

THE COLD WAR COMES TO YBOR CITY:
TAMPA BAY'S CHAPTER OF THE FAIR
PLAY FOR CUBA COMMITTEE

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By

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This thesis was prepared under the direction of the candidate's thesis advisor Dr. William Marina, Department of History, and has been approved by the members of his supervisory committee. It was submitted to the faculty of the Dorothy F. Schmidt College of Arts and Letters and was accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts.

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ABSTRACT

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Fidel Castro's revolution had support from groups in the United States that saw the dictator in a different light than did the anti-communists who opposed him. The most prominent of these groups was the Fair Play for Cuba Committee, which tried to mend the break in US-Cuban diplomatic relations.

The very active Tampa chapter existed in a city with a large Cuban-American and émigré population. It also existed in a Cold War environment, and was viewed similarly to other chapters by government anti-subversives. This organization ceased operations after one of its members was accused of assassinating President Kennedy. The assassination determined its legacy for decades to come. When government records on the Fair Play for Cuba Committee were declassified, the group could again be put into the perspective of the Cold War and Cuba.

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INTRODUCTION

*Proverbs XXVI. 5-6: Answer not a fool according to his folly, lest thou be like him.
Answer a fool according to his folly, lest he be wise in his own conceit.*

Most Cold War historians generally acknowledge the Cuban Missile Crisis to be one of the defining moments of the Cold War. Consequently, events related to Castro's Cuba, its rise to power, and its perceived danger to the United States and the western hemisphere took on more importance. For an example, John Lewis Gaddis's *We Now Know: Rethinking Cold War History*, expresses the importance of the missile crisis in relation to an overall understanding of the Cold War, and the balance of power struggle between the United States [US] and the Soviet Union. While Gaddis only touched upon the Missile Crisis in relation to Cuba, other Cuban related events leading up to it remain a major confrontational point in the Cold War.¹

The Bay of Pigs invasion, the covert war against Castro, and repercussions imagined by US policy makers regarding policy toward Latin American were precursors to the missile crisis. A tiny island nation became important in many ways, which not only belied the rivalry between the two great superpowers, but also led to a renewal in domestic fear of Communist subversion by both liberal and conservative anti-Communists.

The pro-Castro Fair Play for Cuba Committee [FPCC] came to the attention of US foreign and domestic policy makers in 1960, as it formed to counter the bad press

¹ John Lewis Gaddis. *We Now Know: Rethinking Cold War History*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1997.

and deteriorating relations toward Castro's revolution. The organization came under scrutiny from the Senate Internal Security Committee, the FBI, state investigative agencies, and local police intelligence units. In foreign policy, it also found cause for concern from both Kennedy and Eisenhower administration officials in the State Department, the CIA, as well as from presidential special advisors. Likewise, the Tampa Bay branch of that organization was also closely scrutinized.

The many early books on the Cuban revolution dating to the early 1960s, with works by Theodore Draper, Herbert Matthews, William Appleman Williams, Thomas G. Paterson and others generally dwelled on the 26th of July Movement, but not the FPCC. The sole book on the FPCC was by Van Gosse, but it had scant mention of the very active Tampa chapter. Robert Taber, a founding member of the FPCC did even worse. This journalist, who visited Castro in the Sierra Maestra, and edited the FPCC newsletter, did not contribute anything to the literature analyzing the group that he helped found. None of these books, with the exception of Van Gosses's work, addressed the Cold War and its relation to the American pro-Castro movement at any length.

Other books which dealt indirectly with the FPCC were books on the Kennedy assassination. These books confined themselves to assassination related issues. Thus their main focus was the issue of Lee Harvey Oswald, and his short stint as an FPCC member in the summer of 1963. One of the better ones was by Warren Hinckle and William Turner. But even this one focused on New Orleans and Miami, and not

Tampa. It was primarily interested in anti-Castro exile groups and their CIA connections.²

In fairness to these authors, materials on both Cuba and the FPCC were not earlier available because of the secrecy involved due to the ongoing Cold War. Much of the reliance of a study on the Tampa chapter is based on the release of government documents as the FBI, CIA and a variety of federal and state and local agencies which coordinated investigations. John Lewis Gaddis, widely considered one of the pre-eminent Cold War historians, addresses the issue of opening documents and updating the historical record, but does not do so solely for Cuba. This thesis attempts to add to the knowledge of this facet of Cold War history.

Chapter 1 entitled *Beginnings: The Origins of Radicalism in Tampa As Precursor to the FPCC*, deals with the Ybor City area of Tampa, which historically, was a settlement for Cuban, Italian and Spanish immigrants. Many of these immigrants came over in the latter part of the Nineteenth Century, and became part of a burgeoning cigar industry.

The Cuban population in particular had a strong influence on Ybor City culture. Cuba's legendary patriot José Martí described the struggle of Cubans against both Spanish oppression, and American opportunism toward the Cuban revolution. He called the war one of independence for Cubans, and described it in the context of

² Some of the books cited in this thesis, which are by the authors in this introduction are Draper's *Castroism: Theory and Practice*; Matthews's *Fidel Castro*; Williams's *The United States, Cuba and Castro*; and Paterson's *Contesting Castro: The United States and the Triumph of the Cuban Revolution*. Van Gosse wrote *Where the Boys Are: Cuba, Cold War America and the making of the New Left*. Robert Taber wrote *M-26: Biography of a Revolution*; Warren Hinckle and William Turner wrote a book entitled *Deadly Secrets: The CIA War Against Castro and the Assassination of JFK*.

the “redemptive virtue of just wars that would join all Cubans around the burning idea of decent redemption.”³ Thus was born an idea of the Cuban patriot. It put an indelible mark not only on later revolutionaries like Fidel Castro in Cuba, but also on the Cuban and Latin community in Tampa.

Tampa carried that radical tradition through the Twentieth Century, with newspaper publisher Don Victoriano Mantiaga of *La Gaceta*, supporting Cuban exiles from the brutal dictatorships of Machado and Batista, and the Spaniards who fought against the Franco rebellion in the 1930s. His independent tri-lingual newspaper provided the news to a nominally segregated Latin community. This paper proved to be not only a bulwark against the dominant Anglo-American community in Tampa, but also took issue with Communists in Ybor City, who supported Joseph Stalin during the Russo-Finnish War.⁴ Mantiaga courageously fought off both extreme elements, and gained for himself respect and credibility in Ybor City.

When Fidel Castro came to Tampa in 1955 to raise funds and solicit support, Mantiaga supported him. But after the US State Department identified Castro’s 26th of July Movement as an agent of Cuba, Mantiaga resigned.

In the early 1960s, Tampa’s Castro supporters clashed with the growing ranks of angry exiled Batista supporters. In Cuba, harsh measures such as property confiscation, and executions of the captured Batista loyalists became common policy.

³ Louis A. Pérez, Jr. *Cuba: Between Reform and Revolution*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1988.

⁴ Roland Mantiaga. “As We Heard It.” *La Gaceta*. December 22, 1961.

Consequently, mainstream press reports concerning Cuban atrocities increasingly reflected condemnation by moderates, such as the *St. Petersburg Times*.⁵

In January 1961 the Eisenhower administration broke diplomatic relations with Cuba. Consequently, the Castro-led 26th of July Movement, which liberated Cuba before the revolution, became associated with a government hostile to the United States. It soon ceased operations in Tampa. But a new pro-Castro group already was forming, and called itself the Fair Play for Cuba Committee. It was somewhat different from the older pro-Castro group, since it came about after was Castro was already in power. When Cuba formed ties with the Soviet bloc, the FPCC and its defense of Castro increasingly became part of the Cold War.

Chapter 2, entitled *Justo Trato Para Cuba: The Cold War Comes to Ybor City*, chronicles both the development of the FPCC, and the reaction of the US government's foreign policy makers to events in Cuba and to the FPCC. Throughout this organization's existence from 1960-1963, the Tampa chapter of the FPCC was linked to the national chapter. It managed to maintain its own unique identity in a city whose own historic Cuban and radical roots fueled the group's very existence.

By late 1961 the very active Tampa chapter had established its own newsletter, and drew attention from both Castro supporters outside Florida, and anti-Castro Cuban exiles and a variety of government operatives. As the national chapter declined, having been rankled with senate investigations, the Bay of Pigs invasion

⁵ "Castro Risking His Own Success." editorial. *St. Petersburg Times*. 8-A.

and the break in diplomatic relations, the Tampa chapter took on additional importance. Its increased visibility brought the Cold War conflict to the streets of Ybor City.

After several major confrontations were reported in the Tampa newspapers between pro and anti-Castroites in Ybor City's Martí Park in late 1961, the FPCC was shaken, and temporarily declined. But the FPCC newsletter *Tampa Fair Play* retaliated and chastised the anti-Castro Cuban Revolutionary Council for its role in the battles of Martí Park. While there were dark hints of US intelligence involvement in agitating the disorders, anti-Castroites countered that Castro had agents in Tampa who were responsible for instigating the rioting.⁶

Soon after the Martí Park incidents, Tampa chapter head V.T. Lee left Tampa, traveled to Cuba, and settled in New York to become the new national director. He still influenced the Tampa chapter, and acknowledged its importance even after a national decline in this organization. In 1962 and 1963, the Tampa Fair Play chapter continued to criticize US foreign policy toward Cuba. The paper was especially vigorous in its attacks on anti-Castro refugees who actively worked against Castro.

Chapter 3, entitled *Hunting Reds: Federal, State, and Local Investigations Into the FPCC* addresses the domestic Cold War anti-subversion reaction in the US to the FPCC. It performs the same function that Chapter 2 did for foreign policy issues. Chapter 3 focuses on investigations by federal, state, and local government agencies

⁶ Roland Mantiega. "As We Heard It." *La Gaceta*. December 22, 1961. 12. Numerous accounts in both the *Tampa Tribune* and *Tampa Times* as well as the FPCC newsletter *Tampa Fair Play*, chronicled these activities.

during the Eisenhower and Kennedy administrations. By 1963, this supposedly defunct organization underwent intense scrutiny by the Eastland Committee. Under Senator James O. Eastland, the FPCC came to the Senate Internal Security sub-Committee attention as early as 1960. But in early 1963, the senate committee called V.T. Lee in to testify on his FPCC activities both in New York and Tampa. Lee's testimony, and that of FPCC foe Florida Congressman Bill Cramer again showed the importance of the Tampa chapter.

In addition to the federal scrutiny, the FPCC came to the attention of various state and local investigative agencies. The Florida State Legislative Investigative Committee [aka—The Johns Committee] investigated both the Tampa and national chapters. This committee relied on informants and sent investigators to locations where the FPCC met and distributed leaflets and newsletters.

At least three city police intelligence units kept files and conducted surveillance on the Tampa FPCC. These included Miami, Tampa, and New Orleans. In addition the police units also cooperated with each other, and with the US senate committee investigating the organization.

Chapter 4, entitled *From Tampa to Dallas and Beyond: The Last Days of the Tampa FPCC and the Investigations that Followed* investigates the relation between the FPCC and the assassination of President Kennedy. While not attempting to answer the ubiquitous question of who killed Kennedy, it instead shows that the assassination had an effect on the organization and future investigations related to the beleaguered group. The Fair Play for Cuba Committee was identified with the

assassination of President Kennedy because accused assassin Lee Harvey Oswald was identified as a member soon after his arrest on November 22, 1963. Three months earlier Oswald had been arrested in New Orleans after an altercation with anti-Castro exiles. He had been passing out pro-Castro literature.

After Oswald was killed by Jack Ruby, a Dallas nightclub owner, his links to both the Kennedy assassination and the FPCC become murkier in the public eye. Having Oswald, Kennedy's alleged assassin, as one of its members, gave the group overwhelming negative publicity. This resulted in its breakup one month following the assassination.

Government classified files on the FPCC up to the point of the assassination were related to the Cold War and Cuba. After the assassination, investigative files on the FPCC were moved from a general Cold War classification to become part of the Kennedy assassination investigative files. Dr. Anna Kasten Nelson, of the Assassination Records Review Board stated in an interview that the result of this change made accessibility to FPCC records much more difficult than if they had remained in the general Cold War perspective.⁷

In the months following the assassination, a predictable veil of secrecy ensued with the commencement of the Warren Commission investigation. However, when the Warren Commission ended its inquiry and reported in late 1964 that Oswald was the sole assassin, the government's imposed secrecy remained intact. This conclusion did nothing to make the FPCC [and Kennedy assassination files] more available. This

closure increased the level of secrecy, even after this milestone in the post-Kennedy era had ended. Books putting forth conspiracy theories abounded. The authors of these works on the Kennedy assassination admittedly did not have all the answers, but they were correct when they said the government was withholding information.

Similar problems of disclosure and secrecy arose in later investigations. They were apparent in both the 1975 Church Committee, and the 1976-1978 House Select Committee on Assassinations. It was not until 1992 with passage of the JFK Records Collection Act, that investigative records into both the assassination and the Oswald associated FPCC changed the government's rigid adherence to secrecy.

The FPCC as a defender of Fidel Castro, related to facets of the Cold War diplomatically in its reaction to American foreign policy; domestically because it was intensely investigated by anti-subversives; and in its demise because of its unavoidable relation to Lee Harvey Oswald and the Kennedy assassination.

The importance of Cuba in the Cold War was enhanced by the new openness in regard once classified records being opened. Kennedy's obsession with Cuba led to the Bay of Pigs, the Cuban Missile Crisis, and to criticism from the left in the form of the Fair Play for Cuba Committee. His presidency proved to be a Cold War battleground. And the FPCC, whether wittingly or not, proved itself to be an organization inextricably linked and shaped by events in Cuba and to the Cold War.

⁷ Interview. Anna Kasten Nelson. 9-16-02.

Chapter 1

BEGINNINGS: THE ORIGINS OF RADICALISM IN TAMPA AS PRECURSOR TO THE FPCC

*Victoriano Mantiega (editor of La Gaceta): "Local Communists attacked me and defamed me a number of years ago because of the position I took during the Finnish-Russian War. Naturally I was against the Russians for invading her small neighbor. In those days the Communists compared me to Hitler."*⁸

*Victoriano Mantiega (editor of La Gaceta): "I helped Fidel Castro when he came to Tampa in 1955, just as I did those Cubans who first fought against Machado and then those who fought against Fulgencio Batista both times he ruled Cuba."*⁹

*Fidel Castro: "History Will Absolve Me."*¹⁰

The emergence of an increasingly Communistic regime just ninety miles off the coast of the United States caused alarm among the American people in a way never experienced in the post-World War II era. As Cuban leader Fidel Castro consolidated power over his island nation, seizing American assets in the process, it became increasingly evident that Cuba had gone Communist. Among American politicians and publications, denouncement of Castro and his revolution escalated. However, there was also an increase in sympathy toward the new regime among certain segments of the American public.

The April 6, 1960 edition of the *New York Times* contained a full page paid political advertisement entitled, "What Is Really Happening in Cuba."¹¹ This ad went on to announce the formation of an organization whose purpose was to counter the

⁸ Roland Mantiega. "As We Heard It." *La Gaceta*. December 22, 1961. 12.

⁹ Ibid. 12.

¹⁰ SISC Testimony Part 6. 338-405. Note: This was part of Lyle Stuart's testimony. There was an exhibit which showed a book with Fidel Castro as an author of a book entitled "History Will Absolve Me." Castro is also quoted as saying such in Tad Szulc's book on him.

negative publicity the Cuban revolution increasingly received in the American press. An FBI report from an investigation starting in 1960, and dated July 11, 1961, referred to the *Times* ad quoting a passage stating that the new organization intended to, “promulgate the truth about revolutionary Cuba and neutralize the distorted American press on Cuban affairs.”¹² This ad marked the birth of the Fair Play for Cuba Committee.

New York was the starting point of the organization, but chapters sprung up in Chicago, Los Angeles, San Francisco, and Tampa. Tampa had a large, well established Cuban-American community of approximately 50,000 people by the early 1960s.¹³ This community in addition had a history of political involvement of a liberal and even radical bent. Tampa’s FPCC chapter showed itself to be very active in the course of its existence. In a 1962 *Tampa Times* newspaper article former Tampa chapter head V.T. [Ted] Lee said that there were about 300 members in the organization, and claimed an additional 1,000 sympathizers.¹⁴ Many others attended a series of public meetings sponsored by the group over the course of the group’s existence.

While it is true that the Tampa chapter of the Fair Play for Cuba Committee had historical antecedents to Tampa’s nearly one-hundred year old radical tradition, and in the 1950s to Fidel Castro 26th of July Movement, it primarily served a

¹¹ “What is Really Happening in Cuba?” *New York Times*. April 6, 1960.

¹² NARA. JFK Collection. Federal Bureau of Investigation, July 11, 1961. 64-44297-17. “Report Appendix” p 15.

¹³ Tom Dunkin., “Fidel Castro’s Ybor Underground,” *St. Petersburg Times*. January 18, 1959. 27.

¹⁴ Bob Denley, “Of Red Domination--“Fair Play” Leader Shrugs Off Charges,” *Tampa Times*. August 24, 1961.

function similar to other FPCC chapters in countering anti-Castro propaganda. Thus, this organization principally was related to the Cold War coming to Cuba and consequently to Tampa's Ybor City.

Its initial popularity in a southern city of 250,000 may lead one to discount the FPCC's function as a Cold War organization, since cities of comparable size such as Jacksonville, Florida and Charlotte, North Carolina did not have FPCC chapters at all---much less active ones---and also did not have a large Cuban-American population. But the earlier 26th of July Movement did not have the onus of a Communist state to defend, in the sense that the FPCC did. Both organizations, in spite of this difference, shared roots in a radical tradition whose origins were based on Cuban, Italian, and Spanish immigration to Florida.

Tampa's cigar industry and its radicalism were fueled by immigration. During the years 1885-1910, thousands of Cubans, Italians, and Spaniards came to the small coastal village of Tampa, and transformed the settlement into a thriving industrial and commercial center. In a remarkably short space of time they made Tampa into the nation's leader in the production of high quality, hand rolled cigars.¹⁵ The Latinos of Tampa created for themselves a rich community life that included, among other things, immigrant labor unions, foreign language newspapers, ethnic fraternal clubs, immigrant religious parishes and radical political parties.¹⁶

¹⁵ George E. Pozzeta, "Immigrants in the Southern Mind: A Tampa Case," Jerrel H. Shofner and Linda V. Ellsworth, ed. *Ethnic Minorities in Gulf Coast Society*, Gulf Coast History and Humanities Conference, Pensacola: 1979. 26.

¹⁶ *Ibid.* 26-27.

Cubans and the other Latinos established medical mutual aid societies to combat illnesses like yellow fever and malaria.¹⁷ They also formed social clubs such as *Circulo Cubano*, which provided social activities such as picnics, domino playing, and dances. Ybor City institutions like these caused ethnic identity to flourish. In Tampa the Latin settlements of Ybor City and West Tampa, however, were isolated from the mainstream Anglo-American community, while generally in contact with each other.¹⁸

Feelings of Anglo-Saxon superiority, under the guise of Social Darwinism, rose out of the Nineteenth Century and was evident among Southerners, who saw themselves as being, “the most Anglo-Saxon of all the nation’s regions.”¹⁹ Darwinist ideology was supplemented by the legal standing of racial segregation. As far back as 1906, newer immigrants were seen as being of “Negroid stock,” or accused of possessing “improper” [favorable] attitudes toward blacks. Southerners were said to prefer immigrants of “Teutonic, Celtic, or Saxon origin.”²⁰

Labor unrest in the cigar industry was the main crucible of cultural formation in Ybor City, as unions sprung up. One labor leader wrote the American Federation of Labor [AFL] secretary stating that, “Tampa is a splendid field for Industrial Workers of the World [IWW] propaganda. The workers of Tampa to a considerable extent are

¹⁷ L. Glen Westfall. “Retention of Cuban Culture in Tampa.” Jerrel H. Shofner and Linda V. Ellsworth, ed. *Ethnic Minorities in Gulf Coast Society*. Gulf Coast History and Humanities Conference. Pensacola: 1979. 69.

¹⁸ Ibid. 70.

¹⁹ Jerrel Shofner. Intro. *Ethnic Minorities in Gulf Coast Society*. Gulf Coast History and Humanities Conference. Pensacola: 1979. vi.

²⁰ Willard B. Gatewood. “Strangers and the Southern Eden: Ideologies of Race and Ethnicity in the South.” Jerrel H. Shofner and Linda V. Ellsworth, ed. *Ethnic Minorities in Gulf Coast Society*. Gulf Coast History and Humanities Conference.

permeated with socialist ideas, and many of them at least think they are socialists.”²¹

But the AFL incursion ran into problems in Tampa’s Latin community. The union incurred the wrath of the *Tampenos* because they wanted to organize only skilled workers. Many of the more radical union members dissenting this were deported to Honduras. In addition, the well known labor leader Samuel Gompers refused to send aid, claiming that *La Resistencia* did not conform to American trade union principles.²²

The Spanish-American War was a defining event for the Ybor City community as well as the rise of cigar industry unionism. Members of the city’s sizable Spanish community were viewed with suspicion as potential spies in the conflict. The Spanish club, *Centro Espanol* in Ybor City was abruptly shut down by United States troops awaiting embarkation to Cuba. This was done as a response to fears of sabotage or espionage.²³ A War Department report had indicated that help was sought in checking suspected Spanish agents, since a related spy ring operated out of Canada.²⁴ The wartime atmosphere in Ybor City also caused the Cubans to look upon their Spanish neighbors with suspicion.

The heroics of Cuban patriots Jose Martí and Antonio Maceo gave way in the post-war era to new labor militancy, partly because of American control of Cuba. An

Pensacola: 1979. 10.

²¹ Mormino, 126. By early 1911 the Industrial Workers of the World [IWW] Local 602 was fully operational in Tampa, publishing its local newspaper *El Obrero Industrial*.

²² Ibid. 116-117.

²³ Leland Hawes. “Spanish ‘Spies’ stirred Tampa in 1898,” *The Tampa Tribune*. 8 May 1988. D1.

²⁴ Ibid. D1.

emerging generation was looking for answers. The fabled Martí made more than three trips to Tampa in the early 1890s in order to arouse support in the struggle for Cuban independence against Spain. He visited Tampa's cigar factories and paid special visits to Afro-Cuban leaders.²⁵

The legacy of slavery was important to the Afro-Cuban community, and a residual fear of worse times for American Afro-Cubans was apparent. Martí and the Afro-Cuban leadership formed *La Liga de Instrucción de Tampa*, and soon attracted thirty Afro-Cubans.²⁶ Martí's rapport with Afro-Cubans existed in spite of an increasingly segregated South. Anglo-American society tolerated this breach of etiquette toward regional customs as long as race relations remained in the "colony."²⁷ Continued Anglo-Saxon resistance fostered, along with renewed immigration, a new group of Cubans who carried on the older tradition of radicalism.²⁸

During World War I, Ybor City's radicals were monitored by the bureau of Investigation [predecessor to the FBI]. There were reports, originating in Ybor City, of assassination plots against President Woodrow Wilson and President Victoriano Huerta of Mexico. An Ybor City anarchist had earlier killed a prime minister. The Bureau also investigated the personal and private lives of local leftists and

²⁵ Jose Rivero Muniz. Trans. by Eustasio Fernandez and Henry Beltran. *The Ybor City Story 1885-1954*. Tampa: 1976. 58.

²⁶ Ibid. 58-59.

²⁷ Mormino, G. 79.

²⁸ Ibid. 81.

anarchists.²⁹

Another generation of Ybor City radicals was activated in the early 1920s by the early career of Benito Mussolini, and later by the trial of Italian anarchists Sacco and Vanzetti. Factory workers read Mussolini's socialist teachings, and copies of *L'Avanti* circulated on the streets and in the clubs of Ybor City.³⁰ In several years, the Ybor community turned against Mussolini when he came to power in Italy and established a Fascist government.

Mussolini's betrayal of socialism caused anger among Tampa's Italians and other Latinos. The reaction in Ybor City was even more militant than in other Italian-American communities. Fascist Italy, more than twenty years after the Spanish-American War, became the second autocratic European power to see radicalism in Tampa as threatening, as another new generation of *Tampenos* fueled this brand of radicalism.³¹

Of the three Latin ethnic groups in Ybor City, Cubans were both largest in number and closest in proximity to their native homeland. Consequently, another Tampa institution, the Cuban lector, was very influential. A literate worker would read the works of Victor Hugo, along with newspapers, and books to the other workers who simultaneously hand-rolled high quality cigars. History professor Gary Mormino referred to this as, "the most symbolic of the special ambience of the cigar industry." This reader was called *el lector*, and text was read from a raised platform

²⁹ Ibid. 154.

³⁰ Ibid. 162.

[*la tribuna*].³²

One of the lectors was a 1913 Cuban immigrant by the name of Don Victoriano Mantiega. Mantiega, soon after his arrival, was seen by the Latin community as gifted. He soon permanently moved from the lector platform to the editor's desk, and founded the newspaper *La Gaceta* in 1922.³³ He became an Ybor City institution in his own right. Forever sensitive to his fellow Latinos, and the clubs created by the Spaniards and Italians, Mantiega made *La Gaceta* trilingual.³⁴

A German visitor to Tampa in 1931 caught the essence of the culture that was Ybor City, in effect describing two parts of Tampa. This German citizen wrote, "Here they have Italian opera houses with balconies, cock fights, bullfights, houses with balconies, incredibly numerous coffee shops where Italians, Spaniards, Creoles gesticulate wildly...We are in Ybor City."³⁵ The tourist wrote a blander visage of the first Tampa, while describing the "paradisial" aspects of the southern city and its warm climate. Like the Frenchman de Tocqueville a century before, this outsider saw a small corner of America where the uniqueness of the community defined its particular brand of Americanism.

Virtually all the Spanish and Italian language papers supported efforts to promote cohesion between the various immigrant segments of Ybor City.³⁶ This

³¹ Ibid. 162.

³² Ibid. 102.

³³ Ibid. 103.

³⁴ L. Westfall, 71.

³⁵ Ibid. 60.

³⁶ Ibid. 167-168.

became even more apparent, and was fueled further by the advent of one of the immigrants own, since Victoriano Mantiaga and his publication *La Gaceta* further institutionalized the aspects of this thriving community. Mantiaga could almost be an icon for Ybor City, with his liberal, and sometimes radical, ideas.

In the early 1930s, with the advent of the Spanish Republic, Tampa's own Spaniards began removing all signs of the monarchy. Many Spanish immigrants in Tampa held high expectations for the new regime.³⁷ Soon this sense of pride, and anticipation of better things to come for the Spanish Republic, faded as the Falangist rebellion headed by Generalissimo Francisco Franco plunged Spain into a civil war. Franco was aided by Hitler and Mussolini, while Spanish loyalists were supported by Stalin. The European conflict between Communism and Fascism entered Ybor City.

President Roosevelt gave a speech in the 1930s expressing that the US should remain "unentangled and free," and should stay out of European conflicts.³⁸ But Communist Party members and other leftists heeded the call of Soviet dictator Joseph Stalin to combat fascism and the Spanish rebellion. In New York, in the 1930s, there was a huge demonstration by the May Day Committee protesting fascism.³⁹ An outpouring of 40,000 volunteers went to Spain to aid the loyalists. Among them were 3,000 in the American sponsored Abraham Lincoln Brigade. About two dozen of the

³⁷ Anna Marie Varela Lago, "No Pasaran!: The Spanish Civil War's Impact on Tampa's Latin Community, 1936-1939," *Tampa Bay History*, Fall/Winter 1997, 5.

³⁸ *CNN Perspectives Presents Cold War*, A Jeremy Isaacs Production for Turner Original Productions, Inc. Episode I: "Comrades 1917-1945." Time Warner, Burbank, CA: 1998.

³⁹ *Ibid.* "Comrades."

brigade members were from Tampa.⁴⁰

La Gaceta publisher Victoriano Mantiega was one of the strongest defenders of the Spanish Republic. As a result he came under fire from former Spanish consul Andres Inglesias who said, "The red Mantiega has been very damaging to our cause in the Spanish colony in Tampa." *La Gaceta* became the official organ for the Tampa Committee for the Defense of the Spanish Popular Front.⁴¹ But The Abraham Lincoln Brigade was fated to fare poorly. It was a fighting force with a misplaced sense of idealism that was also ill equipped, reckless, and misinformed about Joseph Stalin. The group's reckless endeavor proved disastrous.⁴²

The passing events were a personal show of character and compassion for Mantiega. Those debating and demonstrating the Spanish Civil War gave him both praise and criticism. Mantiega had been one of the Popular Front's staunchest allies. But when Nazi Germany and Soviet Russia signed the 1939 non-aggression pact, and after the Soviets invaded Finland, Mantiega's paper took a stand against the Soviet Union's aggression. As a result some of the local Communists, Mantiega said, "compared me to Adolf Hitler."⁴³

Ybor City's foremost journalist reiterated the independent thought of his community. He was not going to back the USSR, which was described in President

⁴⁰ Lago. 9-11.

⁴¹ Ibid. 12-13.

⁴² Peter N. Carroll. *The Odyssey of the Abraham Lincoln Brigade: Americans in the Spanish Civil War*. Stanford, California, 1994. 65. A survey of 1,745 American volunteers made in 1937 showed only thirty-four percent had military experience.

⁴³ Roland Mantiega. "As We Heard It." *La Gaceta*. December 22, 1961.

Roosevelt's February 10, 1940 speech when he said, "The Soviet Union is a dictatorship, as absolute as any other dictatorship in the world, it has allied itself with another dictatorship and had invaded a neighbor so infinitesimally small, that it could no possible harm to the Soviet Union."⁴⁴

Mantiega's remark put him in the philosophical company of Franklin Roosevelt, and was a harbinger of what was to come in World War II. Cuban, Spanish and Italian-Americans joined the military and fought in World War II as patriotic Americans. Ethnic differences, including those with the Anglo-American community, vanished for the sake of unity. When the war ended, the servicemen returned to Ybor City eager to resume familiar patterns of their domestic lives. By then displacement during the war and depression created a crumbling infrastructure. This and the decline of the cigar industry, changed the area.⁴⁵ But in the early 1950s, this evolution proved inconsequential for what was to come.

In 1952, Cuba experienced instability, terror, and a change in power. Its new head of state, Fulgencio Batista, ignored the electoral process in achieving this end. Cries of betrayal ensued in Cuba, and calls for adherence to the Constitution of 1940 became commonplace. Many Cubans seethed with resentment at the new dictatorial regime. Its brutality conjured memories of the Machado regime of the 1930s. Among the angry was a young lawyer and political activist named Fidel Castro. His anger later found its way to the streets and meeting halls of Ybor City, and aroused the

⁴⁴ Comrades. 1917-1945.

⁴⁵ Gary Mormino. 299.

Cuban community to the service of his cause.

A desperate but determined Castro came to the United States in late 1955 seeking support for his revolution. He started chapters of the *Movimiento de Julio 26* [26th of July Movement] in several US cities including New York, Detroit, Miami, Key West and Tampa. Other chapters formed in Mexico, Venezuela, and Costa Rica.⁴⁶ Tampa and its large exile community were very influential, even though the 26th of July Movement at its peak only had about sixty members.⁴⁷

Victoriano Mantiega was an important part of this local “underground railway.” He organized, and headed of the chapter in 1955. His newspaper, *La Gaceta*, in that year was nearing thirty-five years of operation. The paper continued publishing editorials, and reporting news as it related to Cuba. Mantiega’s activities were augmented by his son Rolando, the business manager of *La Gaceta*.⁴⁸ The writing and publicizing activities provided by *La Gaceta* proved invaluable to the Cuban exiles in Tampa, and to Fidel Castro. But there was help of a militaristic nature also, one that Cubans spoke about in hushed tones.

Anonymously admitted by Ybor City Castro supporters were a series of confiscations of war materials. Among them were 150 machine guns packed in oil drums with ammunition, a boat, and a plane. These were seized in Miami in 1958, but had been transported through Tampa. All were destined for anti-Batista rebel forces in Cuba. Four Ybor City Tampanes were arrested, but the federal agencies reported no

⁴⁶ Tom Dunkin, 3.

⁴⁷ Ibid, 27.

arrests actually occurred in Tampa's Ybor City.⁴⁹ Many Cubans would not admit these activities in 1959 for fear of reprisal by either the US government, or the agents and spies of Batista's government. Castro, himself, indicated this. The fear was well founded since Batista, as with other Cuban leaders, had taken an interest in historic Ybor City. Visits to Cuba by Americans, particularly from Tampa, were commonplace and Batista knew many of them personally.⁵⁰ But Fidel Castro's supporters were not daunted.

Castro's followers raised funds by selling pro-Castro banners, and "rebel currency" in various denominations. They also aided refugees, so they could meet US immigration requirements. Ybor City's rebels, most of them born or naturalized US citizens, did not feel they stretched the laws of their homeland too far by aiding Castro. "After all," one commented, "we also had a revolution here in the United States, you know, which turned out to be a pretty good thing."⁵¹ Miami gained the distinction of being the "gateway to the revolution." Most rebel arm shipments passed through Miami during these hostilities. It was also reported at the end of the conflict, that Tampa's estimated 50,000 persons of Cuban descent or citizenship in Ybor City and West Tampa were proud of their past in supporting the Castro Rebellion. One former US military combat veteran, who also happened to be a Cuban-American

⁴⁸ Ibid. 27.

⁴⁹ Ibid. 3.

⁵⁰ William R. Watson, Jr. "Fidel Castro's Ybor City Underground." (Master's Thesis: University of South Florida). April, 1999. 9.

⁵¹ Dunkin. 27.

ciudadano, once fought with Raul Castro in the Sierra Cristal Mountains in 1958.⁵²

The elation and pride in Tampa soon turned to hostility. Divisiveness soon set in over Cuba's new leader among Cubans. In addition, American business interests became antagonistic toward Castro's revolutionary government. Castro's treatment of defeated Batista supporters was another aspect of his revolutionary government that resulted in deteriorating US-Cuban relations.

A January 16, 1959 *St. Petersburg Times* editorial expressed this sentiment when it stated, "Friends of Cuba are profoundly disturbed with the continuing mass executions of "Batista criminals" following the continued practice of summary courts martial."⁵³ The editorial went on to criticize Castro for trying to remedy Batista atrocities by using similar tactics. Castro was lambasted by the *Times* as it implied that Castro continually violated the rule of law,

What the Cuban people hated most about Batista was his secret police, his contempt for anything resembling due process, his arrests without warrant, his torture chambers and execution without trial. Castro may think that he is only purging those who participated in such inhumanities, and so his own regime will remain unaffected. But will it? Where will the line be drawn, if orderly trials are not substituted for the drumhead courts now functioning?⁵⁴

The *Times* expressed an American sense of dismay. The paper demonstrated a fading sense of optimism as it wrote of basic good intentions of the Castro regime, stating that democratic reform could be accomplished. But the overall tone of the editorial showed more alarm than optimism.

⁵² Ibid. 27.

⁵³ "Castro Risking His Own Success," editorial, *St. Petersburg Times*, 8-A.

⁵⁴ Ibid. 8-A.

Across Tampa Bay, the *Tampenos* in Ybor City, who had thought glowingly about Fidel Castro's revolutionary government taking power, had to deal with deteriorating relations between Cuba and the United States. Raul Villamia, the local head of the 26th of July Movement, occupied Tampa's Cuban Consulate offices when Castro took over. *Tampa Times* reporter Bob Denley questioned him about the reception he received after the transfer of power in Cuba. Villamia described Tampa as very supportive and described Ybor City and West Tampa as non-supportive of Batista.⁵⁵ Tampa's Cuban community did support Castro's revolt, and attempt to reform the island's government, but the Batista supporters also were vocal.

The January 5, 1961 edition of the *Tampa Tribune*, following the break in diplomatic relations between the United States and Cuba, describes window smashing, paint throwing and threat exchanges between pro and anti-Castro groups in the Ybor section.⁵⁶ An organization formed in rebellion at this time, against the Castro regime. It called itself the Cuban Front. The group was made up of Cuban exiles and residents, which at this early date of disaffection with Castro, was composed primarily of Batista supporters.

Since Cuba and the United States had by early 1961 experienced two years of deteriorating diplomatic relations, the Cuban Front's strategy was to raise the specter of communism coming to Cuba. By January 1961 the Cuban government moved to the left politically, and seizures of American business assets increased. Vast areas of

⁵⁵ Bob Denley. "Castro Man Tells of Tampa Support." *Tampa Times*. January 6, 1961. 1.

⁵⁶ Fred Smith. "Tensions Still Run High in Tampa's Latin Quarter," *Tampa Tribune*. January 5, 1961. 1B.

agricultural land tracts and American-owned businesses were confiscated. Anti-Castro reaction burgeoned in Cuba and Tampa. The rise in tensions on both sides brought Tampa police into Ybor City. The Cuban Consulate was also under guard by the police.⁵⁷

In reaction to Castro, the Cuban Front opened up a propaganda front in Ybor City. Front members Raúl Brana and Dr. Manuel A. de Varona met with former Batista regime consulate head Armando Sacassas, during the first week of 1961. Cuba's former diplomat passed on the names and plans of Castro's agents in Tampa.⁵⁸ The main charge made against the agents was that Castro had blackmailed Ybor City cigar manufacturers in order to force them to join the revolutionary cause. Sacassas, himself, had defected from Cuba the week before, and sought asylum in the United States. Cuban exiles charged that cigar manufacturers were being extorted by Castro into giving money to Tampa's Castro leaders under threat of having tobacco leaf cut off from Cuba.⁵⁹ When questioned about this, several of the cigar manufacturers called the charges "preposterous." Brana used this propaganda ploy in order to show anti-Castro strength and give credit to Sacassas for breaking the pro-Castro movement in Tampa. Brana also said that the FBI had been in touch with Front members.⁶⁰

After attacking the manufacturers, Raúl Brana went after the unions. He charged that the Tampa Cigar Union had Communists in their membership. Brana stated, "The support for Castro in the union comes from the top to the bottom---from

⁵⁷ Ibid. 1B.

⁵⁸ "Cigar Men Here Deny Blackmail," *Tampa Times*, January 9, 1961. 1A.

⁵⁹ Ibid. 1A.

⁶⁰ Ibid. 1A.

leaders as well as members.” But when confronted, the anti-Castro leader also acknowledged that there also were many loyal supporters of the US in the cigar factories.⁶¹

Armando Sacassas, speaking in Miami on January 9, continued his diatribes against the Tampa pro-Castroites. He claimed that communists had control of the 26th of July Movement affiliated Patriotic Movement Club in Tampa. The previous day, the *bastiano* claimed that Cuban secret police were operating in Tampa, and had pro-Castro speeches and communist literature which were slated for distribution in Tampa’s Latin Quarter.⁶² The Cuban exile backed up earlier statements by the Democratic Revolutionary Front that he had turned over names of pro-Castro agents to the Front.⁶³ With the arrival of Sacassas on the media scene, and the Cuban Front organizing in the homes and streets in Ybor City, an anti-Castro movement was in its early stages.

The Tampa Times reported that the Tampa patriotic and pro-Castro clubs at 9th Avenue and 14th Street in Ybor City had suffered attacks frequently over the past several months at the hands of anti-Castro groups. After the diplomatic break, anti-Castro vandals struck quickly. On the night of January 3, vandals smashed almost everything in pro-Castro clubrooms, and splattered red paint on walls, doors, and floors.⁶⁴

The Tampa Times reported on this closure of the pro-Castro clubs, showing a picture of the empty building with a “for rent” sign out front. It was evident that the

⁶¹ Ibid. 1A.

⁶² “Former Cuban Consul Who Defected Drops Out of Sight in Miami.” *Tampa Tribune*. January 9, 1961. 9. There was also an article in the *Tampa Tribune* on January 8, 1961 in which a sergeant stationed at the Cuban embassy claimed that Castro had 2,000 spies in the United States. He named a number of large U.S. cities where as he claimed they resided.

⁶³ “Castroites Here Called Communists.” *Tampa Times*. January 10, 1961. 1A.

⁶⁴ Tom Inglis. “Pro-Castro Clubs Closed.” *Tampa Times*. January 14, 1961. 1A.

death knell of the clubs came with the break in diplomatic relations between Cuba and the United States. What was peculiar about this anti-Castro reaction was that it proved more Cuban in content than pro-American. It was anti-Communist to be sure, and eventually would lead the Cubans to ally themselves with Cold Warriors in the United States. At this point in time, it was primarily Cuban.

This early anti-Castro movement attacked not only the 26th of July group, but also the offices of *La Gaceta*. *The Tampa Times* reported, “In this day of attacks, the police reported that the trilingual newspaper *La Gaceta* was also attacked. The newspaper known for its pro-Castro opinions has previously been the target of repeated attacks. The paper’s front has been hit numerous times in recent weeks.”⁶⁵ *La Gaceta* was suffering from Victoriano Mantiaga’s support of Castro, which, from an organizational standpoint, went as far back as 1955 when he and Castro formed Tampa’s 26th of July Movement chapter. Rolando Mantiaga, editor of the newspaper recalled that the club had been formed in 1955 to “encourage and foster better relations” between the United States and Cuba. Mantiaga denounced the emergence of new Cuban elements in Tampa that had resorted to violence.⁶⁶

With a January 3, 1961 American diplomatic break with Cuba, Tampa soon found itself an area of increased Cold War activity. The pro-Castro movement seemed dead with the closure of the 26th of July clubs, which were now discredited because of their adherence to a nation hostile to the United States. But a new organization was forming in 1960. It too was pro-Castro, and like the 26th of July Movement, wanted better relations with Cuba. Tampa was now ready for the Fair Play for Cuba Committee. The Cold War had come to Tampa’s Ybor City

⁶⁵ Ibid. 1A.

⁶⁶ Ibid. 1A.

Chapter 2

JUSTO TRATO PARA CUBA: THE COLD WAR COMES TO YBOR CITY

*Averell Harriman (to Joseph Stalin): " Marshall, this must be a great satisfaction to you after all the trials and after all the tragedies that you've been through to be here in Berlin! He (Stalin) just looked at me and said, "Czar Alexander got to Paris!"*⁶⁷

*VT Lee (Chairman Fair Play for Cuba Committee in letter to La Gaceta): "Our purpose is to desiminate the truth concerning the political, economic and social relations between our government and Cuba and pursue a policy which would bring better relations between our countries."*⁶⁸

With the end of World War II, Communism again began to be seen as monolithic. A victory for Communist forces anywhere in the world was seen as emanating from Moscow.⁶⁹ Thus Joseph Stalin's triumph at the end of World War II grew into a general fear of any left-wing activity.⁷⁰

From a 1950s Cold War perspective, Tampa, Florida was similar to other American cities in its fear of Communism. It was also home to Mac Dill Air Force Base, which was an important Strategic Air Command [SAC] stronghold. Starting in 1959 American relations with Cuba began adding another dimension to Tampa's Cold War experience. Between 1959 and late 1961 American relations with Cuba deteriorated. Cuba entered the Cold War as an American adversary.

Miami was inundated with an influx of Cuban exiles escaping the increasingly repressive regime of Fidel Castro. The population of the central city became more

⁶⁷ Comrades. 1917-1945.

⁶⁸ V.T. Lee. "Tampa's Fair Play for Cuba Committee Answers Critics." *La Gaceta*. 8.

⁶⁹ Comrades. 1917-1945.

⁷⁰ Gaddis. *We Now Know*. Many references in Gaddis's important book on Cold War history are made to Stalin as, at the very least, a major force in the origins of the Cold War. Gaddis, it could be said, sees him playing an even greater role.

Cuban in content. Miami soon supplanted Tampa as the city with the largest Cuban community. Eventually the two cities Cuban communities would clash. The older one had sympathies toward Fidel Castro, while the newer one in Miami showed unbridled contempt for the Cuban dictator and his increasing ties to the Soviet Bloc.

While the fight against Communism in war torn Europe took priority, Latin America did not escape America's early Cold War era fears. New American security policies underwent a trial run in what historian Walter LaFeber calls, "that longtime laboratory of US policies, Latin America." American nations convened at Rio de Janeiro in the late summer of 1947. On September 2, the Rio Treaty was signed, and provided collective self-defense for the hemisphere. One treaty provision insured that an attack against one American nation would be considered as an attack upon all. When two-thirds of the hemisphere nations agreed to resist such an attack, all members were required to contribute either troops or supplies.⁷¹

Cold War Latin American policy expanded at The Ninth Inter-American Conference in Bogotá, in March of 1948. Secretary of State George C. Marshall wanted the US to focus on creating "the proper atmosphere so that Latin American laws, particularly those related to oil resources might be attractive to US investors." Out of this approach came the Organization of American States [OAS].⁷²

The American policy downplay of Latin America was what historian William Appleman Williams saw as a continuation of late Nineteenth Century US policy.

⁷¹ Walter LaFeber, *America, Russia, and the Cold War, 1945-1996*. New York: McGraw-Hill Companies, Inc., 1997. 66-67.

⁷² *Ibid.* 67.

Williams argued that “what we are accustomed to calling the Cold War is in reality only the most recent phase of a more general conflict between the established system of western capitalism, and its internal and external components.”⁷³ Williams went on to write that, “the radicals, particularly those in smaller nations, approached self-determination in a sense that they rejected Wilsonian rhetoric, which they saw as facile and superficial.” The radicals protested the Open Door Policy, which was viewed as a more covert form of imperial expansion and colonialism.⁷⁴ Williams made a valid assessment where it pertained to the early Twentieth Century, and into the early days of the Cold War. But as Cold War policy hardened in Europe, and was bolstered by the fall of China and the Korean War, this bipolar ideological sensibility increasingly became an end in itself. It wasn’t merely a superficial manifestation of an underlying American colonial campaign for economic exploitation.

In the late 1940s, future Cuban dictator Fidel Castro, then a University of Havana student, would probably have agreed with Williams. Castro had helped organize a protest against the 1948 Bogotá conference, and was attracted to a number of anti-imperialist organizations. Interestingly, he was also attracted to Argentinean dictator Juan Peron, a man who was both anti-Communist and anti-American.⁷⁵

When Eisenhower became president in 1952, he installed John Foster Dulles as Secretary of State. In William Appleman Williams’s view, Dulles personified an older paternalism.⁷⁶ Dulles earlier worked for Dean Acheson, one of the architects of Communist containment in the Truman administration. But Dulles was a hawk. Even

⁷³ William Appleman Williams. *The Tragedy of American Diplomacy*. New York: W.W. Norton, 1972. 10.

⁷⁴ Ibid. 104.

⁷⁵ Tad Szulc. *Fidel: A Critical Portrait*, New York: Harper Collins, 1986. 51.

⁷⁶ W.A. Williams. 274.

before he became Secretary of State, his ideas about Communism were more aggressive than Acheson's. He wanted to liberate Russia and China from "atheistic international communism" and usher in the American Century.⁷⁷ Dulles's dedication to the rollback of Communism gave US foreign policy a tougher edge, and complimented President Eisenhower's ending of the Korean War.

In 1954, American foreign policy received a shock from Guatemala. Jacobo Arbenz's left-wing government came to power and started a land reform policy to dismantle the extensive land holdings of the United Fruit Company. For over half a century, United Fruit had monopolized shipping, communications, and railroads. It helped shape Guatemala's politics.⁷⁸ A leftist Arbenz was received skeptically in Moscow. Though Arbenz was a man who expressed passionate anti-imperialism against the US, he appeared more reformist than radical or Communist.⁷⁹

Moscow's hands off policy did not allay assumptions made by US policy makers that Guatemala's reformists were directed from Moscow.⁸⁰ Eisenhower, Dulles and Republican Party policy makers ushered in a new era in inter-American relations. It was marked by a protracted struggle between the US and an assumed international Communist conspiracy.⁸¹

⁷⁷ Ibid. 274-275. Van Gosse. *Where the Boys Are: Cuba, Cold War America and the Making of a New Left*. New York: Verso, 1993. 22. Van Gosse, who wrote a book on the Fair Play for Cuba Committee as a national movement, and saw the FPCC as possibly the first "New Left" radical organization, also sees John Foster Dulles as very formative in U.S. foreign policy during this crucial period in the early 1950s, at least from a Latin American relations perspective. W. LaFeber, 148. States that Dulles felt that "containment as a policy was bound to fail since it was based on a purely defensive policy."

⁷⁸ W. LaFeber. 157.

⁷⁹ Thomas G. Paterson. *Contesting Castro: The United States and the Triumph of the Cuban Revolution*. New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994. 28.

⁸⁰ Richard H. Immerman. *The CIA in Guatemala: The Foreign Policy of Intervention*. Austin, Texas: University of Texas Press, 1982. 101-105.

⁸¹ Ibid. 19. Herbert L. Matthews. *Fidel Castro*. New York: Simon and Schuster, 1969. 56. Herbert Matthews, who visited Castro "the guerilla" in the Sierra Maestra mountains in 1957, also observed the growth in Cold War anti-Communism. Matthews was well over 50 years old when he visited the *barbudo* then in his early 30s. Matthews also was an observer of the Arbenz government's rise to power and its overthrow by the CIA sponsored Armas insurrection.

In addition to diplomacy, another tool of Cold War policy was covert action. The Central Intelligence Agency [CIA] was founded under the National Security Act of 1947. In addition to its intelligence gathering duties, the CIA took part in other covert actions, such as interfering with a nation's electoral process.⁸²

Eisenhower's administration furthered covert action in the 1950s. In 1954, United Fruit worked hand in hand with the CIA to overthrow Guatemala's newly elected Arbenz regime.⁸³ The name of the CIA operation went by the acronym PB/SUCCESS.

The CIA set up PB/SUCCESS headquarters outside of Miami at Opa-Locka, Florida, and utilized about one-hundred agents. CIA officer J.C. King headed the operation. Later, another CIA officer, Tracy Barnes, under the direction of Frank Wisner and Richard Bissell took over the Guatemalan operation. Another CIA officer, E. Howard Hunt, became the Chief of Political Action.⁸⁴ Both Hunt and Bissell later became part of the disastrous Bay of Pigs operation against Cuba during the Kennedy administration. J.C. King and Tracy Barnes also became part of the overall war against Castro.

United Fruit operatives, combating this threat to its business, had newspaper publishing allies who saw stories of the Communist menace as newsworthy.⁸⁵ The CIA and United Fruit soon became allies, but there was still a degree of reluctance on the part of CIA officers involved. Richard Bissell, for one, believed that United Fruit's interests were not particularly persuasive on Director of Central

⁸² Gaddis, *We Now Know*, 44. One covert activity was the manipulation of the electoral process in Western Europe and other foreign nations. The agency's first such action came conspicuously in the Italian elections of April, 1948.

⁸³ Szulc, 100.

⁸⁴ Stephen E. Ambrose, *Ike's Spies: Eisenhower and the Espionage Establishment*. Jackson, Miss.: University of Mississippi Press, 1981. 225.

⁸⁵ Immerman, 112.

Intelligence [DCI] Allen Dulles. Bissell felt that Dulles was infinitely less interested in the United Fruit Company than he was in communism.⁸⁶

E. Howard Hunt was sure of Communist influence, and real infiltration of the Arbenz government in the early 1950s. He had sent reports from Mexico stressing danger in Guatemala.⁸⁷ Hunt also wrote in his memoirs that the Guatemala project was set up as a semi-autonomous unit within the Western Hemisphere Division. With its own funds, communications center, and chain of command, it was able to operate within the conventional CIA structure.⁸⁸

Many American press organs raised the alarm of Communism in Latin America when the Arbenz government took power. Allegations of Communist influence in Guatemala and mistreatment of United Fruit employees received continuous press coverage in such prestigious publications as the *Chicago Tribune*, *Time*, *Newsweek*, *U.S. News and World Report*, the *Atlantic Monthly* and the *Saturday Evening Post*.⁸⁹ In this early covert action, the press became an important tool in the Arbenz government's demise. Some contend that in certain instances this role was not totally unwitting.⁹⁰ It was an example to many leftists, and later supporters of Fidel Castro, that there was an establishment press siding against left-wing reform movements when American business interests were at stake.

On June 17, 1954 a right-wing military force organized and financed by the CIA and the United Fruit Company, invaded Guatemala to overthrow Arbenz.

⁸⁶ Ambrose. 223.

⁸⁷ Ibid. 220.

⁸⁸ E. Howard Hunt, *Undercover: Memoirs of an American Secret Agent*. New York: Berkeley Publishing Company. 1974. 97.

⁸⁹ Immerman. 112.

⁹⁰ John Lewis Gaddis, "Intelligence, Espionage, and Cold War Origins." *Diplomatic History*. April, 1990. Gaddis argues persuasively that the evidence for covert actions is sketchy, and reliance falls upon a bewildering array of mostly unverifiable writings and recollections by former officials (disgruntled or not), defectors, journalists, and novelists.

Witnessing this action may have had more of an impact on Fidel Castro than any Marxist-Leninist theories. It confirming all the warnings of José Martí about the United States, and corroborated the “historical fatalism” theory that proclaimed that nothing may happen in the region without permission of the United States.⁹¹

Castro became acquainted with an activist who had similar political proclivities. Ernesto ‘Che’ Guevara, was, like Castro, an early Juan Peron supporter. He became interested in Guatemala’s government, and visited the country in December 1953. When the Arbenz government was attacked, Guevara aided them. He then fled to Mexico City, where the Argentinean became acquainted with Raúl and Fidel Castro.⁹²

President Eisenhower’s espousal of Cold War ideology related directly to his approval of the overthrow of Arbenz. Eisenhower confronted the relationship between Communism and nationalism more explicitly than did Truman.⁹³ Historian Richard Immerman notes that Eisenhower, best known for “massive retaliation” was less well known as a champion of covert ops.⁹⁴

According to E. Howard Hunt, Eisenhower developed a covert plan for Guatemala in the summer of 1953.⁹⁵ Hunt, an enthusiastic supporter of the ideals behind the project, and a Cold Warrior in his own right, remarked that, “We did the right thing for the wrong reason. I wasn’t a mercenary for United Fruit.”⁹⁶ Howard Hunt was also the source for the charge that the CIA in the mid-1950s had a unit set

⁹¹ Szulc. 315.

⁹² Immerman. 187.

⁹³ Ibid. 16.

⁹⁴ Ibid. 14.

⁹⁵ Ibid. 134.

⁹⁶ Ambrose. 218.

up for the assassination of suspected double agents and similar low ranking officials. It was commanded by a US Army colonel assigned to the CIA. Hunt's remarks were confirmed by another CIA officer Frank Wisner.⁹⁷

Immerman made a persuasive case that actions taking place in Guatemala were related to the Cold War. He argued that the Guatemalan intervention “wasn’t merely another instance of “big stick” US diplomacy similar to many US interventions in Latin America characteristic of the earlier years of the Twentieth Century. It was a critical event in the Cold War, and an illustration of Cold War ethos and its impact on diplomacy. It was also an instance of CIA covert activity used to achieve a foreign policy goal. The Guatemala action complemented a similar CIA action a year earlier in Iran.”⁹⁸

One of the chief proponents of tough economic action against Cuba, seven years after Guatemala, was US Senator George Smathers. The Florida senator also actively spoke out in favor of the Guatemalan action. Smathers put it bluntly when he declared, shortly before Arbenz capitulated, that a hands-off policy was “unrealistic and naive.” He added that, “We must see that the people opposing Communism in Guatemala win this particular battle.”⁹⁹

After Eisenhower’s overthrow of Arbenz, new foreign policy parameters were now in place. Fidel Castro ably adjusted to the new reality, and applied the lessons learned to Cuba. Similar actions were used seven years later in an attempt to end his rule. Historian Walter LeFeber in *America, Russia and the Cold War 1945-1996*, wrote on the later Cuban experience, “The U.S. won the battle, but lost the longer

⁹⁷ Ibid. 296.

⁹⁸ Immerman. 6.

⁹⁹ Ibid. 4.

war.”¹⁰⁰

Meanwhile, the Soviets were trying to do the opposite. Soviet premier Nikita Khrushchev welcomed the Cuban revolutionary as a new force in Latin America.¹⁰¹ Batista supporters left the island, and became the first anti-Castro dissenters. But there was a growing dissent of another variety, which was made up of former Castro backers.

State Department officials were pleased to hear that Manuel Urritia, Manuel Varona, José Miró Cardona, and others, all allies of Castro in the struggle against Batista, had pleaded with Castro to cease the “blackmail” of North American firms in eastern Cuba, because it aroused negative publicity in the US.¹⁰² Soon these and other dissidents would find themselves among the ranks of those who fell out with the Cuban dictator. Anti-Americanism remained omnipresent among dedicated revolutionaries.

Among pro-Castro sympathizers in the US, was a growing voice of understanding with respect to Castro’s Guatemalan analogies. Herbert Matthews, a reporter for the *New York Times*, was one. He visited Fidel Castro in the Sierra Maestra Mountains in 1957. Matthews told of his first hand experience with Castro, since his visit coincided with a gathering of the 26th of July Movement. Matthews had a penchant, as a journalist, for reporting passionately on political events. He had covered and wrote about Mussolini in Italy, and later on the Spanish Civil War. His idealistic spirit got him the first American interview with Castro.¹⁰³ *The New York*

¹⁰⁰ LaFeber. 159.

¹⁰¹ Ibid. 203.

¹⁰² Paterson. 179.

¹⁰³ Herbert L. Matthews. 100.

Times journalist eventually was viewed as reckless by Cold Warriors, for what they saw as favorable reportage on Castro. The *batistianos*, anti-Castro exiles, American right-wingers, and US ambassadors to Cuba Arthur Gardner and Earl ‘E.T.’ Smith were among Matthews’s most vociferous critics.¹⁰⁴

Robert Taber, a CBS reporter, who became one of the founding members of the Fair Play for Cuba Committee, visited Castro prior to his seizure of power. His sentiments echoed Matthews with regard to Cuba and the Guatemala experience. Taber felt that the Cuban Revolution “had thrown a revealing light on the interlocking relationship between press, government, and business in the United States.” He stressed that business interests made the press subservient, and created a media bias toward Cuba.¹⁰⁵

The Fair Play for Cuba Committee was started in April 1960, and immediately supported Castro. Throughout the summer of 1960 and into early 1961 the organization expanded around the nation. Local chapters formed in addition to those already in Tampa, Chicago, and New York.¹⁰⁶ The pro-Castro group drew sympathetic support from Old Left industrial sanctuaries in Chicago, Detroit, and Cleveland. The FPCC also found support in colleges including Antioch, the University of Michigan, Carleton College in Minnesota, and at Indiana University.¹⁰⁷

The first objective of the FPCC was to recruit a group of prominent intellectuals. So the organization, which started under the leadership of New Jersey businessman and political activist Alan Sagner, and CBS newsman Taber, paid for a

¹⁰⁴ Paterson, 80.

¹⁰⁵ Robert Taber, *M26: Biography of a Revolution*. New York: Lyle Stuart, 1961. 317.

¹⁰⁶ Van Gosse, 144.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.* 144.

full-page ad in the April 6, 1960 edition of the *New York Times* entitled, “What is Really Happening in Cuba.” The thirty founding members, whose names appeared in this ad, included Jean-Paul Sartre, Simone de Beauvoir, Norman Mailer, and Truman Capote. Among the honorary members were long time Latin American experts and authors Carleton Beals and Waldo Frank. Significantly, in this era of racial segregation, one-third of the members were African American.¹⁰⁸

On April 29, 1960 the first edition of the FPCC newsletter *Fair Play* was published. The organization’s primary stated purpose was to give an alternative view of Fidel Castro’s revolution to that of the American government and mainstream newspapers. Criticisms directed at the press were similar to those directed at press coverage and propaganda related to Guatemala. The organization used Madison Avenue public relations man, and social critic Vance Packard as an advisor. Packard, author of consumerist books such as *The Hidden Persuaders*, advised members to use the name “Fair Play for Cuba Committee.”¹⁰⁹ *Fair Play* stated that it wanted “fair play” for everybody, including journalists, creative writers, businessmen, and ordinary working men and women.¹¹⁰

On the first page in an article entitled, “Hatchets Sharpened as Committee Opens Truth Campaign,” there was a description of how people weren’t getting a complete picture of Cuba and the FPCC. As an example, the newsletter commented on *The New York Daily Mirror* editorial, which claimed that the organization might be run as a Communist front.¹¹¹ The first issue also chided United Press International

¹⁰⁸ Timothy B. Tyson, *Radio Free Dixie: Robert F. Williams and the Roots of Black Power*. Chapel Hill, N.C. and London: University of North Carolina Press, 1999, 223. “What is Really Happening in Cuba?” *New York Times*. April 6, 1960.

¹⁰⁹ “Q&A.” *Fair Play*. April 29, 1960, 4.

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 4.

¹¹¹ “Hatchets Sharpened as Committee Opens Truth Campaign,” *Fair Play*. April 29, 1960, 1-2.

and other news sources for their slanted reporting, and retorted to the charges of “communism” from the press organs by stating that the views expressed were not those of Moscow or Cuba, but their own.¹¹² The organization particularly expressed outrage toward the media’s FPCC coverage, since author and FPCC advisor Carlton Beals was “kept in the dark about FPCC activities.”¹¹³

Another article featured exiled Cuban journalist Luis Conte Aguero, who became a regular target of FPCC criticism by both the national and Tampa chapters. *Fair Play* wrote that the Cuban Ministry of foreign relations reported that Aguero had left Cuba, after promoting a misleading campaign in which he repeated old charges that “enemies of Cuba” through “grave Communist infiltration were getting control of the government.”¹¹⁴

In the early days of Castro’s Cuban revolution, Conte Aguero had been a friend and an ally of Fidel’s. Aguero, in fact, was informed by Castro about the impending famous July 26, 1953 assault on the Moncada Barracks, which spurred the *Movimiento de 26 Julio* in Cuba.¹¹⁵ Conte Aguero, while in Cuba, read a letter on stage from his then friend Fidel Castro, and denounced Batista.¹¹⁶ But *Fair Play* denounced Aguero for leaving Cuba saying, “Conte Aguero was never a revolutionary.” The paper criticized the American press for “lionizing him.”¹¹⁷ In order to further stamp the idea of biased American mainstream journalism, *Fair Play* poked

¹¹² Ibid. 1-2.

¹¹³ Ibid. 1-2. Carlton Beals. *The Crime of Cuba*. New York: Arno Press & the New York Times, 1970. 353. While this book doesn’t delve into the FPCC, it does cover the history of Cuba from the Spanish-American War through the tyrannical regimes of Machado and Batista. Beals writes about striking cigar workers in Tampa who were deported and sent to the stockade by Machado.

¹¹⁴ “Who is Luis Conte Aguero?” *Fair Play*. 2.

¹¹⁵ Szulc. 255.

¹¹⁶ Ibid. 310.

¹¹⁷ Ibid. 2.

fun at a headline in an unnamed New York tabloid entitled, “Cuba called a Graveyard of Independent Press.” The pro-Castro newsletter sarcastically wrote, “How’s That Again?”¹¹⁸

Fair Play continued this theme of the untrustworthy US press in later issues. The May 6 issue had an article entitled “Sensational vs. Responsible Press,” and dealt with a question posed by one of its readers, who took issue with a 1959 tabloid article about missiles in Cuba. The writer exclaimed to *Fair Play*, “Why don’t you deal with sober questions raised by responsible papers like the *New York Times*?”¹¹⁹ The newsletter answered by calling the article an example of the “yellow press,” and added that the yellow press sometimes blurts out baldly what is said by inference in the responsible press.¹²⁰

Travel to Cuba became a contentious issue in the United States, and the FPCC addressed it. *Fair Play* urged Americans to “penetrate the smoke screen set up around revolutionary Cuba by the press and other instruments of the Washington and Miami propaganda mills.”¹²¹ This article reasoned that it touched upon travel so, “that Americans could see that Cubans were not a people obsessed with hatred and bitterness.”¹²²

Florida US Senator George Smathers sponsored a 1960 bill, which would cut the Cuban sugar quota by ten percent. *Fair Play* made Smathers one of its earliest and continued targets. It stated that he wanted reprisals against Cuba “since she used a disproportionate share” of the US sugar market to “subsidize sales to Russia and Red

¹¹⁸“Debris.” *Fair Play*. April 29, 1960. 3.

¹¹⁹“Sensational vs. Responsible Press.” *Fair Play*. May 6, 1960. 1. Taber. 331.

¹²⁰Ibid. 1. Taber. 331.

¹²¹“Penetrating the Press Propaganda Smoke Screen.” *Fair Play*. May 6, 1960. 2.

¹²²Ibid. 2.

China and other Iron Curtain countries at prices beneath the world market price.”¹²³

The newsletter article added several terse and teasing remarks, lampooning the Florida tourist industry [and Senator Smathers], when it said, “Since many US dollars from northern metropolitan areas worked their way to Havana resorts and casinos, Florida lost its tourist dollars.” The paper then remarked that, “Florida’s hosteliars and hustlers should be forgiven if they view the destruction of the Cuban tourist industry by a lethal combination of pirate air raids from Florida, and bombshells in the reactionary US press with a certain sneaking satisfaction.”¹²⁴ The “pirate air raids” were in reference to the war against Castro which was conducted by both Eisenhower and Kennedy administrations.

One criticism of Communist regimes, that stood the test of time, was that they professed atheism. The FPCC defended the Castro regime in this respect also, reporting Cuban clergy support toward the Castro regime. In a May 20 article, *Fair Play* discounted a *New York Times* Tad Szulc piece that told the opposite.¹²⁵ In a prior issue, *Fair Play* reported on a prominent Cuban cleric, who implied that the Cuban government was not as bad as some had portrayed it in the press. The paper also stated that the Archbishop of Santiago had nothing but praise for Castro, and his plan to help the lower classes¹²⁶

The issues in June, while the *Fair Play* newsletter was still a weekly, dealt with the AFL-CIO in Cuba. The paper criticized the American labor organization for

¹²³“Sweetening the Bitter Tea of Senator Smathers.” *Fair Play*. May 13, 1960. 1.

¹²⁴Ibid. 1. Ambrose. 293-316. Warren Hinckle and William Turner. *Deadly Secrets: The CIA-War Against Castro and the Assassination of J.F.K.* New York: Thunder’s Mouth Press, 1992. Note: This reference to “pirate aircraft” is related to the beginnings of the war against Fidel Castro, which started in the Eisenhower administration and intensified during the Kennedy administration. Much in the way of other covert actions took place including attempts at assassination of Castro utilizing the Mafia, putting botulism toxin in Castro’s wetsuit, and numerous others. Both Cuban exile groups and the Mafia were used.

¹²⁵“If the Counter Revolution Had it Their Way.” *Fair Play*. June 3, 1960. 4.

¹²⁶Postscript to a Pastoral Letter From Oriente.” *Fair Play*. May 20, 1960. 4.

being “wealthy and conservative,” and described it as to the right of John Foster Dulles on foreign affairs. *Fair Play* accused the labor group of supporting a gangster ridden Cuban labor movement under Batista, and his labor boss Mujal.¹²⁷ Another June article featured French intellectual Simone de Beauvoir, who wrote that, “the Cuban Revolution is not merely a success, it is an example.” Simone de Beauvoir’s article described disillusioned young Cubans under Batista, and said that, “What they told us was impossible, Castro proved it was possible.”¹²⁸

June’s issues also featured the omnipresent African American involvement in the FPCC. One article referred to boxing champion Joe Louis’s trip to Cuba, and his appearance and talk with Castro on racial discrimination. Louis later became an object of a congressional investigation. Some newspapers accused Louis of being a sellout, when the former boxer remarked, “Where else can an American Negro go for a winter vacation?”¹²⁹

Reportage on anti-Castro exiles, of course, was paramount in pro-Castro publications. They tended to treat the exiles as dangerous and criminal, but also paradoxically, as disorganized and impotent. Of prime importance was anti-Castro collaboration with the CIA and criminal elements.

Fair Play sounded anxious and anticipatory on July 8, when it stated, “It is apparent to anyone who has been following developments in Havana and Washington with half an eye that U.S.-Cuban relations have entered an ominous phase.” The article went on to say, “Cuba has been precipitated, willy nilly into the Cold War. Under economic pressures from the U.S., the *fidelistas* have been forced to find new

¹²⁷“Labor’s Lost in Cuba.” *Fair Play*. June 3, 1960. 2.

¹²⁸“The Possibilities of Man: Simon de Beauvoir on Revolution.” *Fair Play*. June 6, 1960.

¹²⁹“Why They Don’t Want U.S. Negroes to Visit Cuba.” *Fair Play*. June 10, 1960. 1.

markets and credits in the Communist bloc.”¹³⁰ Again, the Guatemala experience was fresh in the FPCC editor’s minds.¹³¹

FPCC founding member, and author, Carleton Beals visited Cuba soon before the July 8 edition came out. He wrote a favorable article entitled “Cuba Revisited,” which appeared in the FPCC newsletter.¹³² Beals own political sensibilities were evident in his work *The Crime of Cuba*, in which he lambasted earlier Cuban dictatorships.

A prominent African-American presence in the organization again found its way into print in the July 8 issue with an article about founding FPCC member Robert F. Williams, the black militant leader of the Monroe, North Carolina National Association for the Advancement of Colored People [NAACP]. Williams was said to be ahead of his time, as black activists go, and advocated violence when confronted with it by white racists.¹³³ Williams became a Castro enthusiast, and went to Cuba because, as he put it, “To see the country that Joe Louis was not allowed to talk about.”¹³⁴

The national FPCC newsletter became a bi-monthly publication, as its editor Robert Taber announced. It left its weekly format in order to help organize new chapters in Tampa and Chicago. Chicago’s was made up of labor and Old Left members, headed by John Rossen. The Tampa chapter was headed by local activist Louis Fritze.¹³⁵ It was the first indication of the Tampa Bay chapter in the press, since

¹³⁰ “Prescription to Produce a Caribbean Revolution.” *Fair Play*. July 8, 1960. 1.

¹³¹ *Ibid.* 1.

¹³² “A Distinguished Author Reports on the Progress of the Revolution.” *Fair Play*. July 8, 1960. 3.

¹³³ “NAACP Leader in Cuba to Learn What U.S. Faces.” *Fair Play*. July 8, 1960. 4.

Timothy B. Tyson, overleaf. In 1964, Malcolm X said, “Robert Williams was just a couple of years ahead of his time.”

¹³⁴ “NAACP Leader in Cuba to Learn What US Faces.” *Fair Play*. July 8, 1960. 4.

¹³⁵ “Letter From the Editor.” *Fair Play*. July 8, 1960. 4.

the purpose of the article was to announce the formation of the Tampa Bay chapter. At this time in Tampa, local news articles focused on the still viable 26th of July Movement, which in July, 1960 was Tampa's primary pro-Castro group. The FPCC was new, and its function was similar to the older pro-Castro group in this time frame.

The "What is Really Happening in Cuba." ad that appeared in the April 6, 1960 edition of the *New York Times* was published in Sunday's *Tampa Tribune* on May 15, 1960.¹³⁶ This was an even earlier attempt at recruiting Tampa members for the FPCC by the national group, but there is no evidence the Tampa chapter existed before the July date referred to in the national newsletter. The Tampa ad purported to show that the United States press gave a false picture of conditions in Cuba with regard to communism, confiscation of property, and chaotic living conditions. This ad, like its New York counterpart, was signed by the Fair Play for Cuba Committee, 60 East 42nd Street, New York, New York.¹³⁷

The first public meeting of the FPCC took place on July 21, 1960 in New York City at Steinway Hall on 57th Street.¹³⁸ In little more than six months after the *New York Times* ad, the FPCC was transformed from three local chapters to an organization claiming 7,000 members in twenty-seven 'adult chapters' and forty Student Councils. The combined action of these chapters coordinated nationwide protests during the Bay of Pigs invasion.¹³⁹ Robert Taber, who wanted the organization to remain independent from the Communist Party, helped start a

¹³⁶ NARA. JFK Collection. FBI Bureau File: 97-4196-64-24. Appendix, p. 16.

¹³⁷ Ibid. Appendix, p. 16.

¹³⁸ Van Gosse. 146.

¹³⁹ Ibid. 146.

working agreement with the Trotskyite Socialist Workers Party. This move helped the FPCC in its organizational impetus. Trotskyite leader Berta Green, in turn, became the secretary of the organization.¹⁴⁰

Green was interviewed by the *New York Times* for its November 20, 1960 edition. The article detailed the organization's growth, and gave information about its chapters around the nation. The paper also carried a story about a large FPCC rally at Manhattan Center on October 20, which unanimously urged "hands off Cuba."¹⁴¹ Fair Play officers listed in the *Times* were Robert Taber [head of organization] who was a former foreign correspondent for CBS; Alan Sagner, New Jersey businessman; Richard Gibson, graduate student in African Affairs, and like Taber, a CBS reporter; New York attorney Elizabeth Borad; and honorary chairmen Waldo Frank and Carleton Beals. Berta Green also told of the leaders of other chapters such as San Francisco's Vincent Halinan, counsel to Longshoremen's Union head Harry Bridges; Dr. Al Lewis of Los Angeles; John Rossen of Chicago; Richard Tussey of Cleveland; Edward Shaw of Detroit; and Tampa chapter co-leaders Louis Fritze and August Rodriguez.¹⁴² Also listed were academics and reporters such as C. Wright Mills and I.F. Stone, and African Americans such as William Worthy [of the *Baltimore Afro-American*] and NAACP leader Robert F. Williams.¹⁴³

The extension of membership to the Tampa Bay area did not automatically result in a Tampa newsletter. The first issue did not appear until a year after *Fair Play* told its readers to contact Louis Fritze for Tampa area FPCC activities. A later

¹⁴⁰ Ibid. 144-146.

¹⁴¹ "Pro-Castro Body Reports U.S. Gain." *New York Times*. November 20, 1960

¹⁴² Ibid. 30.

¹⁴³ Ibid. 30.

newsletter developed and was called *Tampa Fair Play*. But even without a regularly published bulletin, the FPCC in Tampa was active enough to make headlines regularly as the year 1961 commenced.

With a diplomatic relations break with Cuba came stepped up attacks by Cuban exiles in Tampa toward pro-Castro supporters. The combination of these events ended the branch of the 26th of July Movement organized by Fidel Castro and Victoriano Mantiaga. Anti-Castro *batistianos* were responsible for these attacks. There was, however, another factor which contributed to the demise of the pro-Castro group. Mantiaga wrote in *La Gaceta* in the regular “As We Heard It” column that he had visited Cuba in July 1960 and learned that a Cuban had come to Tampa carrying instructions for the Tampa 26th of July Movement to follow. Mantiaga resigned immediately from the organization, saying he would not accept orders from a foreign nation.¹⁴⁴

An FBI report covering an investigative period from January 11, 1962 to April 4, 1962 focused on the FPCC, but also delved into the roots of Mantiaga and the 26th of July Movement. It made the connection of Mantiaga and Fidel Castro in the report, which stated, “According to an editorial appearing in *La Gaceta*, a Spanish language weekly newspaper published in Tampa, Florida by Victoriano Mantiaga, the 26th of July Movement or Club was founded November 27, 1955 at Tampa in the presence of Dr. Fidel Castro.”¹⁴⁵ For Mantiaga, the harassment from the anti-Castro faction in 1960 and 1961, and the diplomatic break, would curtail his own pro-Castro activism. But *La Gaceta* still published FPCC “letters to the editor” and notices of meetings

¹⁴⁴ Roland Mantiaga. “As We Heard It.” *La Gaceta*. December 22, 1961. 12-A.

¹⁴⁵ NARA. JFK Collection. FBI Bureau File: 97-4196-64-24. Appendix.

from the newer group.

As Castro's policies and pronouncements gradually became stridently anti-American, it became impossible for mainstream American politicians to defend Cuba.¹⁴⁶ The final act that resulted in the US breaking diplomatic relations was an announcement by Cuba that the US should not have any more embassy representation in Cuba than Cuba did in the US.¹⁴⁷ In making this policy, Castro described the American embassy as a nest of spies.¹⁴⁸ When diplomacy finally broke down, the first of the pro-Castro Tampa groups closed its doors. By then a growing Fair Play for Cuba Committee began its activism. And again, as with the 26th of July Movement, anti-Castro harassment, and federal surveillance and harassment would follow.

The same FBI report that referred to Mantiega and Castro, also wrote about the Senate Internal Security sub-Committee hearing which questioned Dr. Charles Santos-Buch, a young Cuban physician, who was a self-described FPCC organizer. Santos-Buch testified that he and Robert Taber obtained \$3,500 from the Cuban government through the son of Cuba's Foreign Minister Raul Roa. This money, along with \$1,100 in funds from FPCC supporters, paid for the full paged FPCC ad in the April 6, 1960 edition of the *New York Times*.¹⁴⁹ The young physician's testimony that he had gotten the money from Raulito Roa, a member of Cuba's United Nations [UN] delegation, put the spotlight on the FPCC. This helped intensify Cold War tensions surrounding the pro-Castro group. Santos-Buch had admitted that he was an agent of a foreign nation.

¹⁴⁶ Lawrence Freedman, *Kennedy's Wars: Berlin, Cuba, Laos, and Vietnam*. New York and Oxford: 2000. 124.

¹⁴⁷ FRUS, Vol. X, Cuba 1961-1962, Vol. XI, Cuba: 1-15, January 3, 1961. 1.

¹⁴⁸ Freedman, 127.

¹⁴⁹ Ibid. FBI, Bureau File 97-4196-64-24, Appendix.. "Castro Supporter Furnished Ad Money." *St. Petersburg Times*, January 11, 1961.

In Tampa, the battle between the anti and pro-Castro forces continued in spite of the demise of the 26th of July Movement. The discrediting of the idea of pro-Castroism proved short lived. On January 3, there was a report of a bomb threat against pro-Batista Cuban Labor Front leader Henry Gonzáles. The note, found by the wife of the Cuban exile leader, threatened him and his wife because “they were counter-revolutionary traitors.”¹⁵⁰ The Labor Front remained undaunted. Just as the pro-Castroites remained a force in the coming months, this anti-Castro group continued despite the threats of violence.

By January 13, 1961, V.T. Lee became the Tampa FPCC chairman. An open letter bearing his name appeared in *La Gaceta*. Addressed to the US State Department, Lee voiced his support for Cuban sovereignty and its right to trade with Communist bloc nations. In the letter, V.T. Lee called the US hypocritical since it traded and gave loans to Communist nations such as Yugoslavia and Poland, and put up with insults from the Russians. Lee predicted that the US might try to use force to overthrow the Cuban government. He warned readers that there would be worldwide outrage and cries of “Yankee Imperialism,” if the U.S. took such action. He closed by saying that, “Democracy must be practiced at home and abroad.”¹⁵¹

A CIA document dated February 17, 1961 noted that Fidel Castro’s regime was becoming more consolidated in power over the island. Another February 1961 CIA document expressed interest in the FPCC. It focused on student Court Wood traveling to Cuba, under a program sponsored by the FPCC. Dave Phillips of C/WH/4 Propaganda, Western Hemisphere, was the interested party.¹⁵²

¹⁵⁰“Castro Foes Threatened” *The Tampa Times*, January 4, 1961. Tom Inglis, “Pro-Castro Clubs Closed.” *The Tampa Times*, 1.

¹⁵¹“Letter to U.S. State Department.” *La Gaceta*, January 13, 1961, 4.

¹⁵²CIA document released under the CIA historical review program, and dated February, 1961. Subject: Fair Play

One year before the CIA paper, the agency initiated a program to create a broad based opposition to the Castro regime. The CIA determined that Castro's opposition should have a left-of-center political orientation.¹⁵³ But while the agency determined this type of anti-Castro leadership to be the most prudent, right-wing *batistianos* were the first refugees. Consequently, they were also the greatest in number and the most vocal. But their pro-Castro counterparts in Tampa were also large in number and vocal.

Pro-Castro sympathies proved alive and well at the first FPCC public meeting in a small Tampa church on February 22, 1961. More than 250 people crowded into a small Tampa church to listen to retired seaman V.T. Lee describe Fidel Castro's Cuba in glowing terms, while attacking the mainstream press and US government policies toward Cuba. Tampa's FPCC leader reported that life in Havana had improved considerably since Castro's revolutionary government came to power. The exuberance of the crowd was manifested by applause, cheers, and whistles.¹⁵⁴

V.T. Lee's critical diatribes extended to the administrations of Presidents Eisenhower and Kennedy, as he chided both for their inability to end unemployment.¹⁵⁵ But to this Tampa crowd, interest in *local* economic issues took priority. Lee talked about Florida's US Senator Smathers, who had proposed an embargo, which the FPCC leader said would throw thousands of Tampa residents out of work, and close social clubs, restaurants, and other Ybor City businesses.

At this meeting, the FPCC leader mentioned Tampa's cigar industry and roundly criticized Smathers for trying to stop Castro's revolution, "All Smathers

for Cuba Committee. C/WH/4 Propaganda was the CIA Western Hemisphere division.

¹⁵³ FRUS. Vol. X. Cuba 1961-1962. Vol. XI Cuba: 46-60. 1. February 17, 1961.

¹⁵⁴ Marty Sullivan. "Cuba Fair Play Rally Packed." *The Tampa Times*. February 23, 1961. 1.

¹⁵⁵ *Ibid.* 1.

thinks it takes to break the Cuban revolution is to stop selling cigars, but he's wrong."¹⁵⁶ Smathers in a telephone conversation with Secretary of State Dean Rusk said that he wanted to persuade President Kennedy to eliminate imports from Cuba such as sugar, tobacco, molasses, fruits, and vegetables.¹⁵⁷ The impact of tobacco in Tampa was significant since the total amount of imports from Cuba in 1960 was \$27 million. US cigar manufacturers would have had difficulty finding comparable cigar leaf.¹⁵⁸

The *Tampa Times* reporter wrote, "Any doubts that the Castro government still has strong support in Tampa were dispelled at the meeting of the group which is dedicated to the new revolutionary government."¹⁵⁹ Pro-Castro sympathy revived in Tampa with a mix of local economic and historical issues which Cuban-Americans considered important. These reasons for support of the FPCC contrasted with earlier support for the 26th of July Movement and its emphasis on *Cuba Libre*. In addition, the FPCC, unlike the older organization, would emphasize its "Americanism," but in a way expressing a desire to improve US-Cuban relations. V.T. Lee was especially emphatic about this point.

The large FPCC public meeting on February 22 gave way to a battle between pro and anti-Castro factions over support from the cigar workers. *The Tampa Times* of March 1 stated, "Tampa's anti and pro-Castro groups are waging a battle this week to gain the support of cigar workers for their varying views on the proposed tobacco

¹⁵⁶ Ibid. 1. The FPCC rally and part of its emphasis on the local cigar manufacturing economy harkens back to the Depression era of the 1930s, and the hard times that industry experienced. A more detailed analysis of the Tampa cigar industry during this period can be found in a book by Gary Mormino and George E. Pozzetta, *The Immigrant World of Ybor City: Italians and Their Latin Neighbors in Tampa, 1885-1985*.

¹⁵⁷ FRUS, Vol. X. Cuba 1961-1962. Vol. XI. Cuba: 46-60. February 18, 1961. 8.

¹⁵⁸ Ibid. February 24, 1961. 10.

¹⁵⁹ Ibid. 1.

embargo. The Fair Play for Cuba Committee, headed by V.T. Lee, got things started by distributing petitions among workers at the Corral-Wodiska Cigar Company. In the petition, the cigar workers were urged to oppose the tobacco embargo proposal by Senator George Smathers.”¹⁶⁰

The anti-Castro faction engaged in counter-measures in this internecine war. The *batistianos* of the Cuban Labor Front announced on the day of the FPCC petitioning that they planned to distribute letters to cigar workers urging support of the embargo. Gerardo Soler, who battled against the 26th of July Movement, and served as chairman of the Cuban Front’s labor wing, said letters would be sent to workers in all Tampa cigar factories.

Soler indicated the letters would be printed in both Spanish and English, and were intended to combat FPCC untruths about the embargo. He said that the FPCC petitions as of March 1 were only distributed at the Corral-Wodiska factory.¹⁶¹ Soler charged the pro-Castro group with preying on cigar workers economic fears, “They don’t want to let Tampans to know that Castro would be the party really hurt by the embargo.”¹⁶² Raúl Brana, Front propaganda director, and like Soler, a foe of the defunct 26th of July Movement, said a showdown between the Front and pro-Castro groups was near.¹⁶³ Tensions intensified in the cigar factories as the week progressed.

The Tampa Times of March 3 again reported on the FPCC call for opposition to the embargo, and the Cuban Labor Front’s support for it. The editorial stated, “Cigar workers, in the face of a proposal to curtail imports of Cuban tobacco--have

¹⁶⁰ “Castro Foes, Backers Battle On Embargo.” *The Tampa Times*. March 1, 1961. 1.

¹⁶¹ *Ibid.* 1.

¹⁶² *Ibid.* 1.

¹⁶³ *Ibid.* 1.

been put on the spot. If they oppose the embargo, they will be called supportive of the Castro dictatorship, which is pro-Communist. If they support the embargo, they will put their livelihoods in jeopardy.”¹⁶⁴ In such an early 1960s southern atmosphere, which was anti-union and pro-business, the issue was a burning one for the cigar workers.

This traditional anti-union attitude was complimented by the influx of anti-Castro Cuban exiles, who were anti-Communist by reason of experience. The paper lamented, “The cigar workers who wish to oppose the tobacco embargo may do so without identifying themselves with the Cuban dictatorship. The wisest course is to follow the leadership of their union and employees. On this issue, labor and management are for once solidly united.”¹⁶⁵

The tri-lingual *La Gaceta* reported on the FPCC without openly becoming an advocate of the group. A March 31 article written in Spanish told of a US Senate investigation of the FPCC. It spoke about the CIA and other government agencies, and the heightened sense of activity brought on by the entrance of Cuba into the Cold War sphere.¹⁶⁶ On April 7 *La Gaceta* published another meeting announcement at the Unitarian Church at the corner of Bay-to-Bay Blvd. and Concordia. Detroit FPCC leader Ed Shaw was slated to speak in favor of the Cuban government’s quest for total independence.¹⁶⁷

In the same edition of the weekly was a letter from V.T. Lee. He defended the organization on the national level, while writing about the twelve city-wide chapters

¹⁶⁴“Cigar Workers on the Spot.” *The Tampa Times*. March 3, 1961.

¹⁶⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁶⁶“Pide Una Investigacion El Fair Play for Cuba Committee.” *La Gaceta*. March 31, 1961. 17.

¹⁶⁷“Reunion Del Fair Play for Cuba Committee.” *La Gaceta*. April 7, 1961. 11.

and Student Councils. Lee said that “Others having had their say, we think it is only fair that the Fair Play for Cuba Committee be permitted to speak in its own behalf.”¹⁶⁸

Then Lee went on to write something which was a delineation of the purpose of the organization, one with which its supporters--who were for the most part people on the left of the political spectrum-- separated themselves from the stain of Stalinist Communism. Lee, whose politics could best be described as radical pro-labor, emphasized his own military service on behalf of the United States in later Congressional hearings. He seemed to be speaking to a larger audience in his letter, “We want everyone to know that this is an American committee which exercises its inherent right to speak, assemble, petition, and protest grievances to our government as set forth in the First Amendment to our constitution.”¹⁶⁹

The Bay of Pigs invasion commenced on April 17, 1961 and FPCC chapters organized protests against the US action. Five days before the invasion, V.T. Lee wrote a letter to *The Tampa Tribune* deriding both the Tampa daily and the Senate Internal Security sub-committee, which was investigating the organization. His letter lambasted Senators Thomas Dodd and James O. Eastland, whose strident anti-Communism begat accusations that the FPCC was run by a foreign government. This charge was in reference to the FPCC’s April, 1960 *New York Times* ad. Lee denied these charges and spoke up in favor of travel to Cuba. He wrote, “We want travel restrictions removed so citizens can travel freely and see for themselves. We’ve had

¹⁶⁸ V.T. Lee, “Tampa’s Fair Play for Cuba Committee Answers Critics,” *La Gaceta*, 8.

¹⁶⁹ Ibid. 8. Van Gosse. Van Gosse’s main thesis in his book is that the FPCC was possibly the first “new left” organization, being ahead of its time. VT Lee’s statements sound similar to Tom Hayden’s in the Port Huron Statement, but for the FPCC the region of the nation is telling as to the political leanings of its members. FPCC Detroit member Ed Shaw, who was in Tampa to speak to the organization at this time had a more traditional leftist background. Most of the Midwesterners were Old Leftists, some were former Communist Party members.

so much hammered into us about iron curtains, we don't like the one lowered on us in Cuba.”¹⁷⁰

Fair Play reported FPCC activities during the Bay of Pigs. There was also a *New York Times* FPCC ad on April 21 titled “An Appeal to Americans.” It called for united action against the US for flouting its own international law in aiding the Cuban exile invaders.¹⁷¹ The article also described demonstrations in a number of US cities including New York, Chicago, Detroit, and Tampa. Members in Tampa organized a picket of one-hundred people to protest the invasion. The paper called this turnout encouraging, since South Florida was a hotbed of anti-Castro and CIA activity.¹⁷²

After the failed invasion, Robert Kennedy wrote a memo to the president posing the problem of Castro's Cuba as a communist base. He reported that arms were sent to Cuba “not only to keep Castro in power, but to provide the necessary tools for Communist agitation in other South and Central American nations to overthrow their governments.”¹⁷³ Robert Kennedy, who was the US Attorney General, was given the job of leadership of the post-Bay of Pigs war against Castro. Humiliated by the defeat at Playa Giron, Robert Kennedy told President John Kennedy, that the new mission's purpose “is to stir up things on the island with espionage, sabotage, general disorder, run and operated by Cubans themselves with every group but Batistites and Communists.”¹⁷⁴ In effect, he was advising his brother to take a more militant course regarding Cuba. Eventually the Kennedy administration organized Operation Mongoose, which revived anti-Castro covert

¹⁷⁰“Keep Out of Cuban Affairs.” V.T. Lee letter to the editor. *The Tampa Tribune*. April 12, 1961.

¹⁷¹“FPCC During Invasion.” *Fair Play*. May 10, 1961. 8.

¹⁷²*Ibid.* 8.

¹⁷³Freedman. 148.

¹⁷⁴Freedman. 153.

actions in the Eisenhower administration, and added more such activities to the project.

In the April 21 edition of *La Gaceta*, V.T. Lee criticized the Bay of Pigs invasion. There was also a guest column in the Ybor City weekly by Joe Barry which commented on Castro's revolution. Barry begged the question, "Castro it is said, betrayed the revolution. Does this condone our undertaking a counter-revolution?" The columnist bemoaned "the inertness of the intellectuals more than the reports and rumors of training camps in Guatemala, Florida and [only the] CIA knows where else."¹⁷⁵ The FPCC in the nation and in Tampa was becoming more aware of the covert nature of the actions against Cuba. More fearful expressions of an escalating Cold War, and nuclear holocaust started appearing in *La Gaceta*.¹⁷⁶

La Gaceta continued publishing meeting notices of the Tampa Bay FPCC chapter throughout the summer of 1961. One article on May 26 told of a meeting, in which 130 persons attended. It took place at the Unitarian Church. V.T. Lee spoke and condemned the recent invasion.¹⁷⁷ It proved to be a good level of turnout for the pro-Castroites in the post-Bay of Pigs period.

The anti-Castroites were also active at this time, and continually focused on Tampa's pro-Castroism, and the FPCC. A leaflet dated May 19, listed thirteen local pro-Castroites. All had names of Spanish origin. Five worked in shipyard related industries. An anti-Castro group, the Cuban Democratic Front, took credit for the leaflet. Among the pro-Castro supporters listed were FPCC organizer Louis Fritze,

¹⁷⁵ Joe Barry. "Columnist Joe Barry Comments on Fidel Castro's Revolution." *La Gaceta*. April 21, 1961. 10.

¹⁷⁶ J. Martin Reyes. Letter to the editor. *La Gaceta*. May 19, 1961. 8.

¹⁷⁷ "Nota Del Fair Play for Cuba Committee." *La Gaceta*. May 26, 1961. 11.

and 26th of July Movement leader Raúl Vilamiel.¹⁷⁸

US intelligence sponsored anti-Castro activities increased at this time on the national level. Late in February 1961 at covert instigation of the CIA, six leading Cuban opposition figures met in New York City for the purpose of electing members for a provisional Cuban government.¹⁷⁹ The CIA documentation for this ‘Revolutionary Council’s’ formation was dated March 10, 1961, and listed as some of its goals, “the overthrow of the Castro regime, and a return to the Constitution of 1940 with certain amendments.”¹⁸⁰

In a break with the right-wing *batistianos*, the CIA paper called for an organization with a center to left-of-center political orientation, and a political platform embodying most of the originally stated goals of the 26th of July Movement. The CIA paper went on to state the reasoning behind this new strategy, “It is believed that this will command the support of a very large majority of anti-Castro Cubans although it will not be altogether acceptable to the more conservative groups.”¹⁸¹

A March 22 State Department memo exposed the divisions in the anti-Castro exile community. When someone proposed that Manuel Artime head the new Cuban Revolutionary Council [CRC], some members objected saying that Artime wanted to utilize the *batistianos*, claiming that some were already in the training camps. The meeting instead chose José Miró Cardona, also a moderate, to head the new anti-Castro group.¹⁸²

¹⁷⁸ Florida Johns Committee. Series: 1486. Box 19.

¹⁷⁹ FRUS. Vol. X. Cuba 1961-1962. Vol. XI. Cuba 46-60. 12. Among these exiles were Manuel Artime, Manolo Ray, Tony Varona and Raul Chibas.

¹⁸⁰ Ibid. 14.

¹⁸¹ Ibid. 33.

¹⁸² FRUS. Vol. X. Cuba 1961-1962. Vol. XI. Cuba 61-75. 19.

Special Advisor to the President, Arthur Schlesinger Jr., wrote to President Kennedy about a white paper of his own that was in progress. Schlesinger argued that the emphasis in the war against Castro should be on “dictatorship” and not just expropriation of US business.¹⁸³ In an April 10 memo to the president, Schlesinger warned that an assault against Castro would cause world-wide sympathy, and urged caution. Among other things he suggested is A Committee for Free Cuba that should be organized to “backstop the Cuban Revolutionary Council and offset the Fair Play for Cuba Committee.”¹⁸⁴

While the Cuban exiles were eager for battle in order to retake Cuba, some of Kennedy’s staff had doubts. They foresaw problems between different factions in the anti-Castro community. Many of the moderates disliked the *batistianos* almost as much as they disliked Castro.

The Bay of Pigs invasion was the Kennedy administration’s low point. The fact that the invasion failed was bad enough. For the US, it also subjected the administration’s highest officials to ridicule, as they tried to pass the event off as the work of independent Cubans.¹⁸⁵ Both the FPCC and anti-Castro Cuban exiles felt betrayal. The former saw a continuation of Eisenhower administration policies, while the latter doubted the Kennedy administration’s resolve. For the rising moderates among the Cuban exile community, the failure to defeat Castro especially hurt. In the future, these moderate Cuban exiles would take a more militant stand than that of the administration. In Tampa they would eventually clash with the FPCC, as the

¹⁸³ Ibid. 10-11.

¹⁸⁴ FRUS. Vol. X. Cuba 1961-1962. Vol. XI. Cuba 76-90. 15.

¹⁸⁵ Taylor Branch and George Crile III. “The Kennedy Vendetta.” *Harper’s*. August, 1975. 49.

batistianos of the Cuban Labor Front did at an earlier date.

Covert actions began a transition, and became more overt. For the CIA this was a change. The Bay of Pigs had made it far more difficult to credibly deny CIA activity, even when the agency was not responsible. This meant that planned operations with excessively “high noise levels” worried the president and led him to withhold approval.¹⁸⁶ Even though there were government memos of excluding Batista supporters from the CRC, which in effect would give more power to the moderates, the fact was that the increasingly militant moderates gradually became willing to take on the job of the right. While the political right-wing, who took part in Eisenhower’s earlier efforts, may have felt snubbed in the new war against Castro, their ideas did not die. The Bay of Pigs experience would not allow it. The Cuban experience in the Cold War intensified.

By June both the national and Tampa FPCC chapters had roundly criticized the Bay of Pigs. The Tampa chapter was becoming better organized, and a notice in *La Gaceta* announced that the group had elected V.T. Lee as president, J. Alcalá, secretary; Harold Wilson, Treasurer; and members at large Mr. J. Menendez and Mr. S. Leal.¹⁸⁷ On June 15, the *Tallahassee Democrat* announced that the Tampa FPCC held its first Cuba-America program the previous Friday, and heard attacks on President Kennedy and Senator Smathers. V.T. Lee said at the meeting, “President Kennedy should learn a few lessons from Fidel before he gets us into a worse mess than we are in now.”¹⁸⁸ Lee also remarked that Adlai Stevenson would not be replaced in his trip to Latin America by Senator Smathers because, “There aren’t

¹⁸⁶Freedman, 157.

¹⁸⁷“Nota del Fair Play for Cuba Committee.” *La Gaceta*, June 9, 1961. 11.

¹⁸⁸“Cuba Committee Hears Attacks on the President.” *Tallahassee Democrat*, June 17, 1961.

enough Marines to send who could get him out of there alive.”¹⁸⁹

La Gaceta published an article by FPCC organizer Louis Fritze in July. Fritze, whose approach was oriented toward Latin American leftism, wrote about a book which chronicled the experience in Nicaragua in the 1920s. He referred to *The Looting of Nicaragua*, which Fritze told *La Gaceta* readers, was in the Tampa Public Library. This book had used the phrase “fair play” as an appeal to the American public to “understand the intervention of the United States” in Nicaragua’s affairs.¹⁹⁰ Fritze wrote that the term “fair play” was used many times with reference to Cuba by its sympathizers, but cautioned that, “The American people are fooled and continue to be fooled, because there are not enough organizations like the Fair Play for Cuba Committee to offset the false presentation about information about Cuba.”¹⁹¹

The FPCC leader addressed the continuing criticisms from Cold Warriors in the US that the FPCC was funded by a foreign government. Remembering the 26th of July Movement, these foes of both pro-Castro groups questioned the FPCC about Castro’s stateside influence. Not unlike V.T. Lee, Louis Fritze defended free speech and the Bill of Rights, and also warned against detractors who wanted to regulate the thoughts of the citizenry as did the Nazis and Communists.¹⁹²

By August 1961, the Kennedy administration’s Special Group Augmented [SGA], which shaped Cuban policy, decided to concentrate on the “further containment, undermining, and discrediting of the target regime while isolating it

¹⁸⁹ Ibid. There was also an article in the *St. Petersburg Times* at this time which told about the initial meeting of the FPCC in Tampa.

¹⁹⁰ Louis Fritze. “Fair Play.” *La Gaceta*. July 23, 1961. 10.

¹⁹¹ Ibid. 10.

¹⁹² Ibid. 10.

from other Hemisphere nations, rather than overthrow of the regime.”¹⁹³ But militancy against Cuba continued, and Operation Mongoose had yet to take hold.

Meanwhile in Tampa, the importation of Cuban tobacco was in the forefront as both an economic and foreign policy issue. This was unlike the national chapter, which was primarily concerned with travel, the press, and defense against red baiting of FPCC members. These issues were important for the Tampa chapter. The *Tampenos*, like their ancestors throughout the Twentieth Century, would also want freer travel to Cuba. But this position was somewhat different from the national chapter, and for different reasons. The *Tampeno* desire for travel to Cuba had as much or more to do with ancestral heritage and family visits to the island, as it did for political support of Castro.

In the September 9 *La Gaceta* in its “This You Can Believe” column, C.A. James Abbott commented on the proposed congressional bill which would ban interstate shipment of anything made from imported Cuban products. Abbott wrote that the Trading With the Enemy Act had loopholes which could destroy Tampa’s cigar industry, and force hundreds of workers to lose their livelihood.¹⁹⁴ Abbott quipped, “I am impressed with the words of our First District Congressman William C. Cramer. He says in part, ‘It is my belief all of the people in my district, including those in the cigar industry, are willing to take any needed calculated risks, and make any necessary sacrifices, to end this Cuban threat’.”¹⁹⁵

La Gaceta’s support for the Tampa FPCC chapter was replaced in September 1961 by the introductory issue of *Tampa Fair Play*. The first issue touched upon

¹⁹³ Freedman. 160.

¹⁹⁴ C.A. James Abbott. “This You Can Believe.” *La Gaceta*. September 22, 1961. 9-10.

¹⁹⁵ *Ibid.* 9-10.

topics related to Castro's Cuba including Senator Smathers, the national FPCC July conference in New York, and an article referring to Guatemala as a "good neighbor" to the United Fruit Company. It also touched upon criticism of attacks on persons joining the organization, and the threat to ban Cuban tobacco leaf slated for the Tampa cigar industry. The newsletter published an article critical of the president referring to him as "one eyed Jack," while another criticized his appointment of Adolf Berle as his chief advisor for Latin American affairs, saying that Berle previously served as chairman of the American Molasses Company. The paper sarcastically quipped, "Berle is at least an authority on that part of the Cuban economy," and also said that since molasses is made from Cuban cane, "Berle may be somewhat of an authority on things here too."¹⁹⁶

The *Tampa Fair Play* article entitled "One Eyed Jack" derided the Cuban exiles that fought against Castro in the aborted Bay of Pigs invasion. They were described as "weak sisters" and the article noted that the "freedom fighters" Kennedy sent in ran when the first shots were fired.¹⁹⁷ *Tampa Fair Play*, in a related article entitled "Rally Round the Flag Boys" blamed government covert ops for the invasion and said the action, "was directed entirely by the US CIA with military plans approved by Pentagon officers and the executive branch of the government."¹⁹⁸

In addition to criticizing the president, Senator Smathers was described as, "a perfect example of the political anarchy and intellectual assininity prevalent in the southern quarter of the United States."¹⁹⁹ The newsletter tied Smathers to a new

¹⁹⁶"Objectivity," *Tampa Fair Play*, September, 1961. 3. Criticism of both Franklin Roosevelt's Good Neighbor Policy and the then current Cold War policy with regards to Cuba is evident in this article.

¹⁹⁷"One Eyed Jack," *Tampa Fair Play*, September, 1961. 2.

¹⁹⁸"Rally Round the Flag Boys," *Tampa Fair Play*, September, 1961. 4.

¹⁹⁹"Smathers and Point Four," *Tampa Fair Play*, September, 1961. 1.

“point four” anti-Castro program, and wrote that an investigation of the Florida senator “with regards to business interests of Cuban exiles in Miami was needed.” *Tampa Fair Play* called the exiles criminals “who roam American streets with armed body guards.”²⁰⁰

The October edition of *Tampa Fair Play* criticized *The Tampa Tribune* for “it misinformed, distorted, and deliberately lied about the entire Cuban-American fiasco from the very beginning.” *Tampa Fair Play* referred to Cuban tobacco leaf, calling it “the life blood of the local cigar industry.”²⁰¹ This article had a distinctly historical theme, when it referred to prejudice toward Ybor’s Latinos, while denouncing the political and press leaders who supported the embargo on Cuban leaf. The newsletter accused mainstream Tampa of trying to destroy the Latin community.²⁰²

Both the September and October issues of *Tampa Fair Play* quoted José Martí. The Cuban patriot once lived in an Ybor City residence during his exile from Cuba in the 1890s. This piece of land he resided on was later named after him. The October edition also endorsed the Monroe Defense Committee, which was organized to defend FPCC founding member, and NAACP leader, Robert F. Williams from kidnapping charges.²⁰³

Tampa Fair Play vehemently criticized the Cuban exile community, and crime fighting Attorney General Robert Kennedy in an October article entitled “The Enemy Within.” This article bore the title of Kennedy’s book on organized crime. *Tampa Fair Play* charged that if left up to their own devices, “The Cubans will turn

²⁰⁰ Ibid. 1.

²⁰¹ “Power Press.” *Tampa Fair Play*, October, 1961. 3. Note: In this article, the writer also stated that the adult generation had struggled through the local schools with taunts of “Cuban Nigger” and had worked hard for the American dream in the face of war, depression and discrimination.

²⁰² Ibid. 2-3.

²⁰³ “Monroe Defense Committee.” *Tampa Fair Play*, October, 1961. 2.

Florida into one of the biggest centers of narcotics, gambling, and prostitution ever witnessed in the history of the US, and that they were financed by the State Department, the Treasury Department, empowered by the CIA, and emboldened by the FBI.”²⁰⁴ The article, along with those on terror and vandalism of the past, specifically targeted *batistianos* and their CIA supporters.²⁰⁵

In the October issue there was a short, obscure article entitled “Gracias.” This seemingly inane piece proved telling as it thanked readers from Iowa, North Carolina, Michigan, California, Nebraska, Georgia, Montana, and “numerous other states.” The Tampa chapter’s influence certainly spread to chapters outside Florida.²⁰⁶

In November, the battle between pro and anti-Castro factions heated up. *The Tampa Times* reported that “charges have been made that Tampa [Ybor City and West Tampa in particular] are hotbeds of Castro Communism.” The article said that estimates ranged, “from 15,000 by a fervid anti-Castroite to “some” by Governor Farris Bryant.”²⁰⁷ Testifying to the loss in support for Castro since the break in diplomatic relations, the paper stated that, “Most Cubans agree that the number of Castro sympathizers in Tampa in January, 1959 was a lot higher than the 15,000 figure,” and pointed out that many had become disillusioned with Cuban ties to Communist bloc nations.²⁰⁸ Another Cuban exile remarked that there “weren’t any more than 500 pro-Castro fanatics in the Tampa area today.” As if disagreeing with the exile, journalist noted that “this guess may be borne out by the last public meeting of the Fair Play for Cuba Committee, in which 300 attended--and applauded the pro-

²⁰⁴“The Enemy Within.” *Tampa Fair Play*. October, 1961. 1.

²⁰⁵“The (New) American Revolution.” *Tampa Fair Play*. October, 1961. 4.

²⁰⁶“Gracias.” *Tampa Fair Play*. 4. Van Gosse. 244.

²⁰⁷Chuck Schwanitz. “How Pro-Castro is Tampa.” *The Tampa Times*. November 4, 1961. 2.

²⁰⁸*Ibid.* 2.

Castro propaganda meet.”²⁰⁹

The anti-Castro exiles speaking to *The Tampa Times* reporter may have been agents of either the anti-Castro movement or the CIA. One who wasn’t publicly identified told the reporter that he was involved in intelligence. The anti-Castroites may also have been looking for agents of Fidel Castro, because one of them said, “The hard core Castro supporters and the professional agents Castro may have sent here are too smart to show their hand by attending a Fair Play for Cuba Committee meeting.” He added, “That’s strictly for the suckers.”²¹⁰ A third exile stated that there were professional Castro agents in Tampa gathering information about us.²¹¹ When the CIA sponsored CRC was forming prior to the Bay of Pigs invasion, it had as one of its purposes the organization of the Cuban community in order to oppose Castro. This activity continued after the aborted invasion, and it spread to Tampa when the CRC organized a rally in Ybor City’s Martí Park. One rally took place on November 16, and was attended by about 600 persons. It ended in a near riot.²¹²

Dr. Luis Conte Aguero, who was the main speaker, also lashed out at the pro-Castro Fair Play for Cuba Committee on December 17, almost one month after the first rally took place. He blasted a Cuban club, which he described as a “pro-Castro stronghold.”²¹³ This battle between pro and anti-Castro forces in Tampa was unlike those taking place a year earlier. Unlike the earlier right wing *batistianos*, these exiles were moderates, and had become the main opposing force to the pro-Castroites.

When Conte Aguero rose to speak at the rally, two intruders rushed the

²⁰⁹ Ibid. 2.

²¹⁰ Ibid. 2.

²¹¹ Ibid. 2.

²¹² Chuck Schwanitz. “Exile Hits Pro-Castroites Here.” *The Tampa Times*. December 18, 1961. 1-2.

²¹³ Ibid. 1-2.

podium. One of them tried to grab the microphone out of his hands.²¹⁴ Aguero was a strong speaker, and addressed the crowd, “The last time we came to Tampa to assault the mentality of its pro-Castro Communists. We are here again in Tampa, and some thought we would never come back.”²¹⁵ Aguero attributed the microphone incident to that of the Communists, and derided a leaflet put out by the FPCC which referred to the Miami Cubans coming to Tampa as an invasion of foreigners. He said in his talk that the FPCC was one of the tentacles of Communism. He urged his friend Victoriano Mantiaga, who like Aguero had helped Castro, to come over to the anti-Castro side.²¹⁶

Victoriano Mantiaga, still the editor of *La Gaceta* as of the November 16 Martí Park incident, replied to Conte Aguero in his paper. He bemoaned the fact that Conte Aguero did not visit him in his trip to Tampa, but also felt that the reporter Chuck Schwanitz may not have gotten his translation straight, when he [Mantiaga] was referred to as a *Castrista*. Mantiaga wrote, “Conte Aguero is my friend, and I had hoped that he would have visited me while in Tampa, but he did not.”²¹⁷ Mantiaga expressed his feelings that Dr. Aguero may not have read *La Gaceta* in recent months. He said that he would be happy to send it to him, just as he had when Aguero resided in Cuba.²¹⁸

Mantiaga also wrote in January that his son Rolando would become the editor of the paper, since he was retiring after forty years as its head. *La Gaceta* had been a Democratic paper and supported the candidacy of President Kennedy in all three

²¹⁴ Ibid. 1-2.

²¹⁵ Ibid. 1-2.

²¹⁶ Ibid. 1-2.

²¹⁷ Roland Mantiaga. “As We Heard It,” *La Gaceta*. December 12, 1961. 12.

²¹⁸ Ibid. 12.

languages. In addition the paper reiterated Mantiega's support of Castro when he came to Tampa in 1955, as well as his opposition to Machado and Batista at an earlier date. Mantiega decried those who called him a proponent of *Castisimo*, and in the article as part of this farewell statement, remarked that,

"Local Communists attacked me and defamed me a number of years ago because of the position I took during the Russian-Finnish War. Naturally I was against the Russians for invading her small neighbor. In those days the Communists compared me to Hitler."²¹⁹

There were other reactions to the events in Martí Park. Congressman William C. [Bill] Cramer spoke before the Forest Hills Junior Women's Club on the night of December 20, and told the gathering that he was going to ask Attorney General Robert Kennedy to put the FPCC on the US Justice Department's list of subversive organizations. Cramer claimed to be the first member of Congress to make this request.²²⁰ Bill Cramer was concerned with Cuban affairs after reading about the FPCC in local newspapers. The Florida congressman told the women's group that the Eastland Committee had proven beyond a doubt that the FPCC was a Communist operation. Cramer requested that the organization be required to file under the Foreign Agents Act, and that '*La Revolucion*' be banned from importation to the United States.²²¹

Seemingly, one of the results of the Martí Park incident was a lessening of activity by the Tampa FPCC chapter. *The Tampa Times* reporter Chuck Schwanitz wrote in a later news story, "No FPCC leaflets attacking anti-Castro groups have been reported in Ybor City within the last week." He also wrote, "Until recently thousands

²¹⁹ Ibid. 12.

²²⁰ "Cramer Hits Subversive Cuban Group." *The Evening Independent*. December 21, 1961. 2-B. Jerry Wallace. "Cramer To Ask Subversive Tag for 'Fair Play' Group." *The Tampa Tribune*. December 21, 1961. 1-E.

²²¹ Ibid. 2-B.

of these leaflets had been found right after anti-Castro rallies took place. But no leaflets attacking last Sunday's Martí Park rally led by Dr. José Miró Cardona, head of the CRC have been seen."²²²

A continued persistence of anti-Castro activists in Tampa was beginning to take its toll on the FPCC. Pro-Castro discussions, which had been common in Ybor City's clubs and bars suddenly diminished. Until the recent Martí Park incident, they had occurred frequently.²²³ There were also sporadic incidents of vandalism in Ybor City during the general time frame of the riot.

The newspaper reported that individuals found red paint splattered against their homes. Vandals used light bulbs and filled them with paint in order to achieve this act.²²⁴ One anti-Castro exile told *The Tampa Times* that his home was the target of vandals, as two paint filled light bulbs had been hurled at it.²²⁵ Anti-Castro leaders denied that any of their organization's members engaged in these actions. They charged that the vandalism was being perpetrated by pro-Castroites who want to create a rift between anti-Castroites and Tampan.²²⁶ But one exile acknowledged that some of the younger hot-headed exiles might have been responsible for splashing paint here and there.²²⁷

These incidents had the feel of a dirty tricks campaign, but there was no evidence confirming this. Martí Park, which people of Cuban ancestry regarded as a hallowed parcel of land, was Cuban territory in the United States. For the FBI, then in

²²² Chuck Schwanitz. "Pro-Castroites Hard to Find." *The Tampa Times*. December 12, 1961. 6-A.

²²³ Ibid. 6-A.

²²⁴ Ibid. 6-A.

²²⁵ Ibid. 6-A.

²²⁶ Ibid. 6-A.

²²⁷ Ibid. 6-A.

its COINTELPRO days, this would have been an illegal operation.²²⁸ But for the CRC, and the fact that the members were in fact operatives of the CIA, this assembly in Martí Park could be considered out of country activity.²²⁹ A later CIA memo dated September 26, 1963 expressed an intention to create disruption for the FPCC, and referred to past attempts of this nature. One reference was to December 1961, when the FBI utilized techniques such as preparing anonymous leaflets, which were sent to selected FPCC members. The FBI suggested advising the CIA on assistance for this type of action.²³⁰

The December issue of *Tampa Fair Play* featured the Martí Park incident. In an article entitled “Hoodlum Justice,” the newsletter lambasted “Southern Justice” for the rally, and referred to the arrest of two men, who had disrupted the rally. They were sentenced to six months in jail, as the paper put it, “to satisfy the anti-Castro lust of foreigners.”²³¹ There was also an article on FPCC literature distribution. In an article entitled “Help.” The newsletter stated, that, “With this copy, 1701 copies of *Tampa Fair Play* have been distributed. It called for donations to keep the publication going.”²³²

In early 1962, *Tampa Fair Play* continued publishing and lambasting the Miami Cuban exiles, who previously held rallies at Martí Park. One article entitled “No Cartoons for Conte” had a main theme of Aguero talking at the rally about the unavailability of cartoons for Cuban children. The editorial stated, “We trust that the

²²⁸ COINTELPRO is an FBI term meaning counter-intelligence program.

²²⁹ FRUS. Vol. X. Cuba 1961-1962. Vol. XI Cuba 1-15 8. Branch 4 of the Western Hemisphere Division was an internal task force within the CIA. In January, 1960 it took charge of the Cuban project. In March, 1961 the CRC was formed with Jose Miro Cardona as head. From then on until 1963 the CRC would come under the CIA’s control and affiliation.

²³⁰ FBI SAC New York (97-1792) to FBI Director (97-4196). The CIA was sent a memo since in 1963 they contemplated a program to create disruption in the FPCC overseas.

²³¹ FBI Bureau File 97-4196-64.

²³² Ibid. FBI.

desecration of that little piece of Cuba inside Tampa's Ybor City has soothed the frustrations of those misfits." It referred sarcastically to the, "Great Battle of Martí Park." The paper poked fun at Dr. José Miró Cardona, who "bravely asserted that he was ready to die." The paper, obviously in reference to Castro's Cuba, warned Miró Cardona that he better not try something more formidable than Martí Park. *Tampa Fair Play* referred to the Sunday December 16 rally as another invasion by Miami hoodlums.²³³

While both the New York national chapter and the Tampa chapter were aware of CIA interventionism in both Guatemala and Cuba, neither said anything about possible CIA action in Martí Park in late 1961. Nor did the Tampa monthly truly refer to the travel to Cuba by *tampenos*. The Tampa Cubans suffered from this ban more than the nation's leftists, who saw it simply as a government infringement on the right to travel. This was uncharacteristic, since the FPCC in Tampa battled the ban on Cuban tobacco very militantly. The incursion of a CIA sponsored organization [the CRC] into Ybor City, and into Martí Park, added more to the Cold War relevance of Tampa, Florida and to the FPCC.

As leaders of the CRC, and consequently as CIA operatives, Dr. Miró Cardona and Dr. Varona in a March 29, 1962 meeting of the Special Group [SG] urged that the CRC be given the wherewithal to invade Cuba and overthrow the Castro regime. Presidential advisor McGeorge Bundy replied that the US was determined to support any action, but that it would have to be planned as "decisive and complete."²³⁴ The meeting turned to a discussion of Operation Mongoose. A decision was made that they would have to proceed on the assumption that the

²³³ "No Cartoons for Conte." *Tampa Fair Play*. January, 1962. 1.

²³⁴ FRUS, Vol. X. Cuba 1961-1962. Vol. XI Cuba 316-330. 2.

Communists have penetrated and will continue to influence refugees in Southern Florida. The memo stated that this situation provided a fertile ground for Communist tactics, including demonstrations and riots; and urged the CIA, FBI and local police to watch this problem very closely.²³⁵ A later memo on April 19, referred to a continued frustration in the exile community, regarding the overthrow of the Castro regime. The steps taken to isolate Cuba at the Punte del Este conference, and the US imposed trade embargo stimulated expectations that the “next logical step” would be some sort of military action against Castro.²³⁶

V.T. Lee left Tampa after the Martí Park incident, and traveled to Cuba. He eventually resided in New York and assumed his FPCC activities as national chair. *Tampa Fair Play* and the FPCC published its April 1962 issue with a reprint of Cuban President Osvaldo Dorticos talk at Punte del Este on January 25, 1962. Dorticos expressed the view that the conference had as its main point, “to prepare a favorable climate in the Hemisphere for a new physical and military aggression against my country, and as such I denounce it.”²³⁷

The US government in 1962 continued reiterating its fear of Soviet incursions into, and by way of, Cuba. An August 5 memo sent by Richard Goodwin, the Deputy Assistant Secretary for Inter-American Affairs, expressed this. Goodwin wrote that the US should say “that we are sympathetic to the Cuban Revolution especially social reform and an end to dictatorship.” He also expressed a desire to let Cubans know that the real concern was Soviet incursion.²³⁸ When Goodwin met Che Guevara at the

²³⁵ Ibid. 3.

²³⁶ Ibid. 18.

²³⁷ “What Cuba Has to Say in its Own Defense at the Punta del Este Conference.” *Tampa Fair Play*, April, 1962, 1.

²³⁸ FRUS, Vol. X. Cuba 1961-1962. Vol. XI. Cuba 331-345, 14.

Punte del Este conference in August, he and Guevara both tried to establish dialogue regarding the rifts affecting the two nations. In the end, Guevara refused to sign the Charter of Punte del Este, calling it an “instrument of economic imperialism.”²³⁹

One month earlier in July, a State Department memo from the office of Caribbean and Mexican Affairs urged the US to treat Cuba as a “bloc nation.”²⁴⁰ A memo from Operation Mongoose Chief of Operations Edward G. Lansdale to the SGA on June 14, expressed that Cuban subversion existed through key population groups, and that the CIA had completed a summary analysis of the travel and activism of Cuban student, labor, and cultural groups. This even earlier memo referred to a similar pattern of Soviet subversion.²⁴¹

In June, the Tampa FPCC featured Brigadier General Hugh Hester, a retired general, in their newsletter. Hester chastised the American press saying, “It is rare that any item about Cuba is favorable in the American press.”²⁴² In July’s edition, *Tampa Fair Play* had an article entitled “Let’s Talk About Refugees,” in which it featured articles from the *St. Petersburg Times* of June 17 and July 5. It referred to actions of sabotage in Cuba, including crop and equipment destruction, and machinery sabotage. The pro-Castro paper also mentioned the inclusion of the CRC in the mainstream newspaper, and asked, “How is it possible for a saboteur to send money to Cuba, when it is prohibited to everyone else?”²⁴³ This article is a possible indication that the FPCC, ever sensitive to attacks on Cuba, may not have known

²³⁹ Goodwin, Richard N. *Remembering America: A Voice of the Sixties*. Boston and Toronto: Little, Brown and Company, 1988. 196.

²⁴⁰ FRUS, Vol. X. Cuba 1961-1962. Vol. XI. Cuba 346-360. 15.

²⁴¹ Ibid. 3.

²⁴² “The Truth About Cuba.” *Tampa Fair Play*. June, 1961. 3.

²⁴³ Editorial, “Let Us Talk About Refugees.” *Tampa Fair Play*. July, 1962. 1.

conclusively that the CIA and Operation Mongoose were behind these and other black operations.²⁴⁴

One of V.T. Lee's efforts, after he left the Tampa FPCC chapter and went to New York, was to help form the Cuban-American Civil Rights Committee. This was reported by *Tampa Fair Play* in July 1962. The newsletter also addressed immigration related to anti-Castro refugees. A mass rally was held at the Palm Gardens ballroom in New York. The purpose of the gathering was to safeguard new arrivals from Cuba, and protect them from anti-Castro exiles. The newsletter reported that several hundred Cuban exiles attempted to break up the meeting violently by throwing fire bombs at the hall.²⁴⁵

In another article about immigration from Cuba, *Tampa Fair Play* printed a speech by Castro entitled "Worms May Leave." It showed the unbridled contempt of Castro toward the *batistianos*, who he called "criminals and betrayers of the revolution." Castro's speech castigated the Bay of Pigs landing, which was a general area of swamps. He called it a "place of putrification," and suitable only for *gusanos* [worms].²⁴⁶

In August, the Tampa FPCC wrote about sabotage against Cuba. *Tampa Fair Play* told of "open bragging" by anti-Castro refugees of the "heroic deeds of sabotage." The Cuban exiles also remarked that "Fidel will be bumped off." The paper said of the exiles, "Let them try it!"²⁴⁷

Richard Gibson in September, 1962 was the acting executive secretary of the

²⁴⁴ Jon Eliston, Ed. *Psy War on Cuba: The Declassified History of U.S. Anti-Castro Propaganda*. New York: Ocean Press, 1999. 3. Eliston speaks about three types of operations: white, gray, and black. Black is the most deceptive since it puts the blame on the enemy.

²⁴⁵ "Cuban-American Civil Rights Committee." *Tampa Fair Play*. July, 1962. 2.

²⁴⁶ "Worms May Leave." *Tampa Fair Play*. July, 1962. 3.

²⁴⁷ Untitled article in *Tampa Fair Play*. August, 1962. 3.

FPCC. An African American, who was sensitive to both civil rights for blacks and Cubans, he castigated the Punte del Este meeting in this September edition of *Tampa Fair Play*.²⁴⁸ Gibson, in a letter to President Kennedy and Dean Rusk, also expressed his feeling that an August 24 gunboat attack by a boat based in Florida was not accidental. He called the incident a concerted US effort to evoke armed conflict with Cuba.²⁴⁹ The reference was made to anti-Castro exiles, many at this point still under CIA control in Operation Mongoose. But Gibson didn't say anything about any possible CIA link; nor did he write about independent exile groups committing these deeds.

News from the FPCC in October and November called for free speech and better relations with Cuba. Introduced in the issue was the first of what became a series of writings by Mexican novelist and commentator Carlos Fuentes.²⁵⁰ *Tampa Fair Play* turned more toward commentary rather than hard news during this pre-Cuban Missile Crisis period. Lillian Cook McFarland wrote a piece for the paper in the editorial section in which she referred to the book *Advise and Consent*, as a work about Washington political power.²⁵¹ In November, the paper also reported on the Cuban Missile Crisis, referring to the blockade as an act of piracy, "even if it was called 'a quarantine'."²⁵²

The newsletter presented a balance sheet showing that Cuba wanted negotiations, and that the US refused. It stated that Cuba acquired defensive weapons, but the US deemed them offensive. *Tampa Fair Play* noted that site inspection of the

²⁴⁸ Editorial, "Alliance for Retrogression," *Tampa Fair Play*, September, 1962. 1.

²⁴⁹ "Press Release," *Tampa Fair Play*, September, 1962. 2.

²⁵⁰ Editorial, "A Few Miles From Mississippi," *Tampa Fair Play*, October, 1962. 1.

²⁵¹ Editorial, *Tampa Fair Play*, November, 1962. 4.

²⁵² "Cuba, Week of October 21, 1962," *Tampa Fair Play*, November, 1962. 2.

missile sites was politically provocative and showed contempt for Cuban sovereignty.²⁵³ The Cuban Missile Crisis commentary was only the tip of the iceberg for the FPCC, even as this seminal cold war event was discussed during early 1963.

President Kennedy's Miami speech in December, at the Orange Bowl, before Cuban exile group Brigade 2506 and the Bay of Pigs veterans, was the other story. Interestingly, the anger of the FPCC seemed even greater toward President Kennedy's Orange Bowl appearance. The Tampa publication castigated him as well as Cuban exiles at his speech.²⁵⁴ *Tampa Fair Play* compared the large Miami gathering to a circus saying, "A circus master went to Miami's Orange Bowl to welcome a band of "yellow worms." The paper went on, "Heroes like Juárez, Bolivar, O'Higgins, and Martí were humiliatingly compared to the foul group of mercenaries presented there."²⁵⁵

February's issue featured art work showing President Kennedy in Miami with Cuban "gusanos." Kennedy was depicted giving dollars to the anti-Castroites, while they angrily reprimanded him for not being militant enough. The article was entitled "The 'Gusanos' Show Their Teeth at Uncle Sam," and said that these exiles were living "La Dolce Vita" in Miami.²⁵⁶ Another article spoke about a recent speech by CRC leader José Miró Cardona at the University of Florida, where he remarked, "War must be waged against Fidel Castro, nothing else will remove Castroism from this hemisphere."²⁵⁷

²⁵³ Editorial, "Christmas 1962," *Tampa Fair Play*, December, 1962, 1.

²⁵⁴ *Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States: John F. Kennedy*, United States Government Printing Office, Washington: 1964, 911-912.

²⁵⁵ "Grotesque Circus in Miami," *Tampa Fair Play*, January, 1963, 1.

²⁵⁶ Editorial, "The 'Gusanos' Show Their Teeth At Uncle Sam," *Tampa Fair Play*, 1. The term 'gusanos' started appearing more after the Bay of Pigs. Castro contemptuous called the exiles with this derogation.

²⁵⁷ "Puppet Government in Exile," *Tampa Fair Play*, February, 1963, 2.

Miró Cardona's resignation from the CRC spoke for the continued militancy and disenchantment of the Cuban exiles. *Tampa Fair Play* wrote about the Cuban leader's resignation from the CRC on April 9, 1963. According to the newsletter, the CRC leader a year earlier was told by Kennedy that Cuba's liberation, "was a military matter, a question of six divisions in which the Revolutionary Council was expected to contribute the maximum number of personnel."²⁵⁸ The paper remarked that while Miró Cardona was negotiating with friendly Latin American allies, and meeting with Pentagon figures such as General Edward Lansdale on the eve of the missile crisis, the US was secretly negotiating with United Nations [UN] Secretary General U Thant and the USSR.²⁵⁹ In the May issue the newsletter printed an article from the British press which called Kennedy two-faced, and spoke of the Miró Cardona break.²⁶⁰

Miró Cardona's employ with the CIA, and his 1961 brush with Tampa pro-Castroites, was not the last time the CIA showed interest in the FPCC. A CIA memo dated September 26, 1963, told of a program to counter FPCC activities. This memo was discussed and sent to Sam Papich, who was the FBI liaison with the CIA. The CIA told the FBI that it was considering countering FPCC activities in foreign countries, and requested some FPCC stationery to create false documents in order to plant deceptive information about the group.²⁶¹ This was a program which fit into the guise of black ops.

The basic philosophy of *Tampa Fair Play* never changed throughout the life of the newsletter when it came to defending Fidel Castro. It decried the economic war

²⁵⁸ Editorial, "Last Act in Miami Comedy," *Tampa Fair Play*, June, 1963. 1.

²⁵⁹ Ibid. 1.

²⁶⁰ Editorial, "The Two Faces of JFK," *Tampa Fair Play*, May, 1963. 1.

²⁶¹ NARA, JFK Collection. FBI SAC New York (97-1792) to FBI Director (97-4196). The routing list included Sam Papich, an FBI man who handled liaison with the CIA.

against his regime, and never failed to tell of the impact on the local economy. The Tampa FPCC chapter continuously criticized and castigated President Kennedy, Senator Smathers, and anti-Castro exile leaders. In its later days, the paper delved into prose by prominent Latin American authors, and used other media items such as Cuban radio broadcasts to put forth its philosophy. The Tampa FPCC published its last edition soon after the assassination of President Kennedy. The organization's final demise resulted from this event.

Chapter 3

HUNTING REDS: FEDERAL, STATE, AND LOCAL INVESTIGATIONS INTO THE FPCC

*Phil Ochs's folk song verse: "William Worthy isn't worthy to enter our door. Went down to Cuba he's not American anymore. But somehow it is strange to hear the State Department say, you are living in the free world, in the free world you must stay."*²⁶²

*Senator James O. Eastland, Chairman of the Senate Internal Security sub-Committee to witness Jacob Rosen during March, 1963 hearings on the Fair Play for Cuba Committee: "You are a Communist and a traitor. Your country needs your help, and it is the first duty of every American citizen to help his country and not help the Soviet Union..."*²⁶³

*J.S. de la Llana, Sgt. and Supervisor of the Tampa Police Intelligence Unit replying to a December, 1962 information request on the Tampa Fair Play for Cuba Committee chapter from P.J. Trosclair of the New Orleans Police Intelligence Unit: "The Tampa Chapter (of the FPCC) is very active, in Tampa these members hold secret meetings and distribute various types of literature, also movies are shown. Enclosed are some of the circulars which are distributed. This unit maintains a current file on the local chapter and its members."*²⁶⁴

Phil Ochs was a well known folk singer from the 1960s. He was a contemporary of Bob Dylan, Tom Paxton, and others, who became known as America's angry young men.²⁶⁵ Ochs wrote and sang songs about the Vietnam War, the Cuban Missile Crisis, and sang a ballad about an active member of the Fair Play for Cuba Committee. When African-American journalist William Worthy came back to the United States from a Cuba trip, he went to New York's "Third Side" to see Ochs perform the tune "The Ballad of William Worthy."²⁶⁶ This song was written as a reaction to the tightening of American foreign policy toward Cuba, and the

²⁶² Phil Ochs. *All the News That's Fit to Sing*. Jacket notes. Jack Holzman and Paul A. Rothchild, Prod. Warner Bros. Records, 1987.

²⁶³ SISC Testimony Part 5, 280-281.

²⁶⁴ "Fair Play for Cuba Committee." New Orleans Police Department File. Folder 2. New Orleans Public Library, Jim Garrison file.

²⁶⁵ Phil Ochs.

²⁶⁶ Ibid.

subsequent congressional investigations which transpired with regard to Castro's regime, and its influence in the United States.

In 1960 an alarmed Senator James O. Eastland watched as Cuba furthered its ties with the Soviet Union. What resulted was a senate committee investigation, which bore the titles "Communist Threat to the Caribbean" and "Castro's Network in the United States [Fair Play for Cuba Committee]" on the top of the Senate Internal Security sub-Committee [SISC] Hearings transcripts.

The Senate Internal Security sub-Committee was under the jurisdiction of the Senate Judiciary Committee. Both were chaired by Eastland. This sub-committee was formed in the anti-Communist political environment of the early Cold War. Its first chairman and founder was Nevada senator Pat McCarran. McCarran's fervent anti-Communism became apparent in 1944, when in his Senate re-election campaign, he became convinced that Communists and left-wingers had targeted him. By 1946 he had joined the growing drumbeat against Communism.

McCarran's anti-Communism intensified to the point that he even offended Pope Pius XII, himself an ardent anti-Communist. McCarran, who was Catholic, proposed the McCarran-Walter Immigration Act, which would severely restrict the entry of Catholic Eastern Europeans from coming to the US from Communist ruled states behind the Iron Curtain. McCarran's tool for fighting Communism was SISC. He appointed his personal assistant, Julian Sourwine, as committee counsel. Sourwine was a Reno lawyer.²⁶⁷

McCarran died in 1954, but his strident anti-Communism lived on. Eastland

²⁶⁷ Roger Morris and Sally Denton. *The Money and the Power: The Making of Las Vegas and Its Hold on America, 1947-2000*. Alfred A. Knopf, New York: 2001. 38-48.

became the new head of the judiciary committee's anti-subversion wing in 1954. The anti-Communism of McCarran was not short-shrifted by Eastland, who added a new dimension to the committee's original intent. The Mississippi senator was one of the senate's most vocal civil rights opponents, and denounced the Supreme Court's 1954 school desegregation decision [*Brown v. Board of Education*]. He remarked that it rested on "writings and teachings of pro-communist agitators."²⁶⁸

As early as 1944, Eastland had spoken out against communism in a civil rights context. He charged that an anti-poll tax measure before Congress was supported by a "bunch of communists."²⁶⁹ Historian Richard M. Fried argues that Eastland, in his new role, was the logical custodian of the union of civil rights and communism. Fried points out that the new judiciary chairman cited works by Karl Marx, Swedish Socialist Gunnar Myrdal, and the Carnegie Corporation of Alger Hiss in his 1955 first anniversary diatribes against the *Brown v. Board of Education* decision.²⁷⁰

In 1954, as Guatemala experienced a *coup*, the Eastland Committee held hearings in New Orleans to prove the Southern Conference Education Fund [SCEF] had succeeded the much maligned Southern Conference for Human Welfare, and inherited its Communist liaisons.²⁷¹ At this time, New Orleans economic interests looked with alarm at land reforms under Guatemala's Arbenz government.²⁷²

In spite of the much publicized downfall of Joe McCarthy, government action

²⁶⁸ Bart Barnes. Eastland Obituary. *Washington Post*. February 20, 1986. Joe Atkins. C-9, "Hundreds Pay Last Respects to Eastland." Eastland is described as one of the staunchest civil rights opponents throughout much of the 1950s and 1960s. *Jackson Clarion-Ledger*. A-1. Eastland File. U.S. Senate Historical Office.

²⁶⁹ Ibid. Atkins.

²⁷⁰ Fried, Richard M. *Nightmare In Red: The McCarthy Era in Perspective*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1990. 175.

²⁷¹ Ibid. 176.

²⁷² Arthur E. Carpenter. "Social Origins of Anti-Communism: The Information Council of the Americas." *Louisiana History*. No. 20, 1989. 119.

continued against domestic communist and leftist activities. A consensus view of Communism as a menace by both liberals and conservatives, kept anti-Communism alive. But with this consensus came a difference of approach.

Historian Richard Gid Powers describes two types of anti-communism. One was dominated by liberals, the other by conservatives. Liberals had an internationalist outlook nurtured by the post-war experience of Europe and the Iron Curtain. To liberals, Communism's spread abroad was the primary threat to freedom. Powers describes conservatives as "counter-subversives," who felt domestic communist influence was equally destructive. Powers argues that counter-subversives saw domestic communists as dangerous in themselves since they were agents of a foreign power. The conservatives feared these ideas would infect the nation with collectivist values incompatible with American traditions.²⁷³ Both McCarran and Eastland fitted into this latter tradition.

When Eastland and the Senate Internal Security sub-Committee convened in 1960 to hear testimony from founders and members of the Fair Play for Cuba Committee, the worry about Communist subversion in the Western Hemisphere was foremost in the minds of key committee members. In addition to Eastland, they included Connecticut Senator Thomas Dodd [also rabidly anti-communist], Illinois Senator Everett Dirksen and others. In addition SISC hearings were punctuated by acerbic questioning from Julian Sourwine, who had been retained by the committee after Pat McCarran's death.

The *New York Times* ad of April 6, 1960, which announced the formation of the FPCC, became a prime target in the committee questioning. This ad had signees

²⁷³ Richard Gid Powers, *Not Without Honor: The History of American Anti-Communism*, Simon&Schuster, New York: 1995, 214.

such as James Baldwin, Norman Mailer, Simone di Beauvoir, Truman Capote, Jean Paul Sartre, and Kenneth Tynan.²⁷⁴ These were contemporary authors and play rights lending their names in support of a Latin American liberator, whose nation was coming out from under the notoriously brutal Batista dictatorship.

Committee investigators showed marginal interest in the academic reputability of the ad signees. Nor were they overly concerned that a prominent non-FPCC member such as *New York Times* journalist Herbert Matthews, and FPCC ad signer Columbia University sociologist C. Wright Mills supported Castro's revolution. Both even journeyed to Cuba. Matthews visited Castro in the Sierra Maestra Mountains in 1957, more than a year before the revolutionary came to power. Mills visited Cuba and wrote his book *Listen Yankee*. In the book he warned America about its past and present power hungry interventionism. Mills based the book on conversations with everyday Cubans.²⁷⁵

The Senate Internal Security sub-Committee subpoenaed Carleton Beals to testify on April 29 and Robert Taber on May 5. The committee alluded to Beals's association with "known communists" in the 1930s, and questioned funding for the *Times* April 6 ad in conjunction with this association.²⁷⁶ Taber testified that Cuba did not pay for the ad. When Dr. Charles Santos-Buch testified otherwise, the FPCC head became discredited. The committee looked upon him as a man who possibly committed perjury. Armed with the Santos-Buch testimony, SISC became convinced that the FPCC was an arm of the Castro government.

²⁷⁴ NARA. JFK Collection. Federal Bureau of Investigation. July 11, 1961. 64-44297-17. "Report Appendix" p 15. Also Florida State Legislative Committee (aka Florida Johns Committee). Series 1486. Carton 17.

²⁷⁵ C. Wright Mills. *Listen Yankee*. New York: Ballentine Books, 1960. This general theme of Mills's book can be found in the entire work.

²⁷⁶ Van Gosse. 142.

After the United States and Cuba broke diplomatic relations in January 1961, SISC questioning centered on the FPCC as a communist front. Former Cuban nationals were called in for testimony in order to show that Castro, at an early stage, showed Communist leanings. On March 29, 1961 the committee took the testimony of Andres Pérez-Chaumont, an exiled Cuban national who was in the Cuban military during the Batista era. The witness was previously in Cuban intelligence and worked as a military attaché in Mexico and Central America.²⁷⁷ Pérez-Chaumont testified that he questioned the 1948 Bogotá uprising, and tried to implicate Castro with the assassination of a Columbian official during that event. In the witness's opinion, Castro was a Communist as far back as 1957. The former Cuban intelligence operative told the committee that he had complained to the US Ambassador in Mexico about Communists, but was disappointed since nothing was done.

Pérez-Chaumont also testified that a known Castro connection with Communists went back to Mexico in the late 1950s, where he observed Castro making contacts with the Czech commercial attaché. The witness was a commanding officer at the Moncada Barracks when Castro's forces attacked on July 26, 1953.²⁷⁸ This testimony came several weeks before the Bay of Pigs debacle. On April 26, after the Bay of Pigs, Colonel Maynard Doerflinger of Army Intelligence, who had worked with Pérez-Chaumont, added that Castro had the support of Lazaro Cardénas, the leftist ex-president of Mexico.²⁷⁹

On June 1 two former military officers associated Castro with Guatemala. In addition, Ricardo Artigas Ravelo and Jorge Garcia-Tunon opined that Castro's

²⁷⁷ United States. Cong. Senate Internal Security Sub-Committee. 87th Cong. Part 13. Hearings. Communist Threat to the United States Through the Caribbean. March 29, 1961. 831-837.

²⁷⁸ Ibid. 831-837.

²⁷⁹ Ibid. 839-842.

personal Communism came at an early date.²⁸⁰ Also on June 1, a former State Department official, Raymond Leddy, who had worked with Ambassador Hill from 1957 to 1960, told of a CIA report which described Cuba as pro-Communist in June 1959. But even Leddy could not conclude after SISC questioning whether Castro himself was a Communist.

Four days later on June 5, committee focus shifted to the FPCC, and Communist influence on African Americans. Former heavyweight boxing champion, and black cultural icon, Joe Louis was called to testify because his public relations firm had courted business relations with Castro's Cuba. Talking to Joe Louis and William Rowe of the public relations firm Louis, Rowe and Lockhart, Julian Sourwine asked about travel to Cuba. Louis told them that he made several trips there in late 1959 and 1960.²⁸¹

One of the firm's goals was to serve African Americans. Castro sought the friendship of American blacks, while the civil rights and Communism conscious SISC worried that the Cuban leader may be trying to exploit them in order to further his own revolutionary goals. Louis's firm placed ads for Cuban travel in African-American publications such as the *Amsterdam News*, the *Pittsburgh Courier*, the *Chicago Defender*, and the *Baltimore Afro-American*.²⁸² But the firm wrote the Cuban government in July, 1960, months before the Cuba-United States diplomatic break. It told Castro that they would have to cancel their travel promotion contract

²⁸⁰ Ibid. 851-854. Nathaniel Weyl. *Red Star Over Cuba: The Russian Assault on the Western Hemisphere*. New York: The Devin-Adair Company. 1960. Weyl's early 1960s book shows much of the fear and consternation over Castro's triumph and regime tightening in Cuba. He was one of the observers who felt Castro was a Communist at a very early date. Weyl, as an author, complements the testimonies of Pérez-Chaumont, Dorflinger, and others who testified before SISC in early 1961, and warned about Castro's regime and his political proclivities.

²⁸¹ SISC Testimony Part 13. 772-776.

²⁸² Ibid. 778-779.

with Cuba. Castro wanted to bring 300 African Americans to Cuba, but Louis's firm backed out.²⁸³

One of the FPCC members, *Baltimore Afro-American* journalist William Worthy, took part in an ad in his newspaper. The ad was called "A Declaration of Conscience by Afro-Americans," and was sponsored by the FPCC. Worthy, who estimated that about one-third of the 3,000 FPCC members were black, stated that he and other African Americans would denounce American intervention as a "wicked colonial war deserving of opposition by African Americans."²⁸⁴

The senate committee had an article for Louis's testimony entitled "Cuba and the American Negro" on exhibit. It mentioned three forces which intended to subvert the American Negro. They were the Cuban Government, the FPCC, and the American Communist Party.²⁸⁵ This SISC exhibit article was especially critical of Worthy. SISC delved into his past, as it wrote of his indictment before a grand jury for violation of the Selective Service and Training Act of 1940. It also referred to a trip he made to Communist China in the 1950s in violation of passport laws.²⁸⁶

The SISC article was an attempt to politically connect radical blacks with Castro. They made references to black militant leader Robert F. Williams, who was part of the FPCC delegation to Cuba in 1960. SISC used as its source the July 8, 1960 edition of *Fair Play*.²⁸⁷ This article also discussed Fidel Castro's upcoming trip to New York City on September 19, 1960 for a meeting of the United Nations General

²⁸³ Ibid. Appendix. 789-792. The appendix is a study by the committee submitted and entitled "Cuba and the American Negro." In this appendix there are many references to the FPCC.

²⁸⁴ Ibid. Appendix. 789-792.

²⁸⁵ Ibid. Appendix. 789-792.

²⁸⁶ Ibid. Appendix. 789-792.

²⁸⁷ Ibid. Appendix. 789-792.

Assembly. Another reference in the SISC exhibit was about Castro's much publicized headquarters in Harlem, during his visit. The FPCC sponsored a reception for Castro in his Harlem hotel, in which famed African-American author Langston Hughes attended. Eastland and his committee saw this as an example of Castro attempting to subvert American blacks.

In July, 1961 the Eastland Committee resumed hearings with a new round of witnesses. They questioned not only travel to Cuba, but prior travel to Communist nations. Among the new witnesses, who testified on July 13 and 14, were John Rossen, Boris Evans Ross, and Richard Criley. All three had affiliations with the Communist Party in the 1930s.

A *Chicago Tribune* article in exhibit told of a Chicago FPCC meeting in which Rossen and Richard Gibson attended. The article gave Rossen's background as a long time associate with the Illinois Communist Party.²⁸⁸ According to Julian Sourwine, the FPCC meeting was held at the Hamilton Hotel in Chicago on December 1, 1960, and attended by forty-eight people. The committee also referred to a Cuba trip advertisement for a December 1960 excursion. Travel to Cuba was still legal before the January 3, 1961 diplomatic break and ban.²⁸⁹

Fair Play attorney Stanley Faulkner told SISC that the FPCC received a communication on January 13 from the Department of Justice demanding that the organization register as a foreign agent. Faulkner turned the tables and set the Senate committee aback when he added, "On the basis on an investigation, and I assume a continuing investigation, by the Justice Department to prosecute the FPCC under the

²⁸⁸ SISC Testimony Part 2. 81.

²⁸⁹ Ibid. 90-91.

Foreign Agents Registration Act.”²⁹⁰ Even with the travel ban, the government had only prosecuted one FPCC violator. But even remarks by the FPCC attorney did not slow down the politically charged interrogation, which included questions of past Communist Party affiliations and travel to the Soviet Union and China.

Sourwine presented evidence of past testimony by Richard Criley in 1954, which showed that Criley had been a 1936 member of the Young Communist League, and led a peace strike sponsored by the American League Against War and Fascism at Berkeley, California. Also brought out was that Criley was expelled by the CIO in 1946 as a Communist.²⁹¹ This testimony showed another area of investigation by SISC, which sought to expose Communist ties by the Cuban revolution to its chief supportive organization in the United States.

After the Bay of Pigs fiasco, attacks on Castro’s sympathizers in the United States escalated. This is true not only for the rabidly anti-Communist Eastland Committee, but is also evident in a National Security Council memo and an FBI memo. On April 22, 1961, when FPCC led public protests against the Bay of Pigs operation became prevalent on a daily basis, the Kennedy administration’s National Security Council passed National Security Action Memo [NSAM] 45. This memo ordered the Attorney General and the Director of Central Intelligence to “examine the possibility of stepping up coverage of Castro activities in the United States.”²⁹²

On April 27, 1961, J. Edgar Hoover issued a general order for FBI agents to report on pro-Castro agitation. Hoover noted that the Fair Play for Cuba Committee’s actions showed “the capacity of a national group organization to mobilize its efforts

²⁹⁰Ibid. 76.

²⁹¹Ibid. 130-131.

²⁹²Van Gosse. 242.

in such a situation so as to arrange demonstrations and influence public opinion...”²⁹³

The ending of the July 13 and 14 testimony was politically in line with the Kennedy and Hoover directives, but also showed a predilection on the part of Eastland and the other committee members to expose those whose ties to the Communist Party were more direct. While SISC questioned Communist Party influence, the FBI, which was hardly a soft-on-Communism law enforcement agency, dismissed the influence of the Communist Party and the Trotskyite Socialist Workers Party in the FPCC. The FBI memo stated that the FPCC minimized both groups and kept the narrow focus of better relations with Cuba intact.²⁹⁴

In 1962 the Senate Internal Security sub-Committee resumed its hearings on the FPCC. Former FPCC chairman Robert Taber was called to testify for a second time. He appeared on April 4, 1962. Sourwine asked him about the seminal *New York Times* ad. Taber told Sourwine and Senator Dodd that Charles Santos-Buch had wide acquaintances within the Cuban community in New York, and that that the Cuban doctor ably could get money for the ad.²⁹⁵ But Sourwine replied that the young Cuban physician testified that Taber was also responsible for procuring funds through Cuban Government member Raulito Roa.

Sourwine’s round of questioning reiterated the earlier questioning of Chicago’s old leftists. He asked Taber if he thought the Cuban revolution would be an inspiration for the rest of Latin America. Taber, who in late 1960 was on an FPCC Cuban tour, was then asked why he remained in Cuba after the tour ended.²⁹⁶ Soon

²⁹³ Ibid. 243.

²⁹⁴ NARA. JFK Collection. FBI. Bureau File 97-4196-64-24. Appendix.

²⁹⁵ SISC Testimony Part 3, 157.

²⁹⁶ Ibid. 166-167.

after the tour, the US and Cuba broke diplomatic relations. By the time of this questioning, Castro had already declared himself a Marxist-Leninist.²⁹⁷

The grilling of Robert Taber became even more intense than that of the 1961 Midwestern leftists. Sourwine questioned him on the still legal 1960 Christmas tour, and asked about the 340 people who traveled there. Taber informed Sourwine that he performed a journalistic function during the Bay of Pigs invasion.²⁹⁸ More testimony dwelled on the journalist's background, including his reportage on Guatemala in 1954, where he was wounded.²⁹⁹

One area of committee questioning became personal and nasty when Sourwine asked the former FPCC head about his carrying weapons in Cuba. Taber told the committee that he was not permitted to carry a weapon in the United States because of a criminal record that he had in 1939. Continued questioning revealed that Robert Taber, the former CBS reporter, was convicted in that year of armed robbery, kidnapping, and illegal transportation of an automobile.³⁰⁰

Robert Taber, like Herbert Matthews, was one of a handful of journalists who knew Fidel Castro on an intimate basis. He had gone to Cuba in 1960 and wrote *M-26: The Biography of a Revolution*. While Matthews was seen as a man whose own idealism blinded him to Fidel Castro's dictatorial intent, Taber was seen as evil. He was someone who may have committed perjury when he denied obtaining funds from Cuba, and had a serious criminal background. However, his call back to testify had more to do with his membership and sponsorship of the Fair Play for Cuba

²⁹⁷ SISC Testimony Part 13. Appendix. 893. This was later testimony by Whiting Willauer before the SISC. Willauer inserted into the record, parts of a Dean Rusk speech, which quoted Fidel Castro on December 2, 1961 as saying that he was a Marxist-Leninist, and would be so until the day he died.

²⁹⁸ SISC Testimony Part 3. Ibid. 176-177.

²⁹⁹ Ibid. 177-180.

³⁰⁰ Ibid. 177-180.

Committee.

Former Costa Rican ambassador Whiting Willauer's testimony on July 22, 1962 was a temporary reprieve from the acidity of the Taber testimony. This career diplomat was viewed favorably as a Cold Warrior by the CIA. He related that rioting and sabotage at Bogotá in 1948 were communist efforts. Willauer also told the committee that President Eisenhower revealed to him that preparations for an invasion of Cuba had been planned since March 17, 1960. This invasion was backed by the CIA, and run by Cuban exiles.³⁰¹ For the SISC record, the ambassador asked that his 1958 paper, "The Crisis of US Interests in the Caribbean," be put on record. Willauer wrote, "The Edgar Snows of Chinese Communism are replaced today by the Herbert Matthews of Caribbean Communists."³⁰²

A resumption of committee hearings in 1963 stepped up activity and brought six witnesses in for testimony. Their background ranged from conservative Florida Congressman William C. Cramer, who was an ardent foe of the FPCC; to leftists such as Jacob Rosen of New York, and Sidney Lens of Chicago. V.T. Lee, former head of the Tampa FPCC chapter, and Latin American expert Waldo Frank, also testified. Congressman Cramer, and FPCC head V.T. Lee were the two witnesses whose testimony was concerned with the Tampa FPCC chapter. It was to be the first SISC inquiry into the active Tampa pro-Castro group.

Publisher Lyle Stuart was the first witness. His firm marketed books and published a monthly newspaper called *The Independent*. As with other witnesses, the committee questioned Stuart about travel to Cuba. In the *Independent*, he wrote a series on the FPCC, which appeared in September, October, and December of 1961.

³⁰¹ SISC Testimony Part 13, 874-875.

³⁰² Ibid. 883.

These news pieces dealt with topics related to the pro-Castro group, such as its history, its leaders, and the influence of the Socialist Workers Party.³⁰³ His three articles also dealt with the reasons behind the organization's decline in membership, and ongoing investigations by SISC and US intelligence agencies.³⁰⁴

The SISC used a different tactic with Stuart. Committee questioning focused on Stuart's personal life, his background [he had a high school level of education], and his firm's book advertising in the *New York Times* and Stuart's *Independent*. His firm's own publications included works such as Robert Taber's *M-26: Biography of a Revolution*, and Fidel Castro's *History Will Absolve Me*.

The SISC inquiry asked Stuart about his publications on sexuality. Among them was an August 27, 1961 ad for *Diary of a Nymph*, which Sourwine described as appealing to reader's prurient interests. Senator Dodd put this ad into the record. After several rounds of questioning, a frustrated Stuart told Dodd, "Senator Dodd, you sound like a phonograph record." Dodd replied that he was an "insolent impudent witness."³⁰⁵

The committee's view of Stuart's publishing company is interesting since it veered away from the threat of Communist Cuba momentarily, and broadened its focus to include what some members saw as issues related to moral breakdown. This theme was also evident in 1962 when Taber was questioned about his arrest record.

In his analysis of McCarthyism, historian Richard Hofstadter argued that this 1950s movement projected the fears of pseudo-conservatives about society.³⁰⁶

³⁰³ SISC Testimony Part 6, 338-339.

³⁰⁴ Ibid. 339-349.

³⁰⁵ Ibid. 395-405. Lyle Stuart's testimony before the SISC was the longest of all the witnesses, over 150 pages. Most of the witnesses were well under 100 pages. The questioning was very comprehensive, but also touched upon issues of sexually explicit publications.

³⁰⁶ Powers. 256.

Hofstadter's argument might also apply to the Eastland Committee at this stage. While Hofstadter referred to the demagogic Wisconsin Senator, Senators Eastland and Dodd also had a legacy of rabid anti-communism. The senate committee's witness selection for the 1963 round of testimony not only belied a pro-Castro domestic threat, but saw examples of moral breakdown related to this.

Historian Richard Fried added to Hofstadter's view. His analysis of the 1950s and sexuality's conflict with government security programs explained the SISC concern with Lyle Stuart's sexual publications and Robert Taber's criminal record. Fried wrote that, "The 1950s was an age leery of excessive heterosexual activity and had even less tolerance for homosexuality." He went on to describe the FBI's practice of watching gay bars.³⁰⁷

The characteristic nastiness of the 1963 hearings again came forth on February 8, as New Yorker Jacob Rosen, the second witness of the day, testified. Rosen, a twenty-five year old man, was asked about a meeting of a youth group called Advance held on June 6, 1960 in which Joanne Grant, an African-American woman, and FPCC and Communist Party member attended.³⁰⁸ Sourwine's questioning also centered on Rosen's World Youth Festival attendance in Moscow in 1957, and his travel on to China. Both trips and the witness's name appeared in the August 10, 1957 *Washington Post*. Rosen admitted to the SISC that he had been a member of the Communist Party, but declined to say when he quit. Sourwine explained that he was being asked these questions, because the Senate committee had

³⁰⁷Fried. 167.

³⁰⁸SISC Testimony Part 5. 280-281.

reason to believe that the party was engaging in activities on behalf of Fidel Castro.³⁰⁹

Armed with news exhibits, the Senate committee told Rosen about how he organized the trip, marched in a youth parade, and how he dipped the American flag to Soviet Premier Nikita Khrushchev and other Soviet leaders. Sourwine also asked him about a 1960 trip to Miami, and his meeting with Barbara Collins and Lillian Clott. Both women resided there and were part of what was then a pro-Castro network in that city.³¹⁰ When the questioning centered on the Moscow and Peking trips, Rosen took the Fifth Amendment. An angry Senator Eastland told the witness, “You are a Communist and a traitor. Your country needs your help, and it is the first duty of every American citizen to help this country and not help the Soviet Union....”³¹¹

V.T. Lee testified before the SISC on February 14. With regards to Tampa, the first questions the senate counsel asked were about his membership in the American Civil Liberties Union, and the fact that a Tampa newspaper reported the membership. Sourwine also asked Lee questions about his livelihood, which in part of the 1950s was as a seaman in Tampa with the Merchant Marine. Lee took the Fifth Amendment on all committee questions, except when asked about his place of birth, citizenship, and military service. He answered all these questions, although the committee grilled him incessantly regarding his Selective Service number, times of service, and place of enlistment.³¹² In a 1961 *La Gaceta* letter, Lee emphasized his, and the FPCC’s own roots, in the United States. At that time SISC was trying to

³⁰⁹ Ibid. 307.

³¹⁰ Ibid. 313-322.

³¹¹ Ibid. 313.

³¹² SISC Testimony Part 1. 7-11.

prove the pro-Castro group was an agent of Cuba.

The questioning started focusing on Lee's whereabouts from late 1961 to May 1962. A committee exhibit was a December 15, 1961 article by *Tampa Tribune* journalist Tom O'Connor. The article stated, "Tampa's Fair Play for Cuba Committee is still active despite Fidel Castro's recent disclosure that he was a Marxist-Leninist, and always has been."³¹³

In the article Lee criticized US justice, saying that Cuban exile and pro-Batista legislator Rolando Masferrer was free roaming American streets. V.T. Lee stated that in Cuba, Masferrer executed Cuban dissidents. When told about American outrage at Castro's execution of Cubans, Lee told O'Connor that, "No one had ever bothered to recount the 20,000 people the Batista regime had killed." Lee downplayed Castro's Communism, and the fact that some FPCC members also were Communists. The Fair Play leader in December 1961 said that he wasn't interested in an individual's politics, but just wanted better relations between the US and Cuba.³¹⁴

A *Tampa Times* article of November 10, 1961 told of FPCC leafleting in Tampa and Miami. Of the leaflets handed out, there were 5,000 in Tampa, 2,500 in Miami, and 1,500 in Miami's African-American community. Lee described the FPCC as a very open organization, but also added that many members of the Latin community could be reached by other means besides leafleting, and that this would help "conserve production costs."³¹⁵ Based upon this information, Julian Sourwine asked V.T. Lee if he, as the head of the Tampa FPCC, had visited the Cuban

³¹³ Ibid. 13.

³¹⁴ Ibid. 12-14.

³¹⁵ Ibid. 27. "Pro-Castro Leaflets Handed Out Here," *Tampa Times*. November 10, 1961.

consulate in Tampa. He also asked if he knew Rolando Mantiaga of *La Gaceta*.³¹⁶ The SISC was trying to find out if there was a link in the United States to Castro's Cuba, which it saw as a conduit for subversion. But in exercising rare prudence, they never called either Rolando or Victoriano Mantiaga in for testimony during their nearly three-year inquiry into the FPCC.

The committee took a list of Tampa FPCC members for the record. The list included Louis Fritze among others, and had a total of about seventy members. In an August 1961 newspaper article by *Tampa Times* journalist Bob Denley, V.T. Lee said that there were about 300 members in the organization, and an additional 1,000 sympathizers.³¹⁷ Lee also said in this article that Senator Eastland was wrong in his assessment of the FPCC being Communist dominated and financed by Cuba.³¹⁸ He showed consistency in keeping the organization focused on better relations with Cuba. This was not unlike other FPCC leaders such as Robert Taber and Richard Gibson.

On February 13, 1963, Robert Taber wrote an article in the Cuban newspaper *Revolución* in reference to V.T. Lee,

While I am writing these lines, Dodd is getting ready to give a turn of the screws to a Ted Lee, former resident of Tampa, two times condemned because he has put himself at this disposal of WBAI (radio) while serving as national director pro-tem of the Fair Play for Cuba Committee. It appears that Lee managed to obtain a permit from the Department of State to visit Cuba last December as a radio reporter with the object of obtaining taped interviews for Pacifica.³¹⁹

Taber went on to say that Ted Lee received a subpoena demanding his presence

³¹⁶ Ibid. 27.

³¹⁷ Ibid. 29. Bob Denley, "Of Red Domination--"Fair Play" Leader Shrugs Off Charges." *Tampa Times*. August 24, 1961.

³¹⁸ Ibid. 29.

³¹⁹ SISC Testimony. Ibid. 19.

before Senator Dodd for the 30th of January. The *Revolución* article roundly criticized the Senate committee's inquiries into the organization. This was another piece the Senate committee put into the record as an exhibit.

During the Senate hearings on the FPCC, with V.T. Lee as a witness, there were three exhibits of the newsletter *Tampa Fair Play* [dated April 1962; August 1962; and November 1961] put into the record. August's newsletter had an article about Miamian Barbara Collins, who had gone to live in Cuba. The article came from the Cuban publication *El Mundo*. Collins warned Tampa FPCC readers of future fascist repression in the US.³²⁰ By 1963, Miami had been inundated with anti-Castro Cuban exiles. Pro-Castroism no longer was visible after four years of diaspora from Cuba. Tampa was different because of its history as a hub of radical Cuban activity. SISC questioned Ted Lee about the late 1961 Martí Park incidents. Julian Sourwine asked the former Tampa resident about Martí Park, which was the site of the December 17 riot.³²¹ Lee took the Fifth Amendment. Sourwine also asked about the arrest of two young Cubans by the names of Elabidio Baso and Ricardo Iysidron. The Tampa FPCC head had visited the two men after their release, and offered the assistance of the FPCC, thinking that they may be Castro sympathizers.³²²

In late 1961, both the *Tampa Tribune* and *Tampa Times* published extensive articles about the Martí Park incidents and their aftermath. There was a *Tampa Times* article on May 22, 1962 entitled "Ex-Tampa Castroite Now in New York." It told of V.T. Lee's resurfacing in New York, after his departure several months earlier from Tampa. At this time, a new organization concerned with the rights of Cubans in the

³²⁰ Ibid. 22. Ibid. Appendix. 55.

³²¹ Ibid. 23.

³²² Ibid. 23.

United States was formed by the former Tampa FPCC head and others. Lee told reporter Tom Inglis that he was attacked on numerous occasions by “Cuban counter-revolutionaries” in Tampa.³²³

A relentless SISC, in its detailed questioning of Lee, tried to trace his movements between the December Martí Park incident, and his resurfacing in New York. In doing so, they started a line of questioning, which departed from this central theme occasionally, while delving into Ted Lee’s association with a wide variety of Florida, and nationally based, pro-Castroites. Senate counsel Sourwine asked Lee if he instructed Ybor City resident José Alvarez [or arrange that he be instructed] to rent Post Office Box 5375, which was used as an address for the *Tampa Fair Play* newsletter.³²⁴ Sourwine also asked the transplanted FPCC leader about his association with FPCC members Lillian Cook McFarland and Louis Fritze. The committee also asked about any association with *Tampa Tribune* reporter Marty Sullivan, and Cigar Maker’s Union head, Frank Díaz.³²⁵

Sourwine quoted from a SISC exhibit from *Tampa Fair Play*, dated April 1962, in which he claimed, called for a mass protest by the Cigar Maker’s Union. The Spanish language article didn’t mention Díaz by name, but did call for a protest against the American embargo against Cuba, particularly as it related to tobacco.³²⁶ Sourwine’s relentless questioning also focused on the cigar union head. The senate counsel asked V.T. Lee if Frank Díaz was a member of the Communist Party. The SISC questioning of virtually all members or supporters of the FPCC included

³²³ Ibid. 30. Tom Inglis. “Ex-Tampa Castroite Now in New York.” *The Tampa Times*. May 22, 1962.

³²⁴ Ibid. 23.

³²⁵ Ibid. 23-24.

³²⁶ Ibid. 24 Ibid. Appendix. 61.

questioning about Communist Party membership or affiliation.

The committee continued to believe that the organization was controlled by the party in spite of efforts of its leaders to keep this from happening. But the FBI, which had penetrated the FPCC, to an even greater extent than the Senate committee questioned it, dismissed the idea that the old left groups controlled this pro-Castro group.³²⁷ More questioning by Sourwine delved into the group's leadership after V.T. Lee departed Tampa. Clearwater residents Manuel and Christine Amor took on more importance, printing *Tampa Fair Play* in the ensuing year. Sourwine mentioned Manuel Amor by name, asking Ted Lee if he, had in fact, instructed them to perform this function.³²⁸

Chuck Schwanitz, a *Tampa Times* journalist, who reported extensively on the late 1961 Martí Park riots, broke a story in the May 24, 1962 edition about the resurgence of the Tampa FPCC chapter after a lull of several months following the riots. Before Sourwine questioned the Schwanitz article, he referred to a statement by V.T. Lee that Cuban "counter-revolutionaries are responsible for beatings and physical attacks on loyal Cubans." Lee had said that "it was no secret that these people are being financed by the CIA and acting under its orders."³²⁹ Sourwine asked Lee if he had "one shred of evidence that the Central Intelligence Agency of the United States ever financed any person for the purpose of beating, shooting, or physically attacking any Cuban in the United States."³³⁰

Schwanitz reported that pro-Castro literature in Tampa bore not only that

³²⁷ NARA, JFK Collection, House Select Committee on Assassinations.(HSCA)FBI, Bureau File 97-41, Appendix.

³²⁸ Ibid. 25-26.

³²⁹ Ibid. 30.

³³⁰ Ibid. 31.

city's postmarks, but also Czechoslovakia's and New York's. His article also remarked that more than 7,000 leaflets had been sent to Tampa from New York after V.T. Lee became the national chair. This article had a less sinister spot, as it reported on a trip to Cuba by General Hugh Hester, who called for better US-Cuban relations. But there was also a news release accompanying the issue of *Tampa Fair Play* which reported that the FPCC was the subject of a future probe by the House Committee on Un-American Activities [HUAC]. Ohio Congressman, and HUAC committee member, Gordon Scherer called for this inquiry.³³¹

The Senate committee questioning centered on V.T. Lee's activities in New York and Florida. He was asked about his affiliation with the 26th of July Movement members in both states, and if he was an agent of Cuba. Lee, who had taken the fifth many times that day, answered a very direct "no" to the question.³³² The questioning made FPCC attorney Faulkner angry. The strategy to depict the Fair Play group as an American organization continued, on the part of the FPCC's attorney.

The Senate committee deflected this strategy and asked Ted Lee about his early 1963 travel to Cuba, where he spoke at the *Plaza de Revolución* in Havana, and shared the speaker's podium with Fidel Castro.³³³ It then began implying that the FPCC leader, like earlier pro-Castroites, was working for a foreign government. This interrogation focused on his affiliation with 26th of July members Carlos Carbonel, Federico Otero Calero, and others. A December 15, 1961 *Tampa Tribune* article written by Tom O'Connor told of the FPCC at the point in time just after Fidel Castro declared himself a Marxist-Leninist. O'Connor wrote in the *Tribune* article about 26th

³³¹ SISC, Part I, Chuck Schwanitz, "Lull of Several Months Ends--Pro-Castro Propaganda in Sharp Upswing Here." *Tampa Tribune*, May 24, 1962.

³³² SISC Testimony, Part I, 35-36.

³³³ Ibid. 37-40.

of July member Carlos Carbonel, “Until a month ago a man named Carlos Carbonel, who lived on 15th Street in Ybor City, was one of Lee’s chief workers. But Carbonel disappeared and was recently reported in Cuba. He [Carbonel] was a registered agent of the 26th of July Movement with the internal security division of the Justice Department.”³³⁴

The *Tampa Tribune* checked into V.T. Lee’s background and reported that as a youth, he was a member of the Socialist Youth League. According to the Attorney General’s office, the organization was connected with the Socialist Worker’s Party.³³⁵ The SISC briefly asked about this membership, but focused on Carbonel. It related to the former Tampa chapter head that Carbonel had been one of the FPCC’s chief workers. Carbonel, and others who supported the FPCC, in its seminal period, had distributed Cuban national publications *Revolución*, and *Bohemia*. Lee knew about these papers since he was one of the chief distributors of them.³³⁶

Distribution of pro-Castro literature in Miami and Tampa continued to evoke questioning. SISC questioned Lee about the procurement and leafleting. A Miami distributor, Renaldo de Stefano was allegedly paid by Lee to distribute this literature. Alluding to FPCC activity in the home ground of Tampa, the committee also asked about distribution of leaflets in Bayfront Park, and on parked automobiles in Tampa.³³⁷ One piece of literature distributed in Tampa, had the caption “Stop the Cold War Against Cuba.”³³⁸

³³⁴ Ibid. 14. Tom O’Connor, “Tampa Leader Says Cuban ‘Fair Play’ Unit Still Active--But Insists He’s Uninterested in Cuban Politics.” *Tampa Tribune*. December 15, 1961.

³³⁵ Ibid. 16.

³³⁶ Ibid. 14.

³³⁷ Ibid. 42-44.

³³⁸ Ibid. 42-43

Later in Ted Lee's interrogation, the subject of Carbonel again came up. The committee disclosed that Carbonel left the US on November 22, 1961. They asked Lee about his knowledge of the 26th of July Movement, and if he knew, "that the 26th of July Movement in this country is divided into groups of ten members each on orders from Havana. They asked if these groups contacted each other only through their leaders."³³⁹

Federico Otero Calero, an alleged member of the Miami 26th of July Movement group, had, according to the committee, asked Lee to participate in the distribution of pamphlets opposing President Kennedy's policies regarding the Punte del Este conference. Otero was involved with helping arrange the return of individuals to Cuba, when travel restrictions prohibited this type of action.

According to SISC, Otero raised money for the FPCC, and traveled to Tampa for this purpose. The committee also said Otero went to Tampa in order to show pro-Castro films.³⁴⁰ This pro-Castro Cuban was involved in a number of illegal activities such as issuing phony passports, and engaging in the illegal movement of firearms through Tampa, Miami, New York, and Toronto. Otero on another occasion was found to have had in his possession hidden instructions from Cuba in a train that he had been a passenger on in Canada.³⁴¹

There may have been a motivating factor behind this line of questioning, one which sought to expose possible terrorism involving several Cubans living in the US. During 1962, from November 17-19, the FBI intently watched pro-Castroites, who were suspected of orchestrating a bombing campaign in New York by detonating

³³⁹ Ibid. 41.

³⁴⁰ Ibid. 47-49.

³⁴¹ Ibid. 49-53.

devices at department store giants Macy's, Gimbel's, and Bloomingdale's. The Cubans, José García and Marino Sueiro, who had been under surveillance, had numerous links to the New York pro-Castro community. They belonged to Casa Cuba, which was also associated with V.T. Lee.³⁴² The Cubans, who had been collared by the FBI, also were said to be members of the 26th of July Movement and the Fair Play for Cuba Committee.³⁴³ It was clear that the covert nature of the Cold War had escalated in the US as well as in Cuba. Anti-Castro Cuban exiles and the CIA, at this time stepped up raids on crops and oil refineries.³⁴⁴

The departure of Ted Lee from the hearing rooms of the New Senate Office Building was, the two month time difference aside, almost an introduction for the next witness. Florida Congressman William C. Cramer testified on April 3, 1963. In addition to both the Tampa and national chapters of the FPCC, his primary subject was, in the words of the Senate committee, "the flow of subversives through the open door of subversion, the Cuban Embassy in Mexico City, by way of Cubana Airlines."³⁴⁵

Cramer was a pioneer Republican in Democratic Florida, and increasingly became a voice for both diplomatic and domestic affairs in the US Congress after the Castro regime took hold in Cuba. His talks on Cuba drew attention from other Republicans. Cramer testified before the Senate committee, telling them that the State

³⁴²Ibid. 42-49. William B. Breuer. *Vendetta! : Castro and the Kennedy Brothers*. New York: John Wiley and Sons, Inc., 1997. 2-4.

³⁴³Ibid. 2-4.

³⁴⁴Jon Eliston. Ed. *Psy War on Cuba*. 153-177. This book outlines many covert ops of various kinds against the Castro regime, which in fact continued after Operation Mongoose was officially discontinued. The US government discussed in documentation programs of covert warfare including propaganda, sabotage, and encouraging "passive resistance" on the part of Cuban nationals.

³⁴⁵SISC Testimony Part 4. 222.

Department has received information that there were numerous instances of American citizens being encouraged to visit Cuba via Central or South America. Cramer also told of travel to Cuba without a valid passport. This, the Congressman said, constituted a violation of travel control laws, and was punishable by a fine of \$5,000 or five years in jail. He emphasized that the only prosecution that occurred was that of *Baltimore Afro-American* journalist William Worthy.³⁴⁶

The Florida congressman felt that these travel violations were much more serious than generally believed. He told that the Cuban Embassy in Mexico City gave travelers, who had gone to Cuba to train for revolutionary activity, “a visa on a separate piece of paper, so that the travelers passport would only show that he had been to Mexico.”³⁴⁷ One figure given by Cramer, of persons traveling through Mexico City, was ninety-seven during a six-month period.³⁴⁸

The House Committee on Inter-American Affairs [the Selden Committee] conducted hearings and published its findings on “Castro Communist Subversion in the Western Hemisphere.” Cramer, who had testified before the SISC, told them that there was a lack of awareness regarding US citizens traveling to Cuba.³⁴⁹ In his Selden Committee testimony, which was put into exhibit by the Senate committee, Cramer told of over 1,000 Latin Americans traveling to Cuba for ideological and paramilitary training, in order to “foment disorder and chaos and ultimately aim for the overthrow of legitimate democratic governments.”³⁵⁰

Cramer used the findings of the Selden Committee to bolster his own case for

³⁴⁶ SISC Testimony Part 4. 222.

³⁴⁷ Ibid. 222-223.

³⁴⁸ Ibid. 223.

³⁴⁹ Ibid. 223.

³⁵⁰ Ibid. 223.

putting the FPCC on the attorney's general subversive list. His own testimony before Sourwine and Eastland included a March 27, 1963 article by Gerry Robichaud of the *Chicago Daily News Service*. The article appeared in the *Washington Post*, and dealt with Mexico and travelers on Cubana Airlines. Robichaud cited Director of Central Intelligence [DCI] John McCone. McCone reported that Cuban bound pro-Castroites left the US and gave their destination as Mexico. The article told that Mexico is the only nation in Latin America in which passenger planes fly regularly to Cuba.³⁵¹ Cramer told SISC that the *Washington Post* article was credible, since its information came from manifests of Cubana Airlines. He also felt that both the US State Department and DCI John McCone had the lists. If they didn't, Cramer said, "It was inexcusable," adding that the US would look silly if its own citizens travel to Cuba, when it asks others not to do so."³⁵²

Testimony of the Florida congressman moved in the direction of V.T. Lee and the Tampa Bay FPCC chapter. This included Lee's travels to Cuba. Cramer told SISC that V.T. Lee had "hit the big time in Communist circles."³⁵³ Among other things, the generally sympathetic committee heard was that Lee accused President Kennedy and Senator Eastland of "withholding diapers from Cuban babies," and that the FPCC leader called Eastland a "hatchetman," while referring to "those jackasses in Washington." Another exhibit put in for the testimony, was a copy of the Cuban publication *Bohemia*. It showed V.T. Lee sitting in Cuba with John Williams, son of black militant and FPCC member Robert F. Williams. SISC inserted into the record an FBI "wanted poster" for Robert Williams on kidnapping charges.³⁵⁴

³⁵¹ Ibid. 251. Gerry Robichaud, "Cuba Travel Spotlighted by Mexico." *The Washington Post*.

³⁵² Ibid. 224.

³⁵³ SISC Testimony Part 4. 232.

³⁵⁴ Ibid. 226-232.

An article about V.T. Lee sharing the speaker's platform with Fidel Castro raised the congressman's ire. He told of his efforts on three occasions to convince Robert Kennedy to put the FPCC on the attorney general's subversive list.³⁵⁵ The first was in 1961 before the Woman's Club in Tampa, the second while addressing Congress on March 15, 1962, and the third was on the date of his SISC testimony. Cramer called for Robert Kennedy to put more emphasis on domestic subversion. But it was apparent in his Eastland and Selden Committee testimony, that the congressman exhibited a lack of knowledge about FBI and CIA operations.

Cramer proposed two congressional bills. One was HR Resolution 227, calling for the reaffirmation of the Monroe Doctrine. The other was HR 5320, which would amend section 215 of the Immigration and Nationality Act. This proposal's intent was to give the president power to declare a national emergency, even without a state of war or a break in diplomatic relations. Its immediate intent was to put the lid on travel to Cuba.³⁵⁶ An article in the March 20, 1963 *Washington Star* describing how Americans traveled through Mexico to Cuba was put into the record. The article quoted the Florida congressman about travel on Cubana Airlines, and its being a conduit through Mexico for the purpose of training subversives.³⁵⁷

Bill Cramer's story became more interesting, as he described infiltration routes into the US. He told that his source of information was, "a man who had lived in the Caribbean area for over 20 years," and was, "as familiar with the Caribbean as any man in the world."³⁵⁸ The Florida congressman described some of the routes

³⁵⁵ Ibid. 234.

³⁵⁶ Ibid. 237.

³⁵⁷ Ibid. 246-247. Earl H. Voss. "Americans in Cuba Illegally; Some Believed Aiding Reds." *Washington Evening Star*. March 20, 1963. I.

³⁵⁸ Ibid. 240-241.

taken, as Sourwine and the committee listened attentively,

Now this route, of course, that had been taken by subversives was from Havana to Curacao by KLM. The route that still can be taken is Havana down Mosquito Key, Providentia Key, and St. Andres Key. Those latter two belong to Columbia which of course is a wide open door into all the Central American countries. The principal route that is being taken to Puerto Rico is from east, from Cuba in fishing boats and otherwise across the Windward Passage, through Haiti, the Dominican Republic, and then across to Puerto Rico, infiltrating through San Juan in that way. The other route is through the Windward and Leeward Islands with training points available on some of those islands. The third route is from western Cuba to Yucatan to Belize, by BWIA to Grand Cayman to Kingston, Jamaica, and Puerto Rico, or by boat to Grand Cayman and by air to Puerto Rico. Interestingly enough, I might say that this same informant advised me that in his travels very recently on certain of the Leeward Islands and the Windward Islands, that the ratio of Russians was in some places about 1 to 10 at that time. The existence of Russians there results from those countries doing business with them, freely issuing visas, giving them free rein.³⁵⁹

Cramer impressed the Eastland Committee with his testimony. They asked him if the man with knowledge of the Caribbean could himself be called in to testify. The Florida congressman told the committee that he would ask him. But no knowledge of the man's identity was ever revealed.³⁶⁰

Cramer told congress in his March 15, 1962 Selden Committee testimony that there were many Cubans in his district who opposed Castro. He said there were only a handful of pro-Castro sympathizers, and that they were recent arrivals to the United States. This statement was in line with his suspicions about pro-Castro infiltration.³⁶¹

V.T. Lee was described as "the ostensible kingpin" of the Tampa FPCC. Cramer quoted *Tampa Tribune* reporter Tom O'Connor, who had written that Lee

³⁵⁹ Ibid. 240-241.

³⁶⁰ Ibid. 240-241.

³⁶¹ Ibid. 253.

said that he had shown no interest in Castro's politics.³⁶² To the Speaker of the House, Cramer said that the, "Tampa chapter may be small, and its leaders pathetic, but a newsletter [*Tampa Fair Play*] of this type can do irreparable damage to our reputation, especially among those who have sought refuge within our borders."³⁶³

The testimony ended with a call for legislative repeal of the Kennedy administration's executive order, which in January 1961, lifted the ban on what Cramer called "Communist propaganda," coming into the United States from Cuba. And he called for "plugging the loophole in the Smith Anti-Subversion Act" by making changes through HR 3247, which would outlaw the organization of Communist cells anywhere in this country. Cramer added, "And that would certainly cover the Fair Play for Cuba Committee."³⁶⁴

With insertion of HR 3247 into the record, Bill Cramer in April 1963, who was a foe of the FPCC, ended his SISC testimony. Cramer's testimony, and disagreement with the Kennedy administration's lack of emphasis on possible domestic subversion, was a textbook example of Richard Gid Powers's argument contrasting conservative anti-subversion to the internationalist based liberal anti-Communism.

Anti-subversion was the primary form of anti-Communism implemented on the state and local level. For the Tampa FPCC, in large part this meant that the Florida Legislative Investigative Committee [aka--Florida Johns Committee] became involved in investigating the activities of the pro-Castro group. This legislative committee was named after State Senator Charlie Johns, who chaired the committee.

³⁶² Ibid. 255.

³⁶³ Ibid. 256.

³⁶⁴ Ibid. 257.

The Johns Committee, in its ten year history, investigated many organizations of both the political left and right. It also looked into university professors, homosexuals, and a number of civic and professional organizations it deemed troublesome. Its investigation of the pro-Castro 26th of July Movement and Fair Play for Cuba Committee began in 1959 and continued into 1964.

The Cuban Revolution partially inspired a resurgent anti-Communism after the damage done by McCarthyism.³⁶⁵ Anti-Communist rhetoric framed much of the 1960 presidential campaign between Democratic Party nominee John F. Kennedy, and the Republican Party's Richard Nixon. Democrats found themselves in a position quite different from the end of the Truman Administration, since the party could now lay blame on the Republican administration for losing Cuba. But for the far Right, which generally sided with the more conservative Republicans and Southern Democrats, the blame was placed on "those who duped Americans into thinking Castro was a reformer and not a Communist."³⁶⁶ Local police intelligence unit "red squads" and state investigative committees filled the anti-Communist void in the post-McCarthy era. The Johns Committee was just one example of this trend, which had historical antecedents.

In the 1930s Oklahoma investigated subversive activities, and in the 1950s Republican state senators helped establish a Senate Loyalty Commission for state employees. Washington, Illinois, and California, among others, also had investigative bodies.³⁶⁷ Florida's Johns Committee had a counter-part in Louisiana, which was the

³⁶⁵ Fried. 194.

³⁶⁶ Ibid. 194.

³⁶⁷ Ibid. 105-107.

Louisiana Un-American Activities Committee [LUAC].³⁶⁸ These agencies, which were contemporaries of the US Senate Internal Security sub-Committee, sometimes sent materials to Washington.

In addition to the state and local agencies, there was a vast array of private organizations supplying information to the governmental investigative bodies. This was part of an American tradition dating back to the early days of the FBI's predecessor, the Bureau of Investigation. One of these, which continually gave information to the Florida investigative committee in the early 1960s, was the Florida Coalition of Patriotic Societies. It was a branch of the American Coalition of Patriotic Societies.³⁶⁹

An early indication of Florida official's interest in the state's pro-Castro movement was a memo in the Johns Committee files, sent to Metropolitan Sheriff Thomas J. Kelly from Lt. Frank Kappel. Kappel was supervisor of Criminal Intelligence for the Miami police. The memo stated that on October 23, 1960 a member of the 26th of July Movement in Miami left for Havana on Flight 803 of Cubana Airlines, after resigning his staff manager position for an insurance company.³⁷⁰

In the Johns Committee files were over twelve issues of the FPCC newsletter. Among them were issues of the national, student, and Tampa chapters. There was an attached memo on the May 6, 1960 FPCC publication, which stated, "Miami is

³⁶⁸ SISC Subject Files. Box 115 Folder 1. Louisiana Un-American Activities Committee.

³⁶⁹ Florida Johns Committee Series 1486. Box 17. Robert Francis's name appears on many pieces of newsprint sent to the Johns Committee. Next to his name and stamped is the Florida Coalition of Patriotic Societies. Also Ralph E. Ellsworth, *The American Right Wing: A Report to the Fund for the Republic*. Washington D.C.: Public Affairs Press: 1962. Ellsworth chronicles the American Coalition of Patriotic Societies, describing their anti-immigration stand and attacks on "Communists, intellectuals and pinks."

³⁷⁰ Florida Johns Committee. Series 1486. Box 12. Report of 11-1-60.

mentioned in this article and facts are mentioned that may be of interest to your followers.”³⁷¹

Travel to Cuba did not escape the Johns Committee investigators. Included in the files was a list of 203 names and addresses of persons who had gone to Cuba as part of an FPCC sponsorship. This document was shared by intelligence groups, and can also be found in the SISC papers, FBI files, as well as those of the New Orleans Police Intelligence Unit.³⁷²

While government agencies at all levels were investigating the FPCC, private organizations associated with the political right-wing did their own investigations. One neighbor of an FPCC member submitted a note to the Johns Committee in reference to the Treasurer of the Tampa Bay chapter. The neighbor previously copied the notebook of the FPCC member. In it was a membership list, which was passed on to the Johns Committee. The informer also sent copies to the National Americanism Commission of the American Legion, the American Security Council, the House Committee on Un-American Activities, and the Florida Coalition of Patriotic Societies.³⁷³ The lines of communication of the Johns Committee went to private citizens who volunteered information, as well as local red squads.

In 1961 there was a pamphlet by an anti-Castro group entitled, “The Local Pro-Castroites.” It listed thirteen names, among them FPCC leaders Louis Fritze and Augustine Rodríguez, and 26th of July Movement leader Raúl Villamia. The pamphlet was dated May 1961. On the paper were workplaces of the Cuban-Americans listed.

³⁷¹ Ibid. Series 1486. Box 17. Various FPCC newsletters.

³⁷² Ibid. Series 1486. Box 12. Also the Papers of New Orleans District Attorney Jim Garrison Kennedy Assassination Investigation. “NOPD File on the Fair Play for Cuba Committee.” New Orleans Public Library.

³⁷³ Ibid. Series 1486. Box 12.

Some turned out to be cigar factories and shipyards.³⁷⁴ A newspaper article in the Johns Committee news clip files entitled “Communists Set Eyes on Florida,” told that Florida was one of ten targeted states for advancement of Communism. The article quoted the chief Johns Committee investigator, R.J. Strickland.³⁷⁵

Another file had a newspaper clipping of Strickland giving a Kiwanis Club speech on Communism. Strickland said “that there are many Communist front organizations in Florida, a notorious one being the Fair Play for Cuba Committee.” Strickland also reported, that the federal government had information that, “700 Cuban agents infiltrated into the Miami and Tampa area with refugees.”³⁷⁶ Another unauthored news clipping referred to informed sources in Chicago claiming that “reds were breaking up their formal Communist apparatus, and forming front groups.”³⁷⁷

The Johns Committee’s operational mode and philosophy on the Communist threat was squarely in the camp of the anti-subversives. Among the articles in their files was a Tampa FPCC news release critical of HUAC, and Representative Gordon Scherer of Ohio. Scherer previously announced that his committee would hold FPCC hearings in Los Angeles.³⁷⁸ Also in the Johns Committee’s files on organizational newsletters was the *New York Times* April 6, 1960 full paged FPCC introductory ad. There was also a July, 1961 FPCC article on the national conference condemning investigations into group and urging the United States to abide by neutrality laws. Lyle Stuart’s *Independent* with full text of the FPCC series, was also in the files.³⁷⁹

³⁷⁴ Ibid. Series 1486. Box 12.

³⁷⁵ Ibid. Series 1486 Box 16. Unauthored article entitled “Communists Set Eyes on Florida.”

³⁷⁶ Ibid. Series 1486 Box 16.

³⁷⁷ Ibid. Series. 1486. Box 16. Unauthored article entitled “Form Front Groups.”

³⁷⁸ Ibid. Series 1486. Box 17 Undated Tampa FPCC “News Release.”

³⁷⁹ Ibid. Series 1486. Box 17.

One investigative report by Strickland was dated July 7, 1962, and told where FPCC propaganda materials were being printed and distributed in Tampa. The location given was near the Palomino Dairy, and was described as an “underground meeting place.”³⁸⁰ This report told of an Ybor City 15th Street distribution point for pro-Castro propaganda. At this newsstand were what the committee described as FPCC “poop sheets,” and the magazines *Bohemia* and *Revolución*.³⁸¹

The July 10 report also dwelled on Cuban intelligence and a lottery.³⁸² Strickland’s report stated that the lottery was “thrown” one night prior to the actual announced day, and that the result was kept secret. But the numbers were broadcast through code either to the Key West or Miami area, and the Cuban government G-2 agents would immediately go out and put money on those numbers.³⁸³

A July 23, 1962 report gave information of a person who might become a good informant in the Tampa area. This man was described as a crabmeat seller, and a member of the anti-Castro Democratic Front in Ybor City. The report said that, “he knows all the Commies and Leftists in the area.” This man was said to also have had a friend who is also an informant.³⁸⁴ The report described three groups in Tampa’s pro-Castro movement at this time. These were the 26th of July Movement, the FPCC, and the Campesinos. Florida’s investigative committee described the Campesinos as the most dangerous, led by a man who the committee described with the racial denigration “half-breed.” The Campesinos, the report said, conducted classes at night

³⁸⁰ Ibid. Series 1486. Report: Fair Play for Cuba Committee and Cuban Communist Activities. July 10, 1962.

³⁸¹ Ibid. Series 1486. Report.

³⁸² The Johns Committee report gave no details on the lottery being used. But the Latin community in Tampa and Miami were fond of gaming activities. In Tampa, bolita was very popular and run by racketeers such as Charlie Wall and Santo Trafficante, Sr. and Jr.

³⁸³ Ibid. Series 1486, Report. Lottery Activities, Dade County Area. July 23, 1962.

³⁸⁴ Ibid. Series 1486. Report. Addressed to Chief Investigator R.J. Strickland by Investigator J. Barker, Miami. July 23, 1962.

in the teachings of Fidel Castro.³⁸⁵

Despite the militant description of the Campesino group, it did not receive the investigative attention of the FPCC. Strickland's investigator in Miami wrote about FPCC propaganda distribution in Miami. The report finished by giving characteristics of a number of individuals in the Miami area with pro-Castro links. Among them was a former police officer, a pressman with the *Miami Herald*, a student at the University of Florida, and an employee of an architectural firm.³⁸⁶

The Johns Committee's desire to obtain information about the FPCC, on occasion, took Strickland's investigation out of Florida. He wrote Lt. Robert Sweeney of the New York State Police on August 7, 1961. The letter asked the police to send any information they had on the FPCC, because as the letter stated, "this organization has grown rapidly in this state and is causing quite a bit of dissension." Strickland sent him a list of over 200 persons who had attended seminars, lectures and programs in Havana, Cuba since December 1, 1960.³⁸⁷ On August 16, after a New York State Police security investigation, J.P. Boylan sent a memo to Lt. Thomas H. Denlea and Strickland, giving the results of the New York investigation on the FPCC. Included were leaflets, literature, and personal profiles of key members.³⁸⁸

Investigator C.L. Rice, in a February 20, 1964 memo, wrote that he had visited Tampa on January 20 and 21 of the same year, and talked to Tampa police intelligence officers Clayton Briggs and Jack de la Llana concerning pro-Castro elements in Tampa. The report stated that most of the Tampa pro-Castroites were

³⁸⁵ Ibid. Series 1486. Report.

³⁸⁶ Ibid. Series 1486. Report. July 23, 1962.

³⁸⁷ Ibid. Series 1486. Box 12. Letter from R.J. Strickland to Lt. Robert E. Sweeney. August 7, 1961.

³⁸⁸ Ibid. Series 1486. Box 12. Letter from J.P. Boylan to Lt. Thomas H. Denlea, New York State Police. Subject: Fair Play for Cuba Committee--Security Investigation. August 16, 1961.

older and former exiles from the Batista regime.³⁸⁹ A number of the persons referred to in this early 1964 report on pro-Castroism in Tampa had police records for both violent and non-violent crimes. Several of the persons were involved in illegal *bolita* operations in gaming friendly Ybor City.³⁹⁰ A number according to anti-Castro pamphlets, were workers in shipyards, and the traditionally radical cigar factories, which were the sites of battles three years earlier between pro and anti-Castro Cubans.

Correspondence with police department [PD] intelligence units was a major part of information gathering for the Johns Committee. Thus, there is evidence in their files which shows information from both the Tampa PD and Dade County PD intelligence units. The Dade police department had kept files on both the 26th of July group and the FPCC. Not only did it give information to the Johns Committee, but also sent letters and reports to the Senate Internal Security sub-Committee. A letter from A.L. Tarabochia, an investigator of the Dade unit, referred to photographs of checks sent to the Senate committee. Investigators discovered these, which were sent from the Cuban Ministry of Education to FPCC honorary chairman Waldo Frank. Tarabochia also told SISC about FPCC leader and *Baltimore Afro-American* journalist William Worthy coming to Miami from his return trip to Cuba. They reported that he was on his way to a lecture tour in the Midwest.³⁹¹

The Dade County intelligence unit also sent a pro-Castro leaflet in the Miami file to Frank Schroeder, SISC Chief Investigator. The date of the letter is October 13,

³⁸⁹ Ibid. Series 1486 Box 12. Report. From CL Rice to File (Pro-Cuban Elements At Tampa, Florida). February 20, 1964.

³⁹⁰ Ibid. February 20, 1964.

³⁹¹ Dade Police Intelligence Unit. #CI-8D. A.L. Tarabochia letter to Senate Internal Security sub-Committee. October 13, 1961.

1961, and was sent by Tarabochia. He wrote Schroeder, "As a parting gesture, I want you to know that last night we had the dubious honor of having on our hands William Worthy. He had just breezed in from Cuba and he is on a lecture tour of the Midwest. The lectures are sponsored by Pryor-Menz, Council Bluffs, Iowa. He will be in Madison, Wisconsin November 5th and Milwaukee, November 7th."³⁹²

Miami's police file detailed local pro-Castro activity. It reported on these and included news articles on anti-Castroites, who posed a potential for conflict with the pro-Castroites. Police intelligence also had in their possession a news article from the Socialist Worker's Party newspaper *The Militant*, which referred to the Bay of Pigs operation as Batista controlled. It also described another *batistiano*, Mariano Faget, as having, "worked for the US Immigration Service in order to interrogate and screen Cuban refugees at the Opa Locka detention center."³⁹³

There were a series of reports and news articles, from the early part of 1961, about FPCC meetings and police intelligence surveillance on several pro-Castroites in the Miami area. Some of them were later connected to SISC hearing testimony. One who apparently was investigated intensely was Barbara Collins, who had gone to Havana, and was quoted in the May 5, 1961 edition of the *Miami News* that she left the US in February 1961 "because she was persecuted by the FBI and other agencies because she belonged to the FPCC."³⁹⁴ Both Collins and Lillian Clott, another Miami pro-Castroite, were brought up in 1963 SISC questioning of FPCC members Jacob

³⁹² Ibid. #CI-8D.

³⁹³ Ibid. #CI-8D. Undated article from the *Militant* reprinted. Note: This police file was in large part a Kennedy assassination file. Included was data from the late 1960s New Orleans investigation by District Attorney Jim Garrison. There was a taped conversation with right-wing anti-civil rights extremist Joseph Milteer of Georgia, who made a statement on November 9, 1963 predicting that Kennedy would be assassinated from a "tall building with a high powered rifle." There are also news clippings from Miami and New Orleans newspapers about investigations.

³⁹⁴ Ibid. #CI-8D. Untitled *Miami News* article. May 5, 1961.

Rosen and V.T. Lee.

The intelligence unit investigated Collins by interviewing her former employer, Pan American Tire Company in Miami, and had letters in its file sent by other employers to the tire chain. Collins, according to the intelligence file, attended a meeting with other persons of pro-Castro leanings on January 8, 1961. Some of the attendees had 26th of July affiliations, others were affiliated with the FPCC, and at least one was described as a “Castro agent” in Miami. Miami-Dade police researched these people after taking down their automobile license plate numbers. One person from out of Florida at this meeting was Ed Shaw of the Detroit FPCC chapter.³⁹⁵ Shaw also visited Tampa later on in 1961 for a talk to the Tampa FPCC chapter.

Perhaps the most interesting of the police intelligence correspondence regarding the FPCC is one between the Tampa Police intelligence unit and its New Orleans Police Department [NOPD] counterpart. As did the Miami and Tampa units, the New Orleans unit kept a file on the FPCC. This New Orleans data collection did not touch upon the Tampa chapter until much later than it did on other chapters and incidents.

The NOPD intelligence unit collected data about the FPCC from March to September, 1961 from newspaper articles.³⁹⁶ It examined news pieces from the Denver and Boulder, Colorado branches of the FPCC, in addition to an article about African-American FPCC leaders Robert Williams and William Worthy.³⁹⁷ This earlier FPCC data concentrated on chapters other than the Tampa chapter.

In 1962 this changed when the New Orleans Police intelligence unit initiated a

³⁹⁵ Ibid. #CI-8D. TO: Thomas J. Kelley, Metropolitan Sheriff. FROM: Lt. Frank Kappel, Supervisor, Criminal Intelligence. SUBJECT: Pro-Castro Meeting. January 8, 1961.

³⁹⁶ Jim Garrison file. “Fair Play for Cuba Committee.” Folder 2. New Orleans Public Library.

³⁹⁷ Ibid. Folder 2.

chain of correspondence with the Tampa Police intelligence unit. This correspondence started on December 3, 1962 when New Orleans Police Department Superintendent Joseph I. Giarrusso [to the attention of P.J. Trosclair, Commander Intelligence Division] made an inquiry to Don McLeod, Director of the Florida Sheriff's Bureau about another recent inquiry the NOPD made into pro-Castro activities in New Orleans. In this investigation, the name of the Fair Play for Cuba Committee was brought out. The NOPD wrote the Florida office, "It is believed that this organization, with headquarters in New York has a branch in Tampa, Florida."³⁹⁸ The letter made a request for more information about the Tampa chapter, and also inquired about any pro-Castro activity in New Orleans.

On December 10, McLeod replied to Giarrusso, telling the New Orleans police superintendent, that he would forward the letter to the intelligence unit of the Tampa PD. The letter also was placed into the Florida Sheriff's Bureau's Fair Play for Cuba Committee file.³⁹⁹ Jack de la Llana, Sgt. and Supervisor, Tampa PD intelligence unit wrote to Trosclair and Giarrusso, "This Unit has not received any information with reference to the New Orleans chapter, however the Fair Play for Cuba Committee is very active in the Tampa area," adding that, "As you know the FPCC is Communist inspired and all literature is very strong pro-Castro."⁴⁰⁰

The Tampa PD intelligence supervisor added, "This organization publishes numerous leaflets such as those enclosed, also publishes a newspaper called "*La Nueva Voz*." The letter went on to note that the paper was linked to the radical

³⁹⁸ Ibid. Folder 1. Letter from Joseph I. Giarrusso, Superintendent New Orleans Police Department to Don McLeod, Director, Florida Sheriff's Bureau. December 3, 1962.

³⁹⁹ Ibid. Folder 1. Letter from Don McLeod to Captain P.J. Trosclair. December 10, 1962. This letter went into a Sheriff's Department file FSB File R802-274. on the FPCC.

⁴⁰⁰ Ibid Folder 1. Letter from Jack de la Llana, Supervisor, Intelligence Unit Tampa PD to P.J. Trosclair and Joseph I. Giarrusso, New Orleans Police Department. December 17, 1962.

Emergency Civil Liberties Committee, and the Communist Party of New York.⁴⁰¹ De la Llana also wrote that the national chapter was, as of the writing, believed to be headed by ex-Tampa chapter head V.T. Lee, who had gone to New York. The letter stated that, “The Tampa chapter is very active, in Tampa these members hold secret meetings and distribute various types of literature, also movies are shown.”⁴⁰²

The Tampa PD intelligence unit enclosed several circulars for its NOPD counterpart, and promised them its full cooperation. Early in 1963, the Tampa PD would write to New Orleans, giving them information about a Dr. James Dombrowsky, a left-wing activist in New Orleans, claiming that he was an active FPCC member.⁴⁰³ No other FPCC evidence existed in New Orleans at this time.

The NOPD investigation of the FPCC collected a copy of *Tampa Fair Play*; a list of 202 travelers to Cuba, which can also be found in FBI files, SISC files, and Florida Johns Committee files; and the pre-Kennedy assassination arrest records and post-assassination warnings of Lee Harvey Oswald. Oswald, seven months after the NOPD-Tampa PD correspondence, wrote to former Tampa chapter head V.T. Lee in the national office, asking to set up an FPCC chapter in New Orleans.⁴⁰⁴

For the NOPD, their late 1962 initiated correspondence to Tampa was odd since New Orleans had no known FPCC chapter in late 1962 and early 1963. Also unusual was the NOPD inquiry to Tampa about FPCC activity in New Orleans! Tampa, correspondingly, did have a chapter that was very active. Paradoxically the Tampa’s FPCC chapter was investigated later by the Senate Internal Security sub-

⁴⁰¹ Ibid. Folder 1. December 17, 1962.

⁴⁰² Ibid. Folder 1. December 17, 1962.

⁴⁰³ Ibid. Folder 1. Letter from Jack de la Llana to Joseph I. Giarrusso and P.J. Trosclair, New Orleans Police Department, January 23, 1963.

⁴⁰⁴ Ibid. Folder 1. January 23, 1963.

Committee than were other chapters. In the waning days of the pro-Castro group effort, Tampa's chapter grabbed more overt attention from the Eastland Committee, and covert attention from intelligence agencies at the federal, state, and local level.

Chapter 4

FROM TAMPA TO DALLAS AND BEYOND: THE LAST DAYS OF THE TAMPA FPCC AND THE INVESTIGATIONS THAT FOLLOWED

*President John F. Kennedy's inaugural address January 20, 1961: "Let every nation know, whether it wishes us well or ill, that we shall pay any price, bear any burden, meet any hardship, support any friend, oppose any foe, in order to assure the survival and the success of liberty."*⁴⁰⁵

*President Kennedy in Tampa on November 18, 1963: "I am proud to come back to this city which, in its own time, and particularly during the past 12 months, has borne a heavy burden in order to keep this country and the rest of Latin America free."*⁴⁰⁶

*Dr. Anna Kasten Nelson, member of the Assassinations Records Review Board in an interview: "We may have had a little more success, since the Cold War was ended (in getting classified documents opened). But the FBI and CIA didn't care. The State Department cared, but not the other agencies."*⁴⁰⁷

A December 1962 Tampa Police Intelligence Unit reply to its counterpart in New Orleans, telling that the FPCC chapter in Tampa held secret meetings was not too far from reality. By late 1962, the organization declined. One reason was the rise of the anti-Castro Cuban faction. Another was the stark Cold War brinkmanship exhibited by the two superpowers during the Cuban Missile Crisis. A downsized Fair Play group began holding smaller meetings at member's homes, while forswearing the larger public gatherings.

A January 30, 1964 FBI report told of meetings the pro-Castro group had at the Tampa residence of Christine and Manuel Amor. Information about this meeting came from October 13, 1963 reports by FBI Special Agents Charles C. Capehart and Fredrick A. Slight. This data was gathered by taking down automobile license plate

⁴⁰⁵ *Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States: John F. Kennedy*. United States Government Printing Office. Washington: 1964. 1.

⁴⁰⁶ *Ibid.* 463.

⁴⁰⁷ Interviews. Dr. Anna Kasten Nelson. 2-6-02, 2-8-02, 9-16-02.

numbers registered to individuals in attendance. Eight cars were at the Amor residence. An FBI informant inside reported that a meeting cancellation notice had been sent to members, but several still showed up. Slide presentations, and a tape recording of V.T. Lee's Cuba trip were planned on this October date.⁴⁰⁸

There is evidence of a political shift to the left of the already left leaning Tampa FPCC in 1963. It is not apparent in newsletters, since *Tampa Fair Play* was consistently pro-Castro throughout its publication history. While FPCC meetings became smaller, the more apparent reason for the leftward swing of the organization was evidence in the FBI report glossary. Background reports provided data on FPCC members past affiliations with the Communist and Proletarian Parties. José Alvarez, who in June 1962 was elected the organization's financial secretary, was identified by TP T-7 as a Communist Party member in Tampa in 1943.

Other members, at late 1963 FPCC meetings, were listed as protestors and supporters of radical causes. Among these causes were opposition to the McCarran Act, and support of Cuba's right to have Soviet missile stations. In addition these members had links to the Communist Party in northern cities. FPCC informants were given the cryptonyms TP T-1 through TP T-11. Among them was TP T-2, who was identified as M. Miller, Superintendent of Mails at Ybor City's post office.⁴⁰⁹ The FBI's mail surveillance program complemented the CIA's HT/LINGUAL mail opening program.⁴¹⁰

FBI agents relied extensively on informants in the Tampa FPCC. TP T-1 and others collected data on various FPCC members, and reported them into classified

⁴⁰⁸ NARA, JFK Collection. FBI File 97-4196-64. "FPCC Tampa Division." January 30, 1964.

⁴⁰⁹ Ibid. 97-4196-64.

⁴¹⁰ John Newman, *Oswald and the CIA*. 54-56.

FBI final reports.⁴¹¹ On November 12, 1963, this informant advised that Manuel Amor stated at an FPCC meeting that \$1275.00 was collected for Cuban victims of Hurricane Flora. The money was sent in the name of the Tampa Chapter. Separate checks were sent to Mexico, where supplies were purchased, and sent on to Cuba.⁴¹² The FBI reported that Lillian McFarland read a letter from V.T. Lee at the November meeting. It told of Lee's annoyance with the Tampa chapter, stating that the members had to comply with the FPCC constitution and by-laws.⁴¹³

FPCC members debated the letter, but were more interested in showing the film of Lee in Cuba. A Cuban national by the name of Gilberto Policarpo Lopéz, attended the viewing of "Ted Lee in Cuba," at Mary Quist's home on November 17. Lopez was staying at the Quist residence, while waiting for a phone call with the "go ahead order" for him to leave the United States and go to Cuba.⁴¹⁴

The day after the film showing, President Kennedy visited Tampa. This visit was part of a political fence mending trip in preparation for the coming 1964 elections. Kennedy went to both Florida and Texas, since they were the South's most populous states. His Florida stop over took place in an area geographically close to Castro's regime. Consequently, the Florida visit focused on the Communist dictatorship ninety miles off the coast of the United States.⁴¹⁵

Kennedy visited and talked to four different audiences. Besides the introductory landing at Mac Dill Air Force Base, there was a helicopter landing to Al

⁴¹¹ This is an FBI shorthand for "Tampa T-1."

⁴¹² FBI File 97-4196-64.

⁴¹³ Ibid. 97-4196-64.

⁴¹⁴ Ibid. 97-4196-64.

⁴¹⁵ Frank DeBenedictis. "Four Days Before Dallas: JFK in Tampa." *Tampa Bay History*. Fall/Winter, 1994. 57-59.

Lopez Field. The Al Lopez Field event was open to the general public and a presidential motorcade followed. Kennedy's Fort Homer Hesterly Armory talk was sponsored by the Chamber of Commerce, and the United Steel Workers sponsored the one at the International Inn.⁴¹⁶ Kennedy touched upon the issue of Cuba at every stop-off, but at Al Lopez Field he told the Cuban exiles, that they "had borne a heavy burden during the past year." The president gave special thanks and recognition to the 3,000 cigar workers in Tampa, who were put out of work when the US began its embargo against Cuban tobacco.⁴¹⁷

In Tampa, the mood was generally warm toward the president. *La Gaceta* was among those who reacted favorably. On November 15, three days before the visit, the weekly showed positive anticipation for the presidential visit. *La Gaceta* editorialized, "This humble weekly was the only newspaper in the city to endorse Mr. Kennedy in 1960. While we have not been in accord with a number of his administration policies, we believe that his administration will prove to be in the long run beneficial to the majority of Americans." Ybor City was a Democratic stronghold. In the 1960 election, Kennedy topped Nixon's vote total by a ten to one margin.⁴¹⁸

Kennedy's dissenters also had their day. A negative advertisement directed at the president appeared in the *Tampa Tribune* on the day of his visit. The top line read, "To The People of Tampa," and described how Cubans lost their freedom under the "Military Boot of International Communism." It also expressed the indifference of the free world nations including the United States under the Kennedy administration. The ad finished with a terse reminder that Cubans were listening to the "voice of José

⁴¹⁶ Ibid. 60-63.

⁴¹⁷ Ibid. 60. Also see *Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States: John F. Kennedy*. United States Government Printing Office. Washington: 1964. 463.

⁴¹⁸ Ibid. 64.

Martí in the streets of Tampa, and that was “War to the Invader.” Taking credit for this ad was “Tampa’s Cuban Exiles.”⁴¹⁹ There was no evidence of who placed this ad, or even if the ad placers were in fact Cuban exiles.

La Gaceta and the FPCC, by the time of the visit, had long parted ways on the issue of the president. The pro-Castro FPCC newsletter continuously took an anti-Kennedy stand, since many raids on Cuba occurred in the early 1960s under the guise of the administration’s covert Operation Mongoose. In addition, the administration officially remained concerned with the threat of Castro’s incursions into other Latin American nations.

This lack of agreement was not unlike an earlier one three decades earlier between *La Gaceta* editor Victoriano Mantiaga and the left-wing supporters of the Abraham Lincoln Brigade. At that time local Communists compared the liberal Mantiaga with Adolf Hitler, because Mantiaga’s paper condemned the Soviet attack on Finland. By 1963 the FPCC was well to the left of the Ybor City weekly, even though *La Gaceta* still held out for better relations with Cuba. However, unlike the radicals of the 1930s, the organization did not reprimand the highly respected Victoriano Mantiaga, whose reputation survived the hysterical ranting of Stalinists three decades earlier.

Kennedy left Tampa and traveled to Miami that evening. Four day later, he was assassinated in Texas. The man accused of killing Kennedy, was Lee Harvey Oswald, who worked at the Texas Schoolbook Depository building on the motorcade route. During the assassination weekend, it was revealed that Oswald was a member of the Fair Play for Cuba Committee.

⁴¹⁹ Ibid. 63.

Because of the Oswald-FPCC connection, the rabidly anti-communist Senate Internal Security sub-Committee entertained early post-assassination suspicions of Cuban complicity in the assassination. One effect of these concerns was to cast a shadow of suspicion on the FPCC. Oswald wrote the organization and was a member for a short turbulent time in New Orleans during the summer of 1963. His FPCC association helped lead to the group's destruction.

Among FPCC critics, was the American Veterans Against Communism. After the assassination, it published an article entitled "Communists Kill President Kennedy," stating that Kennedy's assassin was the chairman of the New Orleans chapter of the FPCC. The veteran's group wrote that Oswald spent three years in the Soviet Union, and "may have received assassination training in the USSR."⁴²⁰ This article became part of a SISC subject file, in the post-assassination period. Another part of the organization's article focused on FPCC members. Of particular interest was background information of individuals who had Communist Party links in the 1930s. Helen Levi Travis, a Los Angeles FPCC member, was a party member during that period. According to the far right organization, she may have played a part in Leon Trotsky's assassination.⁴²¹

This veteran's group may have had another motive in writing about Oswald in conjunction with Old Left sympathizers to the Cuban revolution. Part of the article was devoted to HUAC hearings in Los Angeles regarding illegal travel to Cuba. Also expressed were sentiments after the assassination which favored putting the FPCC on the attorney general's list of subversive organizations. The newsletter depicted the

⁴²⁰ NARA, Legislative Collection, Senate Internal Security sub-Committee, "Communists Kill President Kennedy." American Veterans Against Communism article. Subject Files. Box 108.

⁴²¹ Ibid. SISC Subject File. Box 108.

pro-Castro group as a haven of aged leftists. It charged that they were trying to foster mutual cooperation between different FPCC chapters.⁴²² For the Veterans Against Communism, this was a post-assassination attempt alluding toward the idea of a Communist monolith.

More SISC file articles showed the senate committee's fears that the assassination may have been part of a plot directed by communists. An *American Legion Firing Line* post-assassination article described Detroit FPCC member Ed Shaw's senate testimony. Shaw, who spoke to the group in both Miami and Tampa, declined to say whether he was a "member of the Communist Party or under Communist Discipline."⁴²³ The American Legion news article called for an investigation of the FPCC, particularly its New Orleans chapter. This veteran's group had yet to find out that the New Orleans chapter was non-existent.

One part of the Legion article referred to Communist Party and FPCC member Joanne Grant. Grant who attended an early FPCC meeting in Robert Taber's New York home, once traveled to a Communist Youth Festival in Vienna. Also in this article, the legion quoted columnist Fulton Lewis Jr., who warned that the FPCC should have been put on the attorney general's subversive organization list.⁴²⁴

The Senate committee soon started a probe into the assassination. Other post-assassination publications in the SISC files showed alarm among anti-communists, who became part of the general public malaise over Oswald's pro-Castro image. A newsletter put out by Dollar Federal Savings and Loan Association made reference to Congressman Cramer, and his quote, "It is obvious that additional legislation is

⁴²² Ibid. Box 108.

⁴²³ NARA. Senate Internal Security sub-Committee. "The American Legion Firing Line." Received on January 21, 1964. Box 108.

⁴²⁴ Ibid Box 108.

needed—particularly in view of the Justice Department’s attitude indicating that it is difficult to prosecute these violators under present laws.”⁴²⁵ Herbert Philbrick was the editor of this publication. After retirement from the production of the thematic espionage television series *I Led Three Lives*, he took on the political cause of anti-communism. Among his activities, Philbrick was an advisor to a New Orleans based anti-Castro and anti-Communist propaganda organization, the Information Council of the Americas [INCA].

One of Philbrick’s INCA associates was Ed Butler, who in the brief interlude between Kennedy’s assassination, and the start of the Warren Commission investigation, was called before the Eastland Committee for testimony regarding Lee Harvey Oswald and the Fair Play for Cuba Committee.⁴²⁶ The Senate Internal Security sub-Committee made one of the earliest attempts at investigating the assassination. It abandoned this inquiry when President Johnson appointed the Warren Commission. Unlike the earlier probes into the “Communist Threat to the Caribbean,” this effort was short lived.

In Tampa, the assassination drew considerable attention both from, and toward, the local FPCC chapter. On November 23, 1963, one day after Kennedy’s assassination, TP T-6 advised that Christine Amor and Lillian McFarland discussed the possibility of making a statement to the press concerning the Tampa FPCC. They decided to send a letter to the editor of the local newspaper, which was published, expressing shock at Kennedy’s untimely death.⁴²⁷

⁴²⁵ NARA. Senate Internal Security sub-Committee. Herbert A. Philbrick. “Dollar Hollar.”. Box 108.

⁴²⁶ NARA. Legislative Collection. SISC Testimony. Ed Butler. November 23, 1963. Box 4. Butler, in addition to being a leader in the anti-Castro INCA group, debated Oswald along with Carlos Bringuier in August, 1963 on a New Orleans public affairs radio program.

⁴²⁷ NARA. JFK Collection. FBI File. 97-4196-64.

On November 26, the same informant advised the FBI that a Don Sider contacted Manuel Amor, and told him that it was his understanding that Lee Harvey Oswald was connected to the FPCC at Tampa. Amor told Sider, who was a *St. Petersburg Times* reporter, that he knew nothing about Oswald.⁴²⁸ Also Christine Amor reportedly told someone that Oswald wasn't on the group's mailing list because she had received a letter from V.T. Lee telling her that he wasn't.⁴²⁹

An FBI report on the assassination showed concern in other quarters of the Tampa FPCC. TP T-4 advised on December 11 that the FPCC pressman cautiously resumed printing the FPCC paper, but expressed fears that the group could still be blamed. TP T-6 advised his FBI handlers five days later that another FPCC officer, Harold S. Wilson talked to Louis Fritze about a *New York Times* V.T. Lee article. The former FPCC leader turned over six letters of correspondence between the pro-Castro group and Oswald to the FBI.⁴³⁰ In the December 27 *Tampa Times* a report told of V.T. Lee's resignation as national FPCC chairman. The article questioned whether the FPCC would soon go out of business.⁴³¹

In New York, V.T. Lee came under increased notoriety. A *New York Journal-American* article referred to his "mysterious contact" with Lee Harvey Oswald.⁴³² Lee wrote Lillian McFarland that he was staying away from his home and office for the time being. Tampa's FPCC was seriously discussing disbanding, or changing its name. But there was actually an optimistic note for the beleaguered group. McFarland

⁴²⁸ Ibid. 97-4196-64.

⁴²⁹ Ibid. 97-4196-64.

⁴³⁰ Ibid. 97-4196-64.

⁴³¹ Ibid. 97-4196-64.

⁴³² Guy Richards. "Mystery N.Y. Contact of Oswald Revealed." *New York Journal American*, December 8, 1963. 1-L. This article was part of the negative publicity the FPCC received.

read a note from a group sponsoring a peace walk from Canada to Guantanamo, Cuba. She inquired about possible participation in the walk.⁴³³

Congressman William C. Cramer was referred to in the *St. Petersburg Times* Suncoast News section shortly after Kennedy's death. This December 5 article reiterated Cramer's call for placing the organization on the attorney general's subversive list, and his call for constant FBI surveillance. This article also had one of the more unusual remarks in the post-assassination period, "Had his request to the attorney general been heeded, it is possible the death of the president would never have happened."⁴³⁴ The *Times* piece implies carelessness by Robert Kennedy in dealing with subversives. This article continued with a synopsis of Cramer's fight against the pro-Castro group.

Other articles in December, 1963 told of the imminent demise of the FPCC. A December 29, 1963 *Tampa Tribune* editorial analyzed that the FPCC was dying because of accused assassin Oswald. It also blamed the demise on its Communist ties, and V.T. Lee's left-wing youth activities.⁴³⁵ An article in the *Miami Herald* described Oswald as a confessed Marxist, and told of the FPCC denial of having known him. A reference made in the *Herald* said the FBI uncovered correspondence between Oswald and Lee.⁴³⁶ Jacksonville's *Florida Times Union* referred to Oswald as a "chapter chairman in New Orleans and Dallas." It also reiterated the long standing Senate Internal Security sub-Committee investigative focal point of "secret financial

⁴³³ FBI File. Ibid. 97-4196-64.

⁴³⁴ Florida Johns Committee. Series 1486. Box 17. "Representative Cramer Gave Warning Of "Fair Play for Cuba Committee." December 5, 1963, *St. Petersburg Times*.

⁴³⁵ Ibid. Series 1486. Box 17. "Fair Play Fades Away," *Tampa Tribune*, December 29, 1963.

⁴³⁶ Ibid. "Fair Play for Cuba Committee Bowing Out Quietly" *Miami Herald*, December 28, 1963.

backing of the Castro Cuban delegation to the United Nations.”⁴³⁷

By the time V.T. Lee testified before the Warren Commission in 1964, the FPCC was defunct. Lee’s 1964 testimony was in sharp contrast to his 1963 SISC testimony, where he had taken the Fifth Amendment for nearly every question put to him. Lee told the Warren Commission that the FPCC “is no longer a functioning organization,” but added that he was involved with it when it was.⁴³⁸

V.T. Lee told the Warren Commission that Oswald ignored the by-laws of the organization, in setting up his New Orleans chapter. Lee, who earlier said that he didn’t know the accused assassin, acknowledged that he corresponded with him by mail. The former FPCC national director said he had no knowledge of any August 1963 fights between Oswald and anti-Castro Cuban exiles in New Orleans. In that month, Oswald passed out pro-Castro literature, and engaged in an altercation with anti-Castro exile leader, Carlos Bringuier. Several days before, Oswald approached Bringuier, telling him that he was an ex-Marine willing to help the anti-Castro crusade. Lee told the Warren Commission that the FPCC did not have any members in New Orleans, nor in Texas, where the assassination took place.⁴³⁹

President Johnson’s blue ribbon Warren Commission published its final report in late 1964, and concluded that Lee Harvey Oswald was President Kennedy’s lone assassin. Many critics had doubts; among them were muck-raking journalists who were also wary of US intelligence operations. A 1967 article written by columnist Drew Pearson alleged US involvement in plots to assassinate Fidel Castro.

⁴³⁷ Ibid. “Fair Play for Cuba Group Collapsing,” *Florida Times Union*, December 27, 1963.

⁴³⁸ US President. Executive Order. *Hearings Before the President’s Commission on the Assassination of President Kennedy*. 26 Vols. Washington DC: Government Printing Office, 1964..Vol. X. 86-87.

⁴³⁹ Ibid. 90-94.

This story referred to possible plots through mid-1963.⁴⁴⁰ Other journalists such as Pearson partner and leg-man Jack Anderson and the *New York Times* Seymour Hersh opened information accessibility a little more. They also created more questions about US intelligence activities.⁴⁴¹ When the Watergate scandal erupted in 1972, a changed atmosphere made questioning of intelligence activities even more prevalent. What came several years later was another senate committee. But this one was headed by Frank Church of Idaho instead of James O. Eastland.

Senator Church was an important political figure in this changed atmosphere. The Democrat and Cold Warrior had undergone a political metamorphosis. He first questioned US involvement in the burgeoning Vietnam War. The Idaho senator became one of the most vocal Vietnam War critics during his tenure on the Senate Foreign Relations Committee. Church began emulating an earlier isolationist who hailed from his home state of Idaho, the progressive Senator William Borah.⁴⁴² During this transition, one long time senate observer, William S. White claimed that Church was falling into an isolationist trap. White drew a parallel of Church's non-interventionism in Vietnam to Borah, who discouraged American "entanglements with "colonialist Britain."⁴⁴³

Church's long battle with this pro-war consensus finally gained ground when he and Senator John Sherman Cooper of Kentucky sponsored the bipartisan Cooper-Church Amendment. It proved to be a courageous battle for Church since his

⁴⁴⁰ Kathryn S. Olmstead. *Challenging the Secret Government: The Post-Watergate Investigations of the CIA and FBI*. Chapel Hill and London: The University of North Carolina Press, 1996. There are numerous references in Olmstead's book to Seymour Hersh and others. One chapter is devoted to Hersh.

⁴⁴¹ US Congress. Senate. *An Interim Report of the Select Committee to Study Government Operations with Respect to Intelligence Activities. Alleged Assassination Plots Involving Foreign Leaders*. 94th Congress 1st Session. Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1975.. Prologue xiii.

⁴⁴² LeRoy Ashby and Rod Gramer. *Fighting the Odds: The Life of Senator Frank Church*. Pullman: Washington State University Press, 1994. 139.

⁴⁴³ Ibid. 141.

constituents in conservative Cold War Idaho were outraged by his actions. They had sent copies of journalist William White's article to him, which called Church one of the most "isolationist senators, who would hurt the United States."⁴⁴⁴

Frank Church, already an icon on the Senate Foreign Relations Committee chaired by J.W. Fulbright, another noted Vietnam dove, soon received a boost at a crucial time as the growing Watergate scandal ensued in 1972. Watergate, which was run out of the White House, and included a number of Republican political operatives, was replete with covert activities and dirty tricks. The seminal event leading to this discovery of a complex web of break-ins, disruptive activities toward the Democrats, and the eventual compromise of the Nixon re-election campaign and administration was a late night break-in by the White House "plumbers." These men were Nixon's operatives. They strove to keep leaked information away from Democrats, and an unsympathetic press, hence the name "the plumbers." The Democratic campaign office was in the Watergate complex, which was targeted by the plumbers, who were caught in this illegal act. This led to the discovery of more dirty tricks. Frank Church soon entered the center of this growing awareness. He already posed questions of government credibility on Vietnam. He started questioning Watergate. Several years later, his committee started an investigation into CIA assassination plots and other covert activities.⁴⁴⁵

Church's investigation became the second senate committee to look deeply into the Fair Play for Cuba Committee. The Church Committee investigation was quite different from that of the earlier Eastland Committee. Eastland valued secrecy,

⁴⁴⁴ Ibid. 321.

⁴⁴⁵ Ashby and Rod Gramer. Also: Kathryn Olmstead. Both authors give details on Watergate, which added to the momentum for Church's later investigations. Church, however, was suspicious of government activities long before the Watergate scandal ensued. It was not a turning point in his own consciousness raising.

was very anti-Communist and Cold War oriented, and was a strident interventionist when a regime was even suspected of being pro-communist. Church's anti-war sensibilities put him in sharp contrast to Eastland's interventionism.

The FPCC was not central to Church Committee hearings and investigations, but the committee's emphasis dealt with assassination plots directed at Castro. It did not deal with domestic subversion directed by Castro. The Church Committee resulted in a new era of looking at government intelligence operations and activities. Committee probes affected documentation concerning US intelligence and the FPCC.

When Frank Church spoke in Delaware in June, 1973, he argued that Vietnam begat Watergate, and that the White House dirty tricks program was a grotesque creation of a foreign policy based upon "secrecy, deception and an arrogant refusal to allow congress to play its rightful role."⁴⁴⁶ FBI and CIA investigations into the FPCC also involved dirty tricks, mail openings, and utilized a variety of informants. These actions stepped up in the wake of the Communist takeover in Cuba, as suddenly the fear of Communist expansion came closer to home.⁴⁴⁷ The Church Committee sought to expose those actions that were illegal.

The 1967 Drew Pearson column was found interesting by Church, since during January, 1966 Senate Foreign Relations Committee hearings he accused the Johnson administration of "trying to play both sides and twist the news."⁴⁴⁸ In the 1970s the Church Committee concluded in its interim report that, "The idea of a monolithic enemy of Communism was the perception generally shared in the US

⁴⁴⁶ Ibid. 405.

⁴⁴⁷ US Congress. Senate. An Interim Report of the Select Committee to Study Government Operations with Respect to Intelligence Activities, Alleged Assassination Plots Involving Foreign Leaders. 94th Congress 1st Session. Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1975.. Prologue xiii.

⁴⁴⁸ Ashby. 219.

during the depths of the Cold War. That attitude helps explain assassination plots, which the Church Committee reviewed, although it does not justify them.”⁴⁴⁹

This basic suspicion underlying the Church Committee carried over into other committee investigations of government operations. Biographer William Ashby, concluded that his appointment to the Senate Committee on Intelligence allowed the Idaho senator to deal firsthand with issues such as US interventionism and the growth of the national security state.⁴⁵⁰

Committee members exposed the dimensions of the mail opening program, and discovered that the CIA and FBI had placed the names of 1.5 million Americans in the category of “potentially subversive.” Together both agencies opened about 380,000 letters.⁴⁵¹ Among those discovered to have come under surveillance in the mail opening program were the Tampa and national FPCC chapters. Committee members exposed the dimension of these mail opening programs, the National Security Agency’s use of electronic surveillance, illegal break-ins by the FBI, and the political use of the Internal Revenue Service. In addition, they detailed CIA involvement in various assassination plots.⁴⁵² Thus Frank Church’s select committee investigated a wide variety of activities, which concurrently delved into the FPCC.

The committee also set a precedent for later work by the House Select Committee on Assassinations [HSCA], which further allowed for specific inquiries into the assassinations of civil rights leader Martin Luther King and President Kennedy. The Kennedy inquiry in particular led to increased examination of files

⁴⁴⁹ Church Committee, 256.

⁴⁵⁰ Ashby, 472.

⁴⁵¹ Olmstead, 175.

⁴⁵² Ibid, 109.

related to the FPCC, since the organization's file classification evolved from the broad area of the Cold War to the more narrowly construed concept related to the assassination.

When the HSCA published its completed final report in 1979, it showed two areas related to the Tampa FPCC that the Warren Commission failed to adequately investigate. One overlooked area was the identity of occupants at the address Oswald used for his FPCC literature distribution. The address 544 Camp Street appeared on materials that Oswald was handing out. This address was New Orleans's Newman Building. The Warren Report stated that at an earlier date, the building was occupied by an anti-Castro group, whose name was not revealed in the final report. Later it was found to be the Cuban Revolutionary Council.⁴⁵³

Another resident of the Newman Building was the private detective agency of Guy Banister. He also was not mentioned in the Warren Report. Banister was the retired FBI Special Agent in Charge of the Chicago FBI field office. After his FBI retirement in the mid-1950s, he moved to New Orleans and helped set up that city's police intelligence unit. Guy Banister, a staunch anti-communist, continued his anti-subversion work well after his official ties with the FBI were severed. The HSCA determined in their investigation that in 1961 Banister and Sergio Arcachua Smith of the CRC were working together in the anti-Castro cause.⁴⁵⁴

Ross Banister, the brother of Guy Banister, told the HSCA that his brother had

⁴⁵³ US President, Executive Order, *Report of the Warren Commission on the Assassination of President Kennedy*. Washington DC: Government Printing Office, 1964, 408. United States, Cong. G. Robert Blakey, Intro. *The Final Assassinations Report: Report of the Select Committee on Assassinations*. New York: Bantam Books, 1979, 173.

⁴⁵⁴ HSCA Final Report, 172. Hearings of Louisiana Joint Legislative Committee. Part I. Testimony of Guy Banister. March 7, 1957. Banister in his 1957 testimony before the Louisiana Un-American Activities Committee told of his task in setting up the NOPD red squad. Banister, an ardent anti-Communist, whose politics were much in line with J. Edgar Hoover's FBI, showed concern in his hearings about the possibility of Communist subversion in the maritime industry. With the rise of Fidel Castro, this Cold Warrior turned his attention to this perceived threat to both New Orleans and the United States.

seen Oswald pass out pro-Castro literature in New Orleans during the summer of 1963. The HSCA learned during its investigation that Banister left extensive files when he died in 1964, and that his widow passed them on to the Louisiana State Police. Among the Banister files was information on the FPCC. The files were destroyed, by the superintendent of the Louisiana State Police, because they no longer were part of a criminal investigation.⁴⁵⁵ Since Banister died in 1964, and the Warren Report later that year concluded that Lee Harvey Oswald [who himself had been murdered], was the sole assassin of the president, the FPCC files became a dead letter issue.

The HSCA, which found Banister more interesting than did the Warren Commission, lost a source of information of any possible surveillance on the FPCC by Banister, and his affiliate, the CIA controlled CRC. At the time of the working relationship between Banister and CRC leader Sergio Arcachua Smith, the CRC became involved in Tampa's Martí Park demonstrations against the FPCC.

There was another worrisome allegation for the House Select Committee. It was that of Tampa FPCC member Gilberto Policarpo López. López attended an FPCC meeting of on November 17, 1963. At the time, he was waiting for a telephone call from Cuba so he could return there. López obtained a tourist card on November 20, left Tampa, and entered Mexico through Nuevo Laredo on November 23, the day after Kennedy was killed.⁴⁵⁶

Another source gave information that an American citizen named Gilberto López was involved in the Kennedy assassination, and entered Mexico from Laredo, Texas. He then went to the Cuban Embassy in Mexico City, and left it on November

⁴⁵⁵ Ibid. 172-176.

⁴⁵⁶ Ibid. 136-137.

27. For the FBI, the movements of Lopéz were very suspicious, but the stories later were found to have many inconsistencies.⁴⁵⁷ Other FBI reports stated that Lopéz had not been granted permission to return to Cuba, but was awaiting a phone call to return there. In the March, 1964 FBI report, it was stated that a woman in the Tampa FPCC had called Cuba on December 8, 1963, and was told that Lopéz had arrived safely.⁴⁵⁸

Neither the FBI nor the CIA provided information on Lopéz for the Warren Commission's 1964 investigation. There was another revelation that was even more disturbing. In March, 1964, when the Warren Commission investigation was very active, there were reports circulating that Lopéz was involved in the assassination.⁴⁵⁹ This information, apparently never found its way to the commission. An investigation of Lopéz, as with Guy Banister, was never done.

Lopéz's Tampa connections seemed innocent, since his main objective was to solicit funds from FPCC members for his travel back to Cuba. However, the movements of this FPCC member were suspiciously viewed. Again it showed poorly investigated incidents in the post-assassination period. The Policarpo Lopéz allegations added to the incomplete nature of the Warren Report. The House committee, eager to improve on the Warren Commission's performance, also stated in its report that Oswald had possibly been in contact with the Tampa chapter of the FPCC. In the end, it could find no evidence of this particular story regarding Oswald's movements.⁴⁶⁰

Several files examined by the House committee, and later released in their

⁴⁵⁷ Ibid. 137-138.

⁴⁵⁸ Ibid. 139.

⁴⁵⁹ Ibid. 139-140.

⁴⁶⁰ Ibid. 140-141. Also there is an article written by *Tampa Tribune* journalist Rory O'Connor which stated that Lee Harvey Oswald may have known V.T. Lee on a more than casual basis, and had visited Tampa. But in tracking Oswald's movements before the assassination there is no evidence of any travel to Tampa by Oswald.

entirety by the 1990s Assassination Records Review Board [ARRB], referred to the Gilberto Policarpo López allegations, and FPCC meetings during this period. One file showed that there were several teletypes and airtels regarding López and Oswald, and the possibility that they may have had contact. The airtel message told of López's travel to Mexico, and later to Cuba.

The airtel also told of post-assassination correspondence between FBI offices in Dallas; San Antonio, and Tampa. All intended to identify López.⁴⁶¹ Another part of this file, which was released later than other Tampa FPCC FBI files, told that the San Antonio FBI office was the source of the information in the post-assassination period regarding López crossing the border at Laredo.⁴⁶²

From the 1964 Warren Commission to the 1976 House Select Committee on Assassinations, the change in time was more of a change in broadening of information rather than in a lessening of secrecy. Neither investigation showed a desire for opening assassination files until well into the Twenty-First Century. Since the FPCC was the subject of dossier compilation since its inception, there was much in the way of information. But in its post-assassination classification period, the secrecy surrounding the FPCC had more to do with the Kennedy assassination, and lack of cooperation from intelligence agencies, than from consideration of sensitive material due to the ongoing Cold War.⁴⁶³

Something totally different happened when Kennedy was assassinated. Up to that point HUAC compiled a small number of pre-assassination records related to Lee

⁴⁶¹ NARA. JFK Collection. FBI File 105-2157. From: SAC, Tampa. To: Director. December 16, 1963.

⁴⁶² Ibid. This is part of the overall FBI file. To: Director and SAC, Dallas. From: San Antonio. The teletype is dated December 4, 1963, and is part of the overall correspondence related to this file of correspondence about Lopez between the three FBI offices.

⁴⁶³ Interview. Anna Kasten Nelson. Nelson was a member of the Assassinations Records Review Board, and someone who experienced FBI and CIA attempts at halting the disclosure of those agencies documents.

Harvey Oswald's activities in New Orleans, but had little related to Oswald's other suspicious activities starting with his 1959 defection to the Soviet Union. HUAC had some pro-Castro records of a pre-assassination Oswald in both Dallas and New Orleans.⁴⁶⁴ Oswald had a long paper trail on file in intelligence agencies long before the Kennedy assassination. His extensive dossier coupled with the assassination ultimately strangled the FPCC, an organization that he had little to do with during the totality of its existence.⁴⁶⁵ Ultimately Lee Harvey Oswald became inextricably identified with the group. The Senate Internal Security sub-Committee had taken part in an ongoing investigation into the effects of Castro's Cuba in the United States, implying that the FPCC in particular posed a threat to national security because of its strident pro-Castro stand.

When the Assassinations Records Review Board convened in 1994, it again strove to open records related to the Kennedy assassination, and consequently to files in the FBI and CIA related to the FPCC. By this time it was well established that even pre-assassination FPCC documents were classified as, and linked to, assassination inquiries.

Because of the events in Dealey Plaza, the Kennedy assassination documentation ostensibly became separated from those of the Cold War. Documents related to the assassination received their own classification. This was the case for other records relating to assassination investigations, such as those related to Cuba, to Cuban exile groups, and to the FPCC. For many of these topics, the determining factor mandating strict classification was initially Lee Harvey Oswald.

⁴⁶⁴ US President Executive Order. *Final Report of the Assassinations Records Review Board*, Washington DC: Government Printing Office, 1998, 3-4.

⁴⁶⁵ John Newman. *Oswald and the CIA*. This book by Newman is a compendium of files released on Lee Harvey Oswald by the Assassination Records Review Board. Oswald's pre-assassination records are extensive and include materials from the FBI, CIA, Office of Naval Intelligence and others.

When the ARRB convened and started the arduous process of review, it ran into traditional stonewalling by intelligence agencies.⁴⁶⁶ The history of congressional inquiries into intelligence operations led congressional staffs into dead ends, as the agencies paradoxically would try to use the Freedom of Information Act to slow down the declassification process. The ARRB had to remind the agencies that they were operating under a different set of rules. This mandate intended to bypass ordinary operating procedures.⁴⁶⁷

Anna Kasten Nelson, one of the board members, felt that lack of action by congressional investigations into possible conspiracies put the US Congress under scrutiny. Congress experienced public doubt, and the questioning of the credibility of American institutions. “Congress,” Nelson said, “was getting tired of talk of conspiracy and cover-up, and wanted files to be opened once and for all.” But Dr. Nelson also pointed out that the some of the congressional staffers were in some instances former intelligence officers, who tended to see these issues from an agency perspective.⁴⁶⁸

The ARRB read and declassified thousands of documents. Their actions provided an historiographical window into the people, groups, and events surrounding the Kennedy assassination. Anna Nelson related that prior to the review board, past investigations, like the 1975 Church Committee and the 1976 House Select Committee on Assassinations, still kept many records classified. It was not just a truism for the 1964 Warren Commission. Even after the end of the Cold War, the behavior of intelligence agencies, in many respects, remained unchanged.

⁴⁶⁶ Anna Kasten Nelson. 9-16-02.

⁴⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁶⁸ Ibid.

The Fair Play for Cuba Committee and its Tampa Bay chapter started out as a group fighting the underlying concepts of the Cold War. This pro-Castro group unwittingly became part of it, as they defended Fidel Castro and his revolution. In the end, the FPCC was held responsible for Kennedy's murder by hard line Cold Warriors and domestic anti-subversives. They blamed Lee Harvey Oswald, a peripheral figure, who for several months in the summer of 1963 was an FPCC member in New Orleans. In the end the nation's perception of his actions made him the best known FPCC member. Oswald's association with the Kennedy assassination put an indefensible act at the feet of a pro-Castro group. It was the death knell of an organization, which to its supporters exhibited the best of intentions.

CONCLUSION

*Carole King's song verse: "Was a time I remembered, hope flashed and went dim, when assassins just happened, to do the right people in."*⁴⁶⁹

*Laura Nyro's song verse: "Come on people, Sons and mothers! Keep the dreams of the two young brothers, Gonna take that dream, and ride that dove."*⁴⁷⁰

There is a very powerful scene in Oliver Stone's *JFK* about forty-five minutes into the film. The scene takes place in a seedy neighborhood near the New Orleans business district. District Attorney Jim Garrison, played by Kevin Costner, meets two of his assistants on a Sunday morning sometime in 1967. The urban neighborhood is quiet, as Costner beckons his people to take a walking tour. They cross the street from Lafayette Park, and stand in front of a small decrepit building as Costner, with sinister sounding music resembling the sound of large freighters in the background, points to the address 531 Lafayette Street. He tells the two that the office upstairs was occupied by Guy Banister in 1963.

As the film moves on, the ghost of Banister appears. He puts on his coat, and leaves the premises. Costner's party then walk around the corner, as he points out another entrance to this building, one which bears the address 544 Camp Street. He then says, with the music becoming more sinister, "Guess who uses this address...Lee Harvey Oswald." As he says this, the ghost of Oswald appears. The scene then shows Oswald, the former defector to the Soviet Union, passing out pro-Castro literature

⁴⁶⁹ Carole King. *Her Greatest Hits: Songs of Long Ago*. Track 14. "Eventually." Originally Recorded in 1971, Released in 1996. Produced by Lou Adler. Ode Records. New York: 1999.

⁴⁷⁰ Laura Nyro. *Time and Love: The Essential Masters*. Track 11. "Save the Country." Recorded 12-4-68 New York City. Produced by Al Quaglieri. Common Chord & Columbia Records. New York: 2000.

stamped with the 544 Camp Street address. Suddenly an infuriated Banister approaches and reprimands Oswald for using this address, which happens to be in the same building with the rabidly anti-Communist retired intelligence officer.

Oliver Stone's film presentation is a dramatization. It is not a documentary. However, background information on the address, participants, and probable links in this sinister scene can be found in the HSCA investigation. This movie's cinematic excellence aside, it showed a gateway to an investigation into the death of President Kennedy, which was never fully explained by President Johnson's appointed Warren Commission. Because of the Warren Commission's failure to question Guy Banister, his connection to Oswald, and his files on the Fair Play for Cuba Committee we have an incomplete record of any possible surveillance Banister conducted on the group, particularly the Tampa Bay chapter. The New Orleans police intelligence unit that Banister helped set up did in fact have a file on the Tampa chapter. Banister also was affiliated with the Cuban Revolutionary Council at the time of the late 1961 Tampa confrontation between the CRC and the pro-Castroites.

But even this lack of complete information is telling, since this hard boiled Cold Warrior perceived the dangers of Fidel Castro, and had taken active steps to combat him. He was one of many active and retired intelligence officers and military veterans, of the post-World War II era who feared Communism, and made an extra effort to combat it. The war against the FPCC was just one facet of the war against Castro.

The Senate Internal Security sub-Committee, led by Senator James O. Eastland, had Banister's 1957 testimony on subversion of the maritime industry in its files. This Senate committee also saw grave danger in Castro's Cuba, and the

affiliated FPCC. The pro-Castro group grew dramatically in the latter part of 1960 and early 1961. Tampa's chapter also grew, and had shown staying power after the organization's overall decline. It too would come to the attention of the Senate committee.

Tampa, in spite of its relatively small size compared to other FPCC strongholds, proved to be fertile ground for pro-Castroism. Its Tampa FPCC chapter rivaled those in larger American cities in both size and activity. But like those other chapters across the nation, it was primarily concerned with fostering better relations with Cuba. This thesis shows that it was not treated differently than other organizations deemed suspicious by the government.

However this attitude changed when one of its members, Lee Harvey Oswald, was blamed for the Kennedy assassination. When Oswald was arrested, and later killed by Jack Ruby, many FPCC related records moved from Cold War categorization to that related to the Kennedy assassination. Government records related to the FPCC, particularly at the federal level, would be inaccessible for decades.

The Tampa chapter of the FPCC was, during the early 1960s, associated with the national chapter, and in the eyes of the US government with the regime of Fidel Castro. These are the defining factors of the pro-Castro group.

This thesis has been an attempt not only to highlight this under-reported organization, but to delve into records which have become more accessible since the passing of the JFK Records Collection Act of 1992. Any meaningful additions to the historiography of the FPCC will be accomplished by opening additional records. One obstacle discussed in this study was implied in an interview by Assassination Records

Review Board member Dr. Anna Kasten Nelson. She experienced the reluctance and outright obstruction of federal agencies in the release of documents. Those authors on the Kennedy assassination, in spite of the inaccuracies and omissions in their books, served a function of arousing public interest. They contributed to the clamor by citizens for more open access.

The Cold War had been characterized with secrecy long before 1963, the year Kennedy was murdered on the streets of Dallas. For the FPCC and its Tampa Bay branch, the assassination would have a two-fold effect. The first was to lead to the group's demise. The second was the extra emphasis on secrecy regarding the facts surrounding the group, after the assassination and Warren Commission investigation. While the immediate fate of the organization became intertwined with the Kennedy assassination, in the end its existence succumbed to the reality of war against Fidel Castro and the ongoing Cold War.

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