay of Pigs that the invasion did not constitute a military expedition.<sup>13</sup>

The commando raids were combined with a total US trade and credit embargo which continues to this day and which has genuinely hurt the Cuban economy and chipped away at the society's standard of living. So unyielding was the embargo that when Cuba was hard hit by a hurricane in October 1963, and Casa Cuba, a New York social club, raised a large quantity of clothing for relief, the United States refused to grant it an export license on the grounds that such shipment was "contrary to the national interest".<sup>14</sup> Moreover, pressure was brought to bear upon other countries to conform to the embargo, and goods destined for Cuba were sabotaged: machinery damaged, chemicals added to lubricating fluids to cause rapid wear on diesel engines, a manufacturer in West Germany paid to produce ball-bearings off-centre, another to do the same with balanced wheel gears — "You're talking about big money," said a CIA officer involved in the sabotage efforts, "when you ask a manufacturer to go along with you on that kind of project because he has to reset his whole mold. And he is probably going to worry about the effect on future business. You might have to pay him several hundred thousand dollars or more."<sup>15</sup>

One manufacturer who defied the embargo was the British Leyland Company which sold a large number of buses to Cuba in 1964. Repeated expressions of criticism and protest by Washington officials and Congressmen failed to stem deliveries of some of the buses. Then, in October, an East German cargo ship carrying another 42 buses to Cuba collided in thick fog with a Japanese vessel in the Thames. The Japanese ship was able to continue on, but the cargo ship was beached on its side; the buses would have to be "written off" said the Leyland company. In the leading British newspapers it was just an accident story.<sup>16</sup> In the *New York Times* it was not even reported. A decade was to pass before the American columnist Jack Anderson disclosed that his CIA and National Security Agency sources had confirmed that the collision had been arranged by the CIA with the co-operation of British intelligence.<sup>17</sup> Subsequently, another CIA officer stated that he was sceptical about the collision story, although admitting that "it is true that we were sabotaging the Leyland buses going to Cuba from England, and that was pretty sensitive business."<sup>18</sup>

What undoubtedly was a yet more sensitive undertaking was the use of chemical and biological weapons against Cuba by the United States. It is a remarkable record.

In August 1962, a British freighter under Soviet lease, having damaged its propeller on a reef, crept into San Juan harbour (Puerto Rico) for repairs. It was bound for a Soviet port with 80,000 bags of Cuban sugar. The ship was put into dry dock and 14,135 sacks of sugar were unloaded to a warehouse to facilitate the repairs. While in the warehouse, the sugar was contaminated by CIA agents with a harmless but unpalatable substance. When President Kennedy learned of the operation he was furious because it had taken place in US territory and if discovered could provide the Soviet Union with a propaganda field-day and could set a terrible precedent for chemical sabotage in the cold war. He directed that the sugar not be returned to the Russians, although what explanation was given to them is not publicly known.<sup>19</sup> Similar undertakings were apparently not cancelled. The CIA official who helped direct worldwide sabotage efforts, referred to above, later revealed that "There was lots of sugar being sent out from Cuba, and we were putting a lot of contaminants in it."<sup>20</sup>

The same year, a Canadian agricultural technician working as an adviser to the Cuban Government was paid \$5,000 by "an American military intelligence agent" to infect Cuban turkeys with a virus which would produce the fatal Newcastle disease. Subsequently, 8,000 turkeys died. The technician later claimed that although he had been to the farm where the turkeys had died, he had not actually administered the virus, but had instead pocketed the money, and that the turkeys had died from neglect and other causes unrelated to the virus. This may have been a self-serving statement. The *Washington Post* reported that "According to U.S. intelligence reports, the Cubans — and some Americans — believe the turkeys died as the result of espionage."<sup>21</sup>

Authors Warren Hinckle and William Turner, citing a participant in the project, have reported in their book on Cuba that:

During 1969 and 1970, the CIA deployed futuristic weather modification technology to ravage Cuba's sugar crop and undermine the economy. Planes from the China Lake Naval Weapons Center in the California desert, where hi tech was developed, overflew the island, seeding rain clouds with crystals that precipitated torrential rains over non-agricultural areas and left the cane fields arid (the downpours caused killer flash floods in some areas).<sup>22</sup>

In 1971, also according to participants, the CIA turned over to Cuban exiles a virus which causes African swine fever. Six weeks later, an outbreak of the disease in Cuba forced the slaughter of 500,000 pigs to prevent a nationwide animal epidemic. The outbreak, the first ever in the Western hemisphere, was called the "most alarming event" of the year by the United Nations Food and Agricultural Organization.<sup>23</sup>

Ten years later, the target may well have been human beings, as an epidemic of dengue fever swept the Cuban island. Transmitted by blood-eating insects, usually mosquitos, the disease produces severe flu symptoms and incapacitating bone pain. Between May and October 1981, over 300,000 cases were reported

in Cuba with 158 fatalities, 101 of which were children under 15.<sup>24</sup> In 1956 and 1958, declassified documents have revealed, the US Army loosed swarms of specially bred mosquitos in Georgia and Florida to see whether disease-carrying insects could be weapons in a biological war. The mosquitos bred for the tests were of the *Aedes Aegypti* type, the precise carrier of dengue fever as well as other diseases.<sup>25</sup> In 1967 it was reported by *Science* magazine that at the US government centre in Fort Detrick, Maryland, dengue fever was amongst those "diseases that are at least the objects of considerable research and that appear to be among those regarded as potential BW [biological warfare] agents."<sup>26</sup> Then, in 1984, a Cuban exile on trial in New York testified that in the latter part of 1980 a ship travelled from Florida to Cuba with

a mission to carry some germs to introduce them in Cuba to be used against the Soviets and against the Cuban economy, to begin what was called chemical war, which later on produced results that were not what we had expected, because we thought that it was going to be used against the Soviet forces, and it was used against our own people, and with that we did not agree.<sup>27</sup>

How it was expected that the germs would confine their actions to only Russians was not explained.

The full extent of American chemical and biological warfare against Cuba will never be known. Over the years, the Castro government has blamed the United States for a number of other plagues which afflicted various animals and crops.<sup>28</sup> It may be significant that CIA documents released in 1977, as reported by the *Washington Post*, disclosed that the Agency "maintained a clandestine 'anti-crop warfare' research program targeted during the 1960s at a number of countries throughout the world."<sup>29</sup> There was no indication in the documents of any actual attack against crops, but if such did take place it is reasonable to assume that one of the targets was Cuba.\*

The ingenuity which went into the chemical and biological warfare was apparent in some of the dozens of plans to assassinate or humiliate Fidel Castro. Devised by the CIA or Cuban exiles, with the co-operation of American mafiosi, the plans ranged from poisoning Castro's cigars and food to a chemical designed to make his hair and beard fall off and LSD to be

\* It came to pass that the United States felt the need to put some of its chemical and biological warfare (CBW) expertise into the hands of other nations. As of 1969, some 550 students, from 36 countries, had completed courses at the US Army's Chemical School at Fort McClellan, Alabama. The students from at least one country, Egypt, reportedly put their education to use. In 1967 they helped plan poison gas attacks upon Yemen. According to the International Red Cross, some 150 villagers gagged, coughed and bled to death.

The CBW instruction was provided to the students under the guise of "defence" against such weapons, just as in Vietnam, as we have seen, torture was taught. As will be described in the chapter on Uruguay, the manufacture and use of bombs was taught under the cover of combating terrorist bombings.<sup>30</sup>

administered just before a public speech. There were also of course the more traditional approaches of gun and bomb, one being an attempt to drop bombs on a baseball stadium while Castro was speaking; the B-26 bomber was driven away by anti-aircraft fire before it could reach the stadium.<sup>31</sup> It is a combination of such Cuban security measures, informers, incompetence, and luck which has served to keep the bearded one alive to the present day.

Attempts were also made on the lives of Castro's brother Raul and Che Guevara. The latter was the target of a bazooka fired at the United Nations building in New York in December 1964.<sup>32</sup> Various Cuban exile groups have engaged in violence on a regular basis in the United States with relative impunity during a quarter of a century. One of them, going by the name of Omega 7 and headquartered in Union City, New Jersey, was characterized by the FBI in 1980 as "the most dangerous terrorist organization in the United States".<sup>33</sup> Attacks against Cuba itself began to lessen around the end of the 1960s, due probably to a lack of conclusive results combined with ageing warriors, and exile groups turned to targets in the United States and around the world.

During the next decade, while the CIA continued to pour money into the exile community, more than 100 serious "incidents" took place for which Omega 7 and other groups claimed responsibility. (Within the community, the distinction between a terrorist and a non-terrorist group is not especially precise; there is much overlapping identity and frequent creation of new names.) There occurred repeated bombings of the Soviet UN Mission, its Washington Embassy, its automobiles, a Soviet ship docked in New Jersey, the offices of the Soviet airline Aeroflot, with a number of Russians injured from these attacks; several bombings of the Cuban UN Mission and its Interests Section in Washington, many attacks upon Cuban diplomats, including at least one murder; a bomb discovered at New York's Academy of Music in 1976 shortly before a celebration of the Cuban Revolution was to begin; a bombing two years later of the Lincoln Center after the Cuban ballet had performed; a bomb explosion in luggage at JFK Airport about to be loaded on a flight to Los Angeles. . . .<sup>34</sup> The single most violent act of this period was the blowing up of a Cuban Airlines plane shortly after it took off from Barbados on 6 October 1976, which took the lives of 73 people including the entire Cuban championship fencing team.<sup>35</sup>

Cuban exiles themselves have often come in for harsh treatment. Those who have visited Cuba for any reason whatever, or publicly suggested, however timidly, a rapprochement with the homeland, they too have been the victims of bombings and shootings in Florida and New Jersey. American groups advocating a resumption of diplomatic relations or an end to the embargo have been similarly attacked, as have travel agencies handling trips to Cuba and a pharmaceutical company in New Jersey which shipped medicines to the island. Dissent in Miami has been effectively silenced, while the police, city officials, and the media look the other way, when not actually demonstrating support for the exiles' campaign of intimidation.<sup>36</sup> In Miami and elsewhere, the CIA has long been employing exiles to spy on their countrymen, to keep files on them

as well as on Americans who associate with them. Ostensibly carried out to uncover Castro agents, the tactic has had other obvious uses.<sup>37</sup>

Although there has always been the extreme lunatic fringe in the Cuban exile community (as opposed to the normal lunatic fringe) insisting that Washington has sold out their cause, over the years there has been only the occasional arrest and conviction of an exile for a terrorist attack in the United States, so occasional that the exiles can only assume that Washington's heart is not wholly in it. The exile groups and their key members are well known to the authorities, for the anti-Castroites have not excessively shied away from publicity. They continue to train openly in southern Florida and southern California; pictures of them flaunting their weapons appear in the press.<sup>38</sup> The CIA, with its countless contacts-cum-informers amongst the exiles, can fill in many of the missing pieces for the FBI and the police, if it wished to. In 1980, in a detailed report on Cuban-exile terrorism, *The Village Voice* of New York stated:

Two stories were squeezed out of New York police officials . . . 'You know, it's funny,' said one cautiously, 'there have been one or two things . . . but let's put it this way. You get just so far on a case and suddenly the dust is blown away. Case closed. You ask the CIA to help, and they say they aren't really interested. You get the message.'

Another investigator said he was working on a narcotics case involving Cuban exiles a couple of years ago, and telephone records he obtained showed a frequently dialed number in Miami. He said he traced the number to a company called Zodiac, 'which turned out to be a CIA front.' He dropped his investigation.<sup>39</sup>

In 1961, amid much fanfare, the Kennedy administration unveiled its showpiece programme, the Alliance for Progress. Conceived as a direct response to Castro's Cuba, it was meant to prove that genuine social change could take place in Latin America without resort to revolution or socialism. 'If the only alternatives for the people of Latin America are the status quo and communism,' said John F. Kennedy, 'then they will inevitably choose communism.'<sup>40</sup>

The multi-billion dollar Alliance programme established for itself an ambitious set of goals which it hoped to achieve by the end of the decade. These had to do with economic growth, more equitable distribution of national income, reduced unemployment, agrarian reform, education, housing, health, etc. In 1970, the Twentieth Century Fund of New York — whose list of officers reads like a *Who's Who* in the government/industry revolving-door world — undertook a study to evaluate how close the Alliance had come to realizing its objectives. One of the study's conclusions was that Cuba, which was not one of the recipient countries, had

come closer to some of the Alliance objectives than most Alliance members. In education and public health, no country in Latin America has carried out such ambitious and nationally comprehensive programs. Cuba's centrally planned

economy has done more to integrate the rural and urban sectors (through a national income distribution policy) than the market economies of the other Latin American countries.<sup>41</sup>

Cuba's agrarian reform programme as well was recognized as having been more widespread than that of any other Latin American country, although the study took a wait-and-see attitude towards its results.<sup>42</sup>

These and other economic and social gains — achieved despite the US embargo and the inordinate amount of resources and labour Cuba was obliged to devote to defence and security — served finally to still announcements of the collapse of the Cuban economy and the imminent downfall of Fidel Castro which were a regular feature of *Time* and other American publications throughout the 1960s.

This was but one aspect of what has been a relentless effort to disparage the Cuban government. The CIA and the State Department have counted that day lost in which one or the other did not add to the folklore, from the 1963 scheme to affix a Cuban connection to Lee Harvey Oswald, to the 1980s campaign to link the Cuban government to drug smuggling, mafia criminality, and international terrorism. Many other examples appear elsewhere in this book. In addition to its vast overseas journalistic empire, the Agency has maintained anti-Castro news-article factories in the United States for over two decades. The CIA has reportedly subsidized in Miami such publications as *Avance*, *El Mundo*, *El Prensa Libre*, *Bohemia* and *El Diario de Las Americas*, as well as AIP, a radio news agency that produced programmes sent free of charge to more than 100 small stations in Latin America. Two Agency fronts in New York, Foreign Publications, Inc. and Editors Press Service, also served as part of the propaganda system.<sup>43</sup>

Was it inevitable that the United States would attempt to topple the Cuban government? Could relations between the two neighbouring countries have taken a different path? Based on the American record of invariable hostility towards revolutionary governments, the answer would appear to be simply that there is no reason to believe that Cuba might have been an exception. Washington officials, however, were not immediately ill-disposed towards the Cuban Revolution; there were those who even expressed their tentative approval or optimism. This was evidently based on the belief that what had taken place in Cuba was little more than another Latin American change in government, the kind which had occurred with monotonous regularity for over a century, where the names and faces change but subservience to the United States remains fixed. (The fact that John Foster Dulles was dying of cancer at

\* Though not amongst the stated objectives of the Alliance, there is another area of importance in which Cuba has stood apart from many of its Latin neighbours: there has been no torture, no legions of *desaparecidos*, no death squads.

this time, did contribute to the atmosphere of tolerance. (Dulles left the State Department early in February 1959, a month after the revolution. One of his last acts was to withdraw the US military mission from Cuba.)

Then Castro revealed himself to be cut from a wholly different cloth. It was not to be business as usual in the Caribbean. He soon became outspoken in his criticism of the United States. He referred acrimoniously to the 60 years of American control of Cuba; how, at the end of those 60 years, the masses of Cubans found themselves impoverished; how the United States used the sugar quota as a threat. He spoke of the unacceptable presence of the Guantanamo base; and he made it clear enough to Washington that Cuba would pursue a policy of independence and neutralism in the cold war. It was for just such reasons that Castro and Che Guevara had forsaken the prosperous bourgeois careers awaiting them in law and medicine to lead the revolution in the first place. Compromise was not on their agenda; nor on Washington's, which was not prepared to live with such men and such a government; inevitably, "communist" became the description of choice when referring to Castro or his regime.

In April 1959, after meeting with Castro in Washington, Vice President Richard Nixon wrote a memo in which he stated that he was convinced that Castro was "either incredibly naive about Communism or under Communist discipline" and that the Cuban leader would have to be treated and dealt with accordingly. Nixon says that his opinion at this time was a minority one within the Eisenhower administration.<sup>44</sup> But before the year was over, CIA Director Allen Dulles had decided that an invasion of Cuba was necessary. In March of 1960, it was approved by President Eisenhower.<sup>45</sup> Then came the embargo, leaving Castro no alternative but to turn more and more to the Soviet Union, thus confirming in the minds of Washington officials that Castro was indeed a communist. Some speculated that he had been a covert Red all along.

If Castro had toned down his early rhetoric and observed the usual diplomatic niceties, but still pursued the policies of self-determination and socialism which he felt were best for Cuba (or inescapable if certain changes were to be realized), he could only have postponed the day of reckoning, and that not for long. Arbenz of Guatemala, Mossadegh of Iran, and many other leaders have gone out of their way to avoid stepping on Washington's toes unnecessarily, and have been much less radical in their programmes and in their stance toward the United States than Cuba; yet, nonetheless, all of them fell under the CIA axe.

In 1974, by way of marking 15 years of American hostility towards Cuba, Castro observed that "Cuba is the only country in the world where John Foster Dulles is still Secretary of State."<sup>46</sup>

## 31. Indonesia 1965 Liquidating President Sukarno . . . and 500,000 others

Armed with wide-bladed knives called *parangs*, Moslem bands crept at night into the homes of communists, killing entire families . . . Travellers . . . tell of small rivers and streams that have been literally clogged with bodies. River transportation has at places been seriously impeded.

*Time*, December 1965<sup>1</sup>

Nearly 100 Communists, or suspected Communists, were herded into the town's botanical garden and mowed down with a machine gun . . . the head that had belonged to the school principal, a P.K.I. [Communist Party] member, was stuck on a pole and paraded among his former pupils, convened in special assembly.

*New York Times*, May 1966<sup>2</sup>

Estimates of the total number of Indonesians murdered over a period of several years following an aborted coup range from 500,000 to one million.<sup>3</sup>

In the early morning hours of 1 October 1965, a small force of junior military officers abducted and killed six generals and seized several key points in the capital city of Jakarta. They then went on the air to announce that their action was being taken to forestall a *putsch* by a "Generals' Council" scheduled for Army Day, the fifth of October. The *putsch*, they said, had been sponsored by the CIA and was aimed at capturing power from President Sukarno. By the end of the day, however, the rebel officers in Jakarta has been crushed by the army under the direction of General Suharto, although some dissident army groups in other cities, engaged in supporting actions, held out for a day or two longer.<sup>4</sup>

Suharto — a man who has served both the Dutch colonialists and the Japanese invaders<sup>5</sup> — and his colleagues charged that the large and influential PKI was behind the coup\* attempt, and that behind the party stood Communist China. The triumphant armed forces moved in to grab the reins of government, curb Sukarno's authority (before long he was reduced to little more than a

\* The word "coup" is used for want of a better word to describe the venture of the junior military officers; it was not a coup attempt in the traditional sense of the word.

figurehead), and carry out a bloodbath to eliminate once and for all the PKI with whom Sukarno had obliged them to share national power for many years. Here at last was the situation which could legitimize these long-desired actions.

Anti-Communist organizations and individuals, particularly Muslims, were encouraged to join in the slaying of anyone suspected of being a PKI sympathizer. Indonesians of Chinese descent as well fell victim to crazed zealots. The Indonesian people were stirred up in part by the display of photographs on television and in the press of badly decomposed bodies of the slain generals. The men, the public was told, had been castrated and their eyes gouged out by Communist women. The autopsies, however, revealed no such mutilations.<sup>6</sup>

What ensued was called by the *New York Times* "one of the most savage mass slaughters of modern political history"<sup>7</sup> . . . violence, wrote *Life* magazine, "tinged not only with fanaticism but with blood-lust and something like witchcraft."<sup>8</sup>

Though the massacre put an end to the well-organized PKI national organization, it did not put to rest the basic questions underlying the events of 1965, to wit:

Was there in actual fact a Generals' Council aiming to take over the government within a matter of days? A semi-official account of the whole affair published in Indonesia in 1968 denied the existence of the Council.<sup>9</sup> However, a study written and published by the CIA the same year confirmed that there was indeed a Generals' Council but that its purpose was only to plan how to protect itself from a purported plan of Sukarno to crush the army.<sup>10</sup>

What was the nature and extent, if any, of PKI involvement in the aborted coup? Did some members of the party know of the junior officers' plans in advance and simply lend moral support, or did they take a more active role? The semi-official account stated that the PKI's aim was not to seize political power for itself but to "prevent the army from eliminating the Party after Sukarno's death."<sup>11</sup> (Sukarno had suffered a kidney attack in August, although he quickly recovered. His part in the affair also remains largely a mystery.) The CIA study comes to a similar conclusion: "it now seems clear that the Indonesian coup was not a move to overthrow Sukarno and/or the established government of Indonesia. Essentially, it was a purge of the Army leadership."<sup>12</sup>

What was the role, if any, of the CIA? Was the coup attempt instigated by an agent provocateur who spread the story of the Generals' Council and its imminent *putsch*? (The killing, or even the abduction, of the six generals probably could not have been foreseen — three of them were actually slain resisting abduction.)<sup>13</sup> Was PKI participation induced to provide the excuse for its destruction? There are, in fact, indications of an agent provocateur in the unfolding drama, one Kamarusaman bin Ahmed Mubaidah, known as "Sjam". According to the later testimony of some of the arrested officers, it was Sjam who pushed the idea of the hostile Generals' Council and for the need to counteract it. At the trials and in the CIA study, the attempt is made to establish that, in so doing, Sjam was acting on behalf of PKI leader Aidit — the obvious

purpose behind the Agency taking the unique step of publishing such a book was clearly to assign responsibility for the coup attempt to the PKI so as to "justify" the horror which followed.

But Sjam could just as easily have been acting for the CIA and/or the generals in the same manner. He apparently was a trusted aide of Aidit and could have induced the PKI leader into the plot instead of the other way around. Sjam had a politically checked and mysterious background, and his testimony at one of the trials, in which he appeared as a defendant, was aimed at establishing Aidit as the sole director of the coup attempt.<sup>14</sup>

The CIA, in its intimate involvement in Indonesian political affairs since at least the mid-1950s (cf. Indonesia, 1957-58 chapter), had undoubtedly infiltrated the PKI at various levels, and the military even more so, and was in a good position to disseminate disinformation and plant the ideas for certain actions, whether through Sjam or others.

The desire of the US government to be rid of Sukarno — a leader of the non-aligned and anti-imperialist movements of the Third World, and a protector of the PKI — did not diminish with the failure of the 1958 military uprising. Amongst the various reports of the early 1960s indicating a continuing interest in this end, a CIA memorandum of June 1962 is strikingly to the point. The author of the memo, whose name is deleted, was reporting on the impressions he had received from conversations with "western diplomats" concerning a recent meeting between President Kennedy and British Prime Minister Macmillan. The two leaders agreed, said the memo, to attempt to isolate Sukarno in Asia and Africa. Further, "They agreed to liquidate President Sukarno, depending upon the situation and available opportunities. (It is not clear to me [the CIA officer] whether *murder* or *overthrow* is intended by the word liquidate.)"<sup>15</sup>

Whatever was intended, Sukarno was now, for all practical purposes, eliminated as an international thorn in the flesh. Of even greater significance, the PKI, which had been the largest Communist Party in the world outside the Soviet bloc, had been decimated, its tattered remnants driven underground. It could not have worked out better for the United States and the new military junta if it had been planned.

If the generals had been planning their own coup as alleged, the evidence is compelling that the United States was intimately involved before, during and after the events of 1 October. One aspect of this evidence is the closeness of the relationship between the American and Indonesian military establishments which the United States had been cultivating for some years. President Kennedy, his former aide Arthur Schlesinger has written, was "anxious to strengthen the anti-communist forces, especially the army, in order to make sure that, if anything happened to Sukarno, the powerful Indonesian Communist Party would not inherit the country."<sup>16</sup>

Roger Hilsman, whose career spanned the CIA and the State Department, has noted that by 1963 . . .

one-third of the Indonesian general staff had had some sort of training from Americans and almost half of the officer corps. As a result of both the civic action

project and the training program, the American and Indonesian military had come to know each other rather well. Bonds of personal respect and even affection existed . . .<sup>17</sup>

This observation is reinforced by reports of the House Committee on Foreign Affairs:

At the time of the attempted Communist coup and military counter-coup of October 1965, more than 1,200 Indonesian officers including senior military figures, had been trained in the United States. As a result of this experience, numerous friendships and contacts existed between the Indonesian and American military establishments, particularly between members of the two armies. In the post-coup period, when the political situation was still unsettled, the United States, using these existing channels of communication, was able to provide the anti-Communist forces with moral and token material support.<sup>18</sup>

When the average MAP [Military Assistance Program] trainee returns home he may well have some American acquaintances and a fair appreciation of the United States. This impact may provide some valuable future opportunity for communication as occurred in Indonesia during and immediately after the attempted Communist-backed coup of October 1965.<sup>19</sup>

The CIA, wrote the *New York Times*, was said "to have been so successful at infiltrating the top of the Indonesian government and army that the United States was reluctant to disrupt CIA covering operations by withdrawing aid and information programs in 1964 and 1965. What was presented officially in Washington as toleration of President Sukarno's insults and provocations was in much larger measure a desire to keep the CIA fronts in business as long as possible."<sup>20</sup>

Finally, we have the testimony of Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara before a Senate Committee in 1966:

*Senator Sparkman:* At a time when Indonesia was kicking up pretty badly — when we were getting a lot of criticism for continuing military aid — at that time we could not say what that military aid was for. Is it secret any more?

*McNamara:* I think in retrospect, that the aid was well justified.

*Sparkman:* You think it paid dividends?

*McNamara:* I do, sir.<sup>21</sup>

There are other statements which may be pertinent to the question of American involvement. Marshall Green, the US Ambassador to Indonesia at the time of the coup attempt, speaking in Australia in 1973 where he was then Ambassador, is reported as saying: "In 1965 I remember, Indonesia was poised at the razor's edge. I remember people arguing from here that Indonesia wouldn't go communist. But when Sukarno announced in his August 17 speech that Indonesia would have a communist government within a year [?], then I was almost certain . . . what we did we had to do, and you'd better be glad we did because if we hadn't Asia would be a different place today."<sup>22</sup>

James Reston, writing in the *New York Times* in 1966:

Washington is being careful not to claim any credit for this change [from Sukarno to Suharto] . . . but this does not mean that Washington had nothing to do with it. There was a great deal more contact between the anti-Communist forces in that country and at least one very high official in Washington before and during the Indonesian massacre than is generally realized. General Suharto's forces, at times severely short of food and munitions, have been getting aid from here through various third countries, and it is doubtful if the [Suharto] coup would ever have been attempted without the American show of strength in Vietnam or been sustained without the clandestine aid it has received indirectly from here.<sup>23</sup>

Neville Maxwell, Senior Research Officer, Institute of Commonwealth Studies, Oxford University:

A few years ago I was researching in Pakistan into the diplomatic background of the 1965 Indo-Pakistan conflict, and in foreign ministry papers to which I had been given access came across a letter to the then foreign minister, Mr Bhutto, from one of his ambassadors in Europe (I believe Mr J.A. Rahim, in Paris) reporting a conversation with a Dutch intelligence officer with NATO. According to my note of that letter, the officer had remarked to the Pakistani diplomat that Indonesia was 'ready to fall into the Western lap like a rotten apple'. Western intelligence agencies, he said, would organize a 'pre-mature communist coup . . . [which would be] foredoomed to fail, providing a legitimate and welcome opportunity to the army to crush the communists and make Soekarno a prisoner of the army's goodwill'. The ambassador's report was dated December 1964.<sup>24</sup>

It should be remembered that Indonesia had been a colony of the Netherlands, and the Dutch still had some special links to the country.

Twenty years after General Suharto imposed his "New Order" upon Indonesia, the slaughter continues. Death squads roam at will, killing not only "subversives" but "suspected criminals" by the thousands.<sup>25</sup> The government administers the nation on the level of Chicago gangsters of the 1930s running a protection racket. Political prisoners overflow the jails. Torture is routine.<sup>26</sup>

The wiping out of the PKI became an inspiration to anti-communists the world over. Military leaders in Turkey, Thailand and elsewhere have spoken of following Indonesia's example. In Chile, before the coup which ousted Salvador Allende, "Jakarta, Jakarta" could be seen chalked on walls.<sup>27</sup>

### And 100,000 more

In 1975 Indonesia invaded the former Portuguese colony of East Timor which lies at the eastern end of the Indonesian archipelago and which had proclaimed its independence after Portugal relinquished its control. Since that time, with the aim of forcibly annexing East Timor, Indonesian troops have killed well over

100,000 Timorese out of a population of between six and seven hundred thousand, with a level of atrocity equal to that carried out against the PKI in Indonesia itself. The invasion of 7 December 1975 — of which, said the *New York Times*: "By any definition, Indonesia is guilty of naked aggression"<sup>28</sup> — was launched the day after US President Gerald Ford and Secretary of State Henry Kissinger left Indonesia following a meeting with President Suharto. Columnist Jack Anderson later reported:

By December 3, 1975, an intelligence dispatch to Washington reported that 'Ranking Indonesian civilian government leaders have decided that the only solution in the Portuguese Timor situation is for Indonesia to launch an open offensive against Fretlin [the leading East Timorese political/guerrilla movement].'

But it was essential to neutralize the United States. For the Indonesian army relied heavily on U.S. arms which, under our laws, could not be used for aggression.

As it happened, President Gerald Ford was on his way to Indonesia for a state visit. An intelligence report forewarned that Suharto would bring up the Timor issue and would 'try and elicit a sympathetic attitude.'

That Suharto succeeded is confirmed by Ford himself. The United States had suffered a devastating setback in Vietnam, leaving Indonesia as the most important American ally in the area. The U.S. national interest, Ford concluded, 'had to be on the side of Indonesia.'

Ford gave his tacit approval on December 6, 1975 . . . Five days after the invasion, the United Nations voted to condemn the attack as an arrant act of international aggression. The United States abstained. Thereafter, the U.S. delegate maneuvered behind the scenes to resist U.N. moves aimed at forcing Indonesia to give up its conquest.<sup>29</sup>

Since the invasion, US State Department officials, in statements to the press and in testimony before Congress, have consistently supported Indonesia's claim to East Timor and have downplayed the slaughter to a remarkable extent. Meanwhile, the omnipresent American military advisers, the training, the weapons, the helicopter gunships, and all the other instruments indispensable to efficient, modern counter-insurgency warfare, have been kept flowing into the hands of the Indonesian military. This may not be all, for Fretlin has reported on a number of occasions that American advisers have been directing and even participating in the combat.<sup>30</sup>

## 32. Ghana 1966 Kwame Nkrumah steps out of line

In October of the year 1965, Kwame Nkrumah, the President of Ghana, published his now-famous book, *Neo-Colonialism — The Last Stage of Imperialism*, dedicated to "the Freedom Fighters of Africa, living and dead". In the book, Nkrumah accused the CIA of being behind numerous setbacks and crises in the Third World and Eastern Europe. Nkrumah later wrote that "the American Government sent me a note of protest, and promptly refused Ghana \$35 million of 'aid'."<sup>31</sup> Four months later he was overthrown in a CIA-backed military coup.

To be sure, the coup-makers — members of the Ghanaian army and police — had their own motivations. They were fearful of having their powers stripped from them by a suspicious Nkrumah who was building up his own private army, and they were intent upon furthering their individual professional careers and status. Within days, even hours, of the successful coup in February 1966, majors had become colonels and colonels had become generals. There was more than a touch of the Keystone Kops to the whole episode.

Kwame Nkrumah was a man who, during the Great Depression, had roamed Harlem, slept in the subway and lined up at Father Divine's soup kitchens. Later he was to be hailed as "Africa's brightest star", a leader in the call for an anti-imperialist, pan-African organization and an international non-aligned movement. But from all accounts, Nkrumah engaged in idiosyncratic, one-man rule and thought that socialism could be promoted by edict from above. And though he spoke out boldly against neo-colonialism, he was unable, ultimately, to keep Ghana from falling under the sway of the multinationals. When Nkrumah attempted to lessen Ghana's dependence on the West by strengthening economic and military ties to the Soviet Union, China and East Germany, he effectively sealed his fate.

The United States wanted him out. Great Britain, the former colonial power in Ghana when it was known as the Gold Coast, wanted him out. France and West Germany wanted him out. Those Ghanaians who carried out the coup suffered from no doubts that a move against Nkrumah would be supported by the Western powers.

At the time of the coup, the Soviet press charged that the CIA had been involved, and in 1972 *The Daily Telegraph*, the conservative London newspaper, reported that "By 1965 the Accra [capital of Ghana] CIA Station had two-score active operators, distributing largesse among President