

IX. DIRECTORIO REVOLUCIONARIO ESTUDIANTIL (DRE)

(286) The Directorio Revolucionario Estudiantil (DRE)(1) was the outgrowth of an activist student group in Cuba that originally fought against Batista.(2)

In the late spring of 1960,(3) three DRE leaders escaped from Cuba (4) and arrived in Miami.(5) They immediately offered their services to the Democratic Revolutionary Front (FRD) with the intent of organizing an anti-Communist student organization within this group.(6) Nevertheless, it later was decided that the DRE would be an "affiliate," but not a member of the Frente.(7) The leaders of the DRE were kept on a regular monthly retainer by the U.S. Government, as were all members engaged in training for paramilitary operations and propaganda dissemination.(8) They were also supplied with weapons and ammunition on occasion.(9).

(287) The first DRE infiltration team (10) landed in Cuba in November 1960, (11) with the objective of organizing anti-Castro student propaganda and conducting general harassment operations.(12)

(288) By April 1961, 400 guerrillas(13) were operating effectively from the Sierra Maestra mountains.(14) Nevertheless, 74 men were captured (15) concurrently with a failure to receive air-dropped supplies. (16) This capture was a severe setback for the DRE underground prior to the Bay of Pigs.(17)

(289) One leader was also arrested in April 1961, but his true identity was unknown to the authorities and he was released following an interrogation.(18) Escaping again to Miami, he made three daring attempts to reinfiltrate Cuba in 1961. Although he failed, his exploits reportedly made him an underground hero to the students in Cuba.(19)

(290) The DRE chief of military operations,(20) who also infiltrated into Cuba prior to the Bay of Pigs invasion and told the committee that the Cuban underground believed it had the total backing of the United States.(21) By March 1961, however, one leader testified that the underground realized the invasion would be a failure, because the U.S. Government had failed to perform even before the invasion.(22) "It never got us the supplies it promised and never did the things it was supposed to do," he claimed.(23) Another leader was also upset about Agency performance and once wrote to friends threatening to kill CIA personnel if anything ever happened to one person as a result of Agency bumbling.(24) The DRE chief of military operations told the committee he thought the invasion was designed to fail and that it was only conceived to relieve the pressure building in the anti-Castro exile community. (25)

(291) Although DRE members had a deep-lying opposition to U.S. plans and policies,(26) they continued to accept U.S. funding, con-

tinued despite evaluation of the group as an "enfant terrible." (27) CIA headquarters received a report that the five top officials of the DRE had established a position for themselves as "oracles," because of their ability to acquire money from the U.S. Government. (28) This support allowed the DRE to play an inordinately influential role in the exile community. (29) According to the DRE chief of military operations, by July 1962, the DRE had taken to soliciting support for proposed propaganda operations but actually using the funding for military operations. (30)

(292) For instance, in early September 1962, the DRE official said he received a call from another leader notifying him of an impending major military operation. (31) The latter told him the DRE had all the weapons, ammunition, and support it needed. (32) The raid turned out to be the attack on the Blanquita Theater in Havana, which received a great deal of publicity. (33) Castro even raved about it, claiming it was an attempt on his life by the CIA. (34) In fact, according to the DRE official, the raiders did not know that Castro was scheduled to be at the theater the night of the shelling. (35) In any event, there was a tremendous uproar when the raiders returned to the United States. The DRE leaders were called to Washington to confront U.S. Government officials, including Attorney General Robert F. Kennedy and CIA Operations Chief, Richard Helms, (36) who both told them they were doing a great job but wasting their time in such independent actions. (37)

(293) As a result of the Blanquita raid publicity, the DRE was subsequently able to raise about \$200,000 in private funds. That enabled the group to establish an operating base on Catalina Island near the south coast of the Dominican Republic from which it hoped to make a major strike against Cuba. (38) Nevertheless, after the October 1962 missile crisis, (39) the Dominican Republic Government informed the DRE leaders that the United States was putting great pressure on it to shut down the DRE operations and it therefore could no longer permit the group to operate out of its country. (40)

(294) Thus, the DRE was, of all the anti-Castro groups, one of the most bitter toward President Kennedy for his "deal" with the Russians. (41) In a letter dated February 21, 1963 and addressed simply to "Sirs," the DRE said it was grateful for the initial support of the United States, but could no longer operate under restrictions of U.S. policy. The DRE demanded that the U.S. Government, ". . . understand that the Cubans cannot continue waiting for the international policies, because those dying of hunger are Cubans, because it is our country that bodily suffers slavery, because it is our blood that runs in Cuba." (42)

(295) Despite such strong sentiment, the DRE continued to accept support although its more militant members had been urged to join Manuel Artime's Movimiento de Recuperacion Revolucionaria (MRR) forces. (43) Whether or not this suggestion was ever taken by any DRE members is not documented, but the top leaders remained a homogeneous group and, by 1964, were soliciting additional financial support outside the U.S. Government. They were successful in receiving some funds from the Bacardi rum family in Miami. (44)

(296) Although the DRE continued its relationship with the U.S.

Government until the end of 1966,(45) the group's activities, like those of other anti-Castro organizations, declined in intensity and effectiveness.

(297) Because the DRE was an extremely militant "action" group, the committee was especially interested in DRE operations prior to the assassination of President Kennedy on November 22, 1963.

(298) As noted, one of the effects of the Blanquita raid in September 1962, was to garner the DRE a blast of national publicity, which, in turn, gave the leaders of the group the opportunity to solicit additional funding from wealthy individuals who were sympathetic to their anti-Castro cause.(46) Among those who wound up supporting the DRE was Miami multimillionaire William Pawley, a staunch rightwing conservative, former owner of the Havana bus system, and a friend of former CIA Director Allen Dulles.(47) Another supporter of the DRE was a friend of Pawley's, former Ambassador to Italy Clare Boothe Luce,(48) then the wife of Time-Life publishing boss Henry Luce, and later, a Nixon appointee to the Foreign Intelligence Advisory Board.

(299) In its review of DRE activities, the committee took special interest in a relatively recent series of events involving Clare Boothe Luce. In October 1975, Luce was being interviewed by Vera Glaser, a reporter and columnist for Knight newspapers, when she told Glaser of an alleged incident involving members of the DRE and Lee Harvey Oswald.(49) At the time, Senator Richard Schweiker and Senator Gary Hart were in the midst of their subcommittee investigation of the Kennedy assassination as part of the Senate select committee inquiry into intelligence activity.

(300) According to Glaser's report of the interview, this is basically what Luce told her:

(301) Luce said that after the failure of the Bay of Pigs invasion, her friend, William Pawley, persuaded her to help sponsor a fleet of motorboats for a group of anti-Castro Cubans who, Pawley envisioned, would be Cuban "Flying Tigers," flying in and out of Cuba on intelligence-gathering missions. Pawley had helped start Gen. Claire Chennault's original Flying Tigers in World War II. Luce said she agreed to sponsor one boat and its three-man crew. She said she met with this Cuban boat crew about three times in New York and, in 1962, published a story about them in Life magazine.(50)

(302) Following the missile crisis in October 1962, Luce said that the Kennedy administration clamped down on exile activities against Cuba, and the Pawley-sponsored boat raids were discontinued. Luce said she never saw her "young Cubans," as she called them, again.(51)

(303) Then, on the night of Kennedy's assassination, Luce said she received a call from New Orleans from one of the boat crew Cubans. Luce told Glaser she would call him Julio Fernandez. She said the Cuban told her he called because he wanted to tell her about some information he had concerning the President's killer, Lee Harvey Oswald.(52)

(304) Luce told Glaser that, according to "Julio Fernandez," Oswald had approached the anti-Castro group to which Fernandez belonged and offered his services as a potential Castro assassin. The Cubans, however, did not trust Oswald, suspected he was really a Communist,

and decided to keep tabs on him. They eventually penetrated Oswald's Communist "cell" and tape recorded his talks, including his bragging that he could shoot anyone, even the Secretary of the Navy. (53)

(305) Then suddenly, Luce said Fernandez told her, Oswald came into some money, went to Mexico City and finally to Dallas. Luce said Fernandez told her he still had the tape recordings of Oswald, as well as photographs of Oswald and samples of handbills Oswald had distributed on the streets of New Orleans. Fernandez, she said, asked her what he should do. (54)

(306) Luce said she advised him to contact the FBI immediately. She then told Glaser that she did not think about the story again until the Garrison investigation hit the headlines in 1967. Luce said she then contacted the Cuban who had called her. He told her his group had followed her instructions and turned their material over to the FBI. But, he said, they were advised to "keep their mouths shut" until further contact. Further contact was never made, he said. (55)

(307) Luce said that Fernandez then told her that one of the members of his group had since been suddenly deported and that another had been murdered. He himself, he said, wanted nothing further to do with the Kennedy assassination. (56)

(308) After Luce told her this story, Vera Glaser immediately went to Senator Schweiker and told him about the alleged Oswald encounter. (57) Intrigued, Schweiker contacted Luce directly and asked her for information about the Cuban who had called her (58) As a result, Schweiker sent a staff investigator in search of "Julio Fernandez." No such individual was ever found. (59)

(309) During the course of its own investigation into the Luce allegations, the committee reviewed the 1977 CIA Task Force report that dealt with the newspaper reports of the incident. (60) According to the task force report, Luce called then CIA Director William Colby on October 25, 1975, and told him that Schweiker had called her to ask her for details about the allegations. She said she had given Schweiker the name of Justin McCarthy who, along with Pawley, had initially aroused her interest in helping the anti-Castro Cubans. Nevertheless, she said she did not tell Schweiker how to locate him. (61)

(310) Luce told Colby that after she talked to Schweiker, she had contacted McCarthy. He told her that he doubted that anything would come of a congressional probe and suggested instead that she contact Colby. Luce then told Colby that McCarthy gave her the names of three Cubans with whom he had been associated in DRE activities. They were Luis Fernandez Rocha, Jose Antonio Lanusa, and someone he remembered only by his code name, "Chilo." (62)

(311) According to the 1977 task force report, as a result of Luce's call to him, Colby contacted Justin McCarthy and attempted to persuade him to call Senator Schweiker and provide him with any information or evidence he might have. McCarthy said he did not want to get involved because there were too many "political opportunists" in Washington. (63)

(312) With this background of information, the committee decided to conduct its own investigation into the Luce allegations.

(313) Luce told the committee basically the same story given to Vera Glaser. (64) Luce was specifically asked if she was certain the late night

call on November 22, 1963, came from New Orleans. She was definite in her answer that it did. The Warren report account of the Bringuier/Oswald association was outlined for her. She responded that it sounded much the same as the type activity in which her "boys" were engaged. Luce also told the Committee she did not recognize the name Jose Antonio Lanusa, mentioned in her conversation with Colby in 1975. (65) (314) The committee located in Miami three anti-Castro Cubans, who were among the leaders of the DRE in 1963. One of them, Juan Manuel Salvat Roque, was a founder of the group. He was interviewed by committee investigators on February 7, 1978. (66) Although Salvat did not recall Luce's involvement with the DRE, he said he "heard" William Pawley had provided the group some support. (67) He said that, as far as he remembers, the group never received a large amount of money from any single individual, but received small contributions from a great many people. (68) He said that, according to his knowledge, Carlos Bringuier, the New Orleans delegate of the DRE, was the only member of the group who ever had any contact with Oswald. (69) Committee records, moreover, indicate that Carlos Bringuier became the New Orleans delegate to the DRE in the summer of 1962. (70) As detailed elsewhere, Bringuier and Oswald had a confrontation on Canal Street in New Orleans in August 1963, when Oswald was distributing "Fair Play for Cuba" leaflets. Both Bringuier and Oswald were arrested, but were later brought together to engage in a radio debate. (71) Further, Bringuier previously had arranged for a friend of his, Carlos Quiroga, to approach Oswald and talk to him on the pretense of being interested in pro-Castro activities. (72) (315) Isidro "Chilo" Borja, another leader of the DRE, was interviewed by the committee on February 21, 1978. (73) Borja said he knew Luce was supportive of the DRE, but said he did not know the extent of her financial involvement. (74) He also recalled Bringuier's contact with Oswald and the fact that the DRE relayed that information to the CIA at the time. (75) Borja said his responsibilities with the DRE involved only military operations (76) and he suggested that Jose Antonio Lanusa, who handled press and public relations for the group, knew Luce and had been in contact with her. (77) (316) Jose Antonio Lanusa was interviewed by the committee on April 22, 1978. Lanusa said that on November 22, 1963, he and a small group of DRE members were at a Miami Beach hotel when they heard the news of the assassination of the President. (78) When Oswald's name was broadcast, Lanusa recalled the name as that of someone who had something to do with one of the DRE delegates, so Lanusa and those who were with him went to the Miami DRE office to search the files to determine if Lanusa's suspicion was right. (79) By late afternoon, they had found delegate Bringuier's report from New Orleans detailing his encounter with Oswald. Along with it was a sample Fair Play for Cuba (FPCC) leaflet and a tape recording of the radio debate. (80) With this discovery, someone immediately called a CIA contact. This person told them not to do anything or contact anyone else for at least an hour. He said he needed that time to contact Washington headquarters for instructions. (81) Nevertheless, Lanusa said, he was so anxious to release the information that Oswald was associated with a pro-Castro group that he contacted the major news organizations before the hour was up. (82)

(317) When the CIA contact called back, he told them the FBI would contact the group. The next day, Lanusa said, Miami FBI agent James J. O'Conner showed up at DRE headquarters. He was given Bringuier's report, the FPCC leaflet, and the tape recording of the radio debate. Lanusa said O'Conner told them they would get a receipt for the material but, Lanusa said, they never did. Neither, he said, was the material ever returned. (83)

(318) Lanusa also told the committee that soon after the DRE shelling of the Blanquita Hotel in 1962, he was introduced to Clare Boothe Luce by Justin McCarthy, who Lanusa said was the DRE's public relations contact with the New York major media. (84) Lanusa said Luce told them she wanted to publish the Blanquita raid story in *Life* magazine and that she would give the DRE the \$600 she would receive from the magazine as payment for that story. (85) As far as he knows, Lanusa said, that was the only contact any member of the DRE ever had with Luce. (86) Lanusa also said he strongly doubted Luce or William Pawley ever paid for motorboats for the DRE because, he said, he knew how all of the boats were acquired. Lanusa said he had no knowledge of any DRE member having been deported or murdered. (87) Lanusa said, "I think Clare Boothe Luce shoots from the hip without having her brain engaged." (88)

(319) In investigating her allegations, the committee considered the possibility that Luce incorrectly identified the source of her information. The source of the documentation of Oswald's contact with the DRE was New Orleans-based Carlos Bringuier. Nevertheless, Bringuier told the committee he never engaged in any paramilitary DRE activities (89) and therefore could not have been one of the crew members of the alleged Luce-sponsored motorboat. Bringuier's New Orleans associate, Celso Hernandez, the secretary of the chapter, (90) also said he never received any paramilitary training and did not know Oswald prior to encountering his passing out pro-Castro literature on Canal Street in New Orleans. (91) Bringuier also told the committee he knew Luce by reputation only, had never contacted her personally, and had never given her any information about his experience with Oswald. (92) He further said he was not aware of the fact that Luce was involved in any Cuban exile activities. (93) Bringuier maintained that no member of his DRE group in New Orleans had any contact with Luce during this period of time. (94)

(320) The investigation of the Warren Commission documented that Oswald was interested in establishing a chapter of the FPCC in New Orleans and had contact with the New York headquarters of this pro-Castro organization during the summer of 1963. (95) Luce raised questions about the nature and extent of involvement the New Orleans chapter of DRE had in monitoring Oswald's activities, and its association with the FBI regarding Oswald's Communist activities.

(321) The evidence indicated that the official DRE delegate in New Orleans was Carlos Bringuier, and that he was aided by two Cubans, Celso Hernandez, and Miguel Aguado. In an attempt to monitor Oswald, Bringuier approved the efforts of his friend, Carlos Quiroga, to call on Oswald to elicit additional information about FPCC activities in New Orleans.

(322) None of the New Orleans individuals associated in these events had any involvement in the paramilitary activities of DRE. The New Orleans chapter engaged solely in propaganda and fundraising activities. No New Orleans DRE member had any association with Luce.

(323) The first report of Oswald's contact with the DRE in New Orleans came from the group's headquarters in Miami. This information was released to national news organizations, the CIA, and the FBI shortly after the identification of Oswald as Kennedy's assassin. The evidence indicates that the Luce allegations, although related to certain facts, cannot be substantiated in the absence of corroboration by other individuals.

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