

XV. ADDENDUM TO THE JUNTA DEL GOBIERNO DE CUBA EN EL EXILIO: CARLOS RODRIGUEZ QUESADA

(548) Carlos Rodriguez Quesada was general coordinator of the Cuban underground movement known as the 30th of November, (1) named for an anti-Batista uprising on November 30, 1956, led by Frank Pais who was killed in the assault. (2) The organization was made up mainly of labor union members. (3)

(549) Quesada was also a leader of the labor movement among sugar and agricultural workers in the Province of Las Villas and rose to national prominence in the Confederation of Cuban Workers (CTC). (4) Although Quesada had fought Batista with Castro and was elected to Secretary General of the CTC after Castro took power, he grew disgruntled with Castro's Communist leanings. (5)

(550) Likewise, the 30th of November that philosophically leaned toward socialism and nationalization of industry, was totally opposed to Castro and communism. (6) The group began across-the-board anti-Castro activities including guerrilla actions, sabotage, propaganda, and exfiltrations of members from Cuba. (7) The 30th of November was considered to be one of the most effective organizations in the Cuban underground until infiltration by Castro agents and Cuban Government repression following the Bay of Pigs invasion severely crippled its activities. (8)

(551) Quesada and other 30th of November members were forced to seek asylum. (9) Quesada escaped to the United States in March 1961 aboard a fishing boat. (10)

(552) During his last days in the Cuban underground, Quesada had been in contact with U.S. agents in Havana. (11) Nevertheless, after he took asylum, he began to disagree with them about how to utilize the underground members within labor and peasant organizations. (12) But the 30th of November did join the Cuban Revolutionary Council, and was funded by it. (13)

(553) Yet Quesada also had his troubles with the council. One incident occurred when Quesada went to Puerto Rico on a special operation for the council. (14) It was learned that Quesada had been independently courting sympathetic military leaders and Senators who disagreed with what was then State Department policy toward Cuba. (15) At the same time, Quesada was involved in discussions among the leaders of the DRE, MRP, and the 30th of November about forming a new unity group outside the council organization umbrella. (15a)

(554) These activities put Quesada at odds with the council leadership and in March 1962 he was expelled by Antonio de Varona, the council's general coordinator, for "lack of discipline." (16) The actual reason given for Quesada's expulsion was his involvement in organizing a hunger strike in Bayfront Park in Miami at which 152 people

were arrested. (17) The strike had been planned as a peaceful demonstration during President Kennedy's March 10 visit to Miami. (18) The strikers called for aid for the liberation of Cuba and the resignation of Jose Miro Cardona as head of the council. (19) Other well-known Cuban exile leaders such as Laureano Batista Falla of the MDC had joined Quesada in the protest. (20) The so-called peaceful demonstration, however, deteriorated into a wild melee and the arrests ensued.

(555) A few weeks later, Quesada held a press conference criticizing the council. (21) These actions caused a division among the members of the 30th of November. (22) Part of the group elected to remain with the council while Quesada set up a rival faction named the Movimiento Revolucionario de Frank Pais. (23) Because the 30th of November had been so closely identified with Quesada and his followers, Quesada's group continued to be referred to as the 30th of November. Having lost the healthy council subsidy, however, Quesada spent the next few months trying to gain recognition for his group and find ways to fund it. (24)

(556) The group soon became known as one of the more outspoken of the anti-Castro organizations. In April 1962 an FBI report noted that the group's leaders no longer trusted the U.S. Government. (25) Quesada revealed that in a February 1962 operation the 30th of November group had given names of the participants in Cuba to the CIA but those individuals had been subsequently arrested. (26)

(557) By 1963, Quesada's attitude toward the U.S. Government showed no signs of softening. In March, he wrote a letter to President Kennedy requesting immediate armed intervention in Cuba to fight communism. (27) "You are either with or against America," Quesada claimed. (28)

(558) Shortly after, Quesada and his followers joined Paulino Sierra's Junta del Gobierno de Cuba en el Exilio. (29) Quesada became the junta's head of internal affairs. (30)

(559) Several reports reviewed by the committee, however, raise questions about Quesada's motivation in joining the junta. One report indicated Quesada wanted respectability to cover illicit dealings. (31) The report also suggested Quesada was living suspiciously high for someone receiving assistance from the Cuban Refugee Center. (32) Other reports were more critical. One called Quesada unreliable and untrustworthy, describing him as a man who surrounds himself with "thieves, homosexuals and drug addicts." (33)

(560) In early 1964, after the junta had ceased activities, Quesada was expelled from his own group, the MRFP. (34) There were reports that Quesada had been misappropriating funds for his own use. (35)

(561) In assessing Quesada's role in the Junta del Gobierno de Cuba and the effectiveness of the junta itself, Quesada's personal relationship with the anti-Castro organizations may be significant. Several reports reviewed by the committee suggest that "opportunists" made up much of the membership of the junta and contributed to its final demise. (36) Quesada may well fit into that category of individuals who sought funds from the junta but made no effort to recruit followers

or help unify all the anti-Castro groups into the junta. In fact, Quesada may have been less a true leader of a group than one who used his role in the organization for his own ends.

Submitted by:

GAETON J. FONZI
Investigator.
PATRICIA M. ORR
Researcher.

REFERENCES

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- (2) See ref. 1, handbook summary.
- (3) See ref. 1, CIA-Quesada, p. 1.
- (4) Ibid.
- (5) Id. at p. 3 (ref. Jan. 18, 1961, memo).
- (6) See ref. 1, handbook summary.
- (7) Ibid.
- (8) Ibid., see also staff summary of FBI file for Carlos Rodriguez Quesada, p. 5 (ref. 105-107224-16, Mar. 15, 1962, Miami) (hereinafter FBI-Quesada).
- (9) See ref. 1, CIA-Quesada, p. 3 (ref. Jan. 18, 1961, memo).
- (10) Id. at p. 1.
- (11) Ibid.
- (12) Ibid.
- (13) Ibid.
- (14) See ref. 8, FBI-Quesada, p. 7 (ref. 105-107224-16, Mar. 15, 1962, Miami).
- (15) Ibid.
- (15a) Id. at p. 6 (ref. 109-584-3414, Feb. 14, 1963, and 97-4133-60, Apr. 30, 1963).
- (16) Id. at p. 7 (ref. 105-107224-16, Mar. 15, 1962, Miami); see also ref. 1, handbook summary.
- (17) Id. at p. 4 (ref. 105-107224-A., Mar. 19, 1962) and p. 8 (ref. 105-92196-24, Mar. 15, 1962).
- (18) Id. at p. 1 (ref. 109-584-3102, Miami, Mar. 15, 1962).
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- (20) Ibid.
- (21) Id. at p. 4 (ref. 109-584-3183, May 28, 1963, Miami).
- (22) See ref. 1, handbook summary.
- (23) Ibid.
- (24) Ibid.
- (25) See ref. 8, FBI-Quesada, p. 8 (ref. 105-92196-30, Apr. 16, 1962).
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- (27) Id. at p. 7 (ref. 105-92196-70, Apr. 12, 1963).
- (28) Ibid.
- (29) See ref. 1, handbook summary.
- (30) Ibid.
- (31) See ref. 1, CIA-Quesada, p. 1.
- (32) Ibid.
- (33) See ref. 1, handbook summary.
- (34) Ibid.
- (35) See ref. 8, FBI-Quesada, p. 4 (ref. 105-137256-4, Apr. 21, 1964).
- (36) Staff summary of FBI file for Paulino Sierra Martinez, House Select Committee on Assassinations, p. 7, memo, Feb. 28, 1961, re JGCE.

