On September 28, 1960, almost a year after the revolutionary overthrow of Cuban dictator Fulgencio Batista, Cuban Prime Minister Fidel Castro (1901-1973) addressed a crowd of around seventy thousand people in Havana. This speech was a summation of his journey to the United Nations where he famously stayed at the Hotel Theresa in Harlem where he met world leaders such as Nikita Khrushchev of the Soviet Union, Jawaharlal Nehru of India, Gamel Abdel Nasser of Egypt and American artists and activists such as Malcolm X, Langston Hughes and Alan Ginsberg.¹ At this point in time, relations between the United States and Cuba were particularly strained as Cuba became closer to the Eastern Bloc and further from the control of the American government. In his speech in Cuba, Castro denounced US imperialism and applauded colonized nations fighting for independence from their European conquerors. But an hour into his speech, a bomb detonated near the speaker’s stand. The people in the crowd demand the execution of the bomber, shouting “¡Parédon!” or “To the wall with him!”² Terrorist bombings had become a regular occurrence to the Cuban people, and they had made clear what punishment they thought terrorists deserved: the discursive norm in Cuba at that time favored executions of counterrevolutionary terrorists. “We all know who is responsible for that little bomb! Imperialism!” Castro exclaimed, blaming the bombing on US-controlled interests. As the police apprehended the individual thought responsible for the explosion, Castro asked the chief of police if the bomber had been caught. The chief of police nodded yes. Castro continued his speech and one hour later another bomb exploded, illustrating

perfectly the need for tighter security in Cuba, even at the risk of curtailing civil liberties.

Since 1959 terrorist attacks on Cuba have taken 3,478 lives, and injured 2,099 others. Proportionately, this is as if some 95,000 US citizens had been killed by Cuban attacks.\(^3\) In contrast, there has not been a single documented terrorist attack by Cuban citizens against the United States. It should be no surprise that English-language scholarship on Cuban exile terrorism—such as the bombings during Castro's homecoming speech—is limited. Existing academic histories of Cuba have been written in favor of the counterrevolutionary forces working against its government. Noam Chomsky observes that “in respected scholarship, US terrorism against Cuba has been excised from the public record in a display of servility that would impress the most dedicated totalitarian.”\(^4\) The dominant narrative is that the US-led Cuban exile campaign of terror was a reaction to the repressive nature of the revolutionary government when the opposite is true.

The more repressive aspects of Cuban society, the aspects outside observers are quick to criticize, are a response to a violent, sustained campaign of terrorism sponsored by the Central Intelligence Agency and carried out by exiles who fled Cuba for Miami after the Revolution. This essay argues that CIA-sponsored terrorism by Cuban exiles was the causative factor for authoritarianism in Cuba rather than a reaction to it. It analyzes the way exile terrorist attacks shaped political discourse within Cuba and explores the evolution of Luis Posada and Orlando Bosch into some of the most prolific terrorists of the twentieth century.

**Terrors of the Earth**

After the fall of the regime of Fulgencio Batista (1901-1973) on New Year's Day 1959, the new revolutionary government implemented a series of radical and popular reforms, including the very

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popular agrarian reform law in May of 1959, which redistributed .5 million acres of land, much of it American-owned.\(^5\) Following this reform, relations between the US and Cuba deteriorated quickly. This challenged the precedent of American control over the internal and commercial affairs of Cuba since the end of the Spanish American War. This doctrine was a continuation of the policy of the Platt Amendment which dictated the United States would have hegemony over the island of Cuba despite the nominal independence of the latter. In addition, anti-Communist sentiments of the early Cold War painted the situation in Cuba as a struggle against Soviet influence rather than the suppression of a nationalist movement. This discourse was similar to the one that affected CIA actions in Guatemala in 1954.

When the Cuban government began nationalizing American-owned industries, the Eisenhower administration responded by instructed Texaco to stop refining Cuban crude oil. As a response, Cuba began trading sugar for Soviet oil, pushing Cuba closer to the Soviet Bloc. Fearing the creation of a Marxist-Leninist state ninety miles from the Florida Keys, the Central Intelligence Agency under Allen Dulles (1893-1969) began a campaign of sabotage and subversion against Cuba, employing numerous Cuban exiles to carry out the CIA's missions.\(^6\) The CIA equipped and trained Cuban exiles to attack the Cuban mainland and attempted to make life in Cuba so difficult that the government would collapse.\(^7\) Though the militants were given CIA training, resources and funding, they were also allowed autonomy in their operations in order to give the United States government plausible deniability.\(^8\) The CIA was integral in the anti-Cuban terror campaign, and, without the financial, logistical and legal support the Agency provided the exiles, it is unlikely that these terrorists could have survived and thrived as they did.

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\(^6\) Ibid., 40.
The CIA’s support for the Cuban counterrevolutionary exiles is similar to Coalition support for France’s Catholic and Royal Army, or Allied support for the White armies in the Russian Civil War. Much as these counterrevolutionary movements radicalized the French and Russian Revolutions, Cuban counterrevolutionary terrorists made elements of the Cuban government more intransigent and rationalized the policies of hard-liners. During the modern era, reactions to revolution are often more terrible and violent than the revolution which they hope to counteract. Quite often these counterrevolutions create an intractable revolutionary hardcore that demands tighter security and retribution against perceived “enemies of the people.” Some specific examples include the French Reign of Terror under Robespierre or the violent reaction of Leon Trotsky to the left-communist Kronstdadt sailors. Cuba fits into this historical frame very well.

After the failure of the Bay of Pigs, the CIA initiated Operation Mongoose, a program of sabotage focused upon destroying vital Cuban infrastructure such as oil and sugar refineries, power plants and bridges.9 According to President Kennedy, the goal of Operation Mongoose was to unleash the “terrors of the earth” on Cuba and make the Cuban people overthrow Castro out of dissatisfaction with his policies.10 JMWARE, a training base for the Bay of Pigs invasion, became the base for Operation Mongoose and later sabotage campaigns. The CIA coordinated anti-Castro operations from its JMWARE station in Miami starting in 1961, employing around three thousand Cuban exiles to attack nonmilitary targets on the Cuban mainland from its JMWARE station in Miami.11 From 1959 to 1962, the CIA gave the exiles the resources to 291 maritime attacks against the Cuban mainland.12 Even after Operation Mongoose, as a result of the Cuban Missile Crisis, the Kennedy Administration’s “Integrated Program of Action Towards Cuba” continued the use of

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exilio saboteurs at JMwave station to attack Cuban civilians and infrastructure.\textsuperscript{13} These attacks against Cuba continued throughout the Johnson administration.\textsuperscript{14}

Many academics recognize that CIA-sponsored terrorism made Cuba a less free place. For example, Keith Bolender, a freelance Canadian journalist and lecturer at the University of Toronto, argues that CIA-backed attacks on civilians by Cuban exiles militants between 1959 and the 1961 Bay of Pigs invasion were a major factor in the regimentation of Cuban society.\textsuperscript{15} Rather than “liberate” the Cuban people from the tyranny of the 26\textsuperscript{th} of July Movement which overthrew Batista, the exile terrorists necessitated a state monopoly on the press and the creation of a one-party state.\textsuperscript{16}

The Cuban government was quick to restrict political discourse in order to protect the new social order. For example, Law 425 of July 7, 1959 made the distribution of “subversive propaganda” punishable by as much as twenty years in prison, preventing the spread of the counterrevolutionary message while also restricting the arena of political discourse.\textsuperscript{17} Because “subversive propaganda” is a term open to the interpretation of the authorities it is possible that authorities could arbitrarily censor media.

Between 1959 and 1963, other laws expropriated the property of counterrevolutionaries and, most notably, instituted the death penalty for terrorists.\textsuperscript{18} In June of 1959, the Cuban Cabinet ordered that “[p]ersons convicted of counterrevolutionary activities will die before a firing squad under new legislation adopted early this morning by the Cuban Cabinet.” This decision was made after a series of bombings and other terrorist acts in the greater Havana area. Under this decree, civil courts were authorized to sentence terrorists to death. Execution at el paréid was now the legal punishment for

\textsuperscript{13} Douglas, “Being Sufficiently Nasty,” 65.
\textsuperscript{14} Ibid. 72.
\textsuperscript{15} Bolender, Cuba Under Siege, 54.
\textsuperscript{16} Ibid., 54.
\textsuperscript{17} Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Cuba, Criminal Legislation Enacted After 1 January 1959.
\textsuperscript{18} Inter-American Commission on Human Rights, Organization of American States, The Situation of Human Rights In Cuba, Seventh Report, 4 October 1983.
terror in Cuba as many citizens had demanded it to be.  

It is unknown whether this ruling had a deterrent effect on terrorism, but it is quite obvious that it was called for by the citizenry as seen in the cries of the audience at Castro’s homecoming speech.

That the revolutionary government instituted capital punishment for acts of terror and sabotage is indicative of how serious the problem was in the years after the revolution. The evolving punishments for terrorism reveal the changing nature of the Cuban revolution and the socialist project. Over time the social order became stricter and more regimented in reaction to the actions of Miami’s exile terrorists.

After the second explosion during his speech, Castro declared that the government would be creating a network of informants which would later come to be known as the Committees in Defense of the Revolution, or CDRs. Castro stated that the CDRs were organized “so that everybody knows who lives on every block, what they do on every block, what relations they have had with the tyranny, in what activities are they involved, and with whom they meet.”

The Castro government hoped that the CDRs would help mitigate attacks by counterrevolutionary militants, protect the radical gains the Revolution had made and protect the lives of Cuba’s people. The bombs that went off during Castro’s speech is a perfect example of how CIA-sponsored terrorism restricted Cuban political discourse through fear. The CDRs were essentially neighborhood civil defense organizations with the primary goal of solidifying the revolution, preventing counterrevolution and defending against possible invasion by the United States.

The CDRs served a similar function to Jeremy Bentham’s Panopticon which Michel Foucault described in *Discipline and Punish*, his seminal history of the evolution of the prison in the modern

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The main role of the Panopticon was to “induce in the inmate a state of conscious and permanent visibility that assures the automatic functioning of power.” Much as Bentham’s Panopticon facilitated constant surveillance of prisoners, the CDRs observed and documented the movements, associations and opinions of the entire Cuban nation, reporting directly to Cuban intelligence services. The CDRs “raised to the level of counterintelligence the daily gossip (chismes) and disagreements (bretes) that go on at the neighborhood level,” creating an atmosphere of distrust, suspicion and fear of reprisal. While this silenced critics of some of the government’s less popular policies, it also made it difficult for exile terrorists to operate. Considering that the alternative to creating these counterterror

In *En Cada Barrio: Timocracy, Panopticism and the Landscape of Normalized Community*, Daniel H. Ortega argues that public murals that announce the existence of the state-powered Committees for the Defense of the Revolution, institute a type of panopticism, that eventually leads to a community of self-surveillance. Ortega refers to Foucault’s statement on the “automatic functioning of power” and argues that the CDRs serve a similar purpose to Bentham’s prison. By creating a sense of mutual suspicion between neighbors, the Cuban government created an incredibly effective counterterrorist vehicle while simultaneously limiting freedom of speech and association.

While critics of the Cuban government argue that Cuba’s restrictions on freedom of speech, neighborhood spy networks and crackdowns on dissidents were unnecessary, Emilio Comas, a Cuban writer well-versed in the history of *gusano* terrorism, argues that the authoritarian nature of Cuba’s government is necessary to protect the safety of the Cuban people and the gains made during the revolution. “The Cuban government is criticized for many things, civil rights, press restrictions,

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23 Ibid., 201.
treatment of dissidents. But try and imagine a person on the floor and he has a boot on his neck and you ask him to smile.”26 In this metaphor, Cuba is the individual on the floor and the exile militants—backed by the CIA—are the boot on the neck.

Comas continues, insisting that critics of the revolutionary regime “…can not ask the Cuban government to provide full political civil liberties under these conditions of aggression, of all the years of terrorism, with these Cuban-American groups in Miami still. Security of the nation is more important.”27 Mr. Comas argues the same thing that many people do in the aftermath of terror attacks: liberty is a worthwhile sacrifice when the lives of civilians are at stake. By being totally unwilling to stop acts of violence against Cuba, Cuban exiles made criticism of Cuba’s government more difficult by forcing the Cuban government to clamp down on security threats.

It is plain to see that the continued CIA-sponsored terrorist offensive led to several other concrete policy changes. For example, the Social Defense Code was amended once again on January 4, 1961 by Law 923 which listed offences of destruction (estragos) and created severe punishments for CIA-supported terrorists who killed innocent civilians or damaged infrastructure.28 Law 923, along with the other anti-terror laws passed by the Cuban government, all fit into the CIA’s long-term plan for Cuba. A declassified CIA document from May 1961 recognized that the aim of its terrorism was to make the new Cuban government curtail civil liberties with laws such as 425 and 923.29 But while the CIA’s campaign of terror, sabotage and subversion did successfully create a siege mentality in Cuba, it did not accomplish the Agency’s main goal. The CIA wanted to overthrow Fidel Castro’s government and establish a Cuban government that would bow to United States interests.

The Bay of Pigs invasion of April 17, 1961 was a failed CIA attempt to accomplish that objective. The Agency planned to use Cuban exiles to establish a beachhead. The Agency hoped, the

26 Bolender, Voices From the Other Side, 120-121.
27 Ibid.
28 Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Cuba, Criminal Legislation
29 Bolender, Cuba Under Siege, 54.
Cuban people would rise up against Castro’s government, with the exiles forming a new, U.S-friendly government. The *exilios* who participated in the invasion had a vested interest in overthrowing the revolutionary government: prisoners taken after the invasion’s failure “had previously owned in Cuba 914,859 acres of land, 9,666 houses, 70 factories, 5 mines, 2 banks, and 10 sugar mills” according to Michael Parenti, a renowned scholar and cultural critic.

Brigade 2506—the CIA trained and controlled Cuban exile invasion—was decimated: “the 1,400-man Cuban exile force… was crushed by Castro’s far larger military and militia in less than 72 hours.” During the Bay of Pigs, the CDRs were involved in the arrest of hundreds of potential counterrevolutionaries; potential supporters of the invasion were placed under house arrest, preventing an uprising by Castro’s detractors. The failure of the invasion was a major embarrassment for the CIA and the Kennedy Administration but, more importantly, it solidified Castro’s base of support. Many Latin Americans saw Castro’s government as defending the gains of the Revolution from an American invasion, which increased his popularity at home and abroad. It also provided a recruitment pool for CIA operatives later on when terrorism became the primary means of counterrevolutionary resistance. In 1962 the CIA reported to the FBI the existence of 371 counterrevolutionary organizations operating on US soil.

The Bay of Pigs rationalized the creation of an authoritarian police state in Cuba. In a Cold War context, the Bay of Pigs also pushed Castro into the arms of the Soviets, laying the stage for the October Crisis, also known as the Cuban Missile Crisis. These traumatic events legitimized the security measures taken by the revolutionary government. Between the October Crisis and the election of US President Johnson, other counterterror laws were passed in order to stop the

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31 Lamrani, *Superpower Principles*, 70.
32 Bolender, *Cuba Under Siege*, 60.
33 Arboleya, *Cuban Counterrevolution*, 126.
continuing assault of the *gusano* saboteurs. For example, the Cuban government passed Law No. 988 of November 29, 1961, which set penalties for attacks on leaders of the new government, as well as on sabotage and attempting to provoke rebellion.³⁴ This law and other counterterror legislation set the tone for civic life in Cuba for the rest of the Cold War and beyond.

By the spring of 1965, the Johnson administration started to phase out attacks against Cuba in order to dedicate more resources to the developing war in Vietnam.³⁵ Though the Central Intelligence Agency continued to recruit Miami’s exiles to attack Cuba, but it was increasingly seen as a lost cause. In 1968, JMWAVE was decommissioned as a result of this shift in focus.³⁶ But rather than ending the wave of terror, the closing of JMWAVE simply exported the Cold War terrorism of the Cuban exiles to Venezuela, Chile and other Latin American countries.

**War over the Roads of the World (1968-1976)**

It is important not to divorce exile attacks on the island during the 1970s from their broader Cold War context. From 1971 through 1976, Cuba experienced the *quinquenio gris* (Five Grey Years), a period of increased censorship and Stalinization of media, art and culture; this Stalinization was a condition the Soviets placed on increased aid to the Cuban government.³⁷ One must not forget, however, that the Castro government would not have been dependent on that aid were it not for the embargo that economically cut Cuba off from the United States and the rest of Latin America. In addition, the anti-terrorist laws the revolutionary government enacted were in place before and after the *quinquenio gris*. Terrorism against Cuba started before the country became an ally of the Soviets

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³⁴ Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Cuba, *Criminal Legislation*.
³⁵ Ibid., 77.
³⁶ Ibid., 77.
³⁷ José Quiroga, *Cuban Palimpsests* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2005), 16.
and continued after the fall of the USSR, supporting the assertion that terrorism affected Cuban political discourse more than the development of a post-revolutionary social system.

Elsewhere in Latin America, in 1971, Salvador Allende (1908-1973) became the first democratically elected Marxist head of state in the Western Hemisphere, and the Cuban government supported the Chilean socialist experiment both morally and diplomatically. The exile terrorists were keen to fight against this new ally of Cuban communism, fearing that the Allende government would become a democratic socialist model for Latin America. Over a four-month period in 1973, the Cuban Embassy in Santiago de Chile - and the homes of Cuban diplomats there- were bombed a total of six times. On September 11th, 1973, the Allende government was overthrown in a CIA-backed coup. The new Chilean dictator, Augusto Pinochet, welcomed Cuban exile militants like Orlando Bosch who fled to that country after violating his parole. Compounding this was a rash of airline hijackings during the period from 1968-1972.

What defined exile terror after 1968 was its focus on Cuban targets outside of the island instead of on the island itself. The War over the Roads of the World (as the campaign came to be called) was named by Felipe Rivero, a member of Cuba’s pre-Revolution elite and consummate terrorist. There were bombings of Cuban diplomatic missions, airline offices and press service bureaus in Panama, Colombia, Barbados and Trinidad and Tobago and an attempt to kidnap the Cuban consul in Merida, Mexico.

The Cuban government responded to this wave of political violence and airline hijacking by enacting Law 1262 on January 5, 1974. This law established severe punishments for airplane hijacking

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41 Arboleya, Cuban Counterrevolution, 149.
and assassination specifically. But what made Law 1262 especially important was the negative impact it had on civil liberties on the island. In a memorandum on November 9, 1978, Amnesty International criticized the Cuban government for the provisions of Law 1262, especially certain additions to Article 140 of the Social Defense Code. For example, the law punished creation, distribution and possession of propaganda critical of “the socialist order, international solidarity or the Revolutionary state” with up to twelve years of imprisonment. Also, spreading gossip, rumors and false information intended to “cause alarm or discontent among the population…” was punishable with up to four years in jail, and the use of mass media to distribute propaganda through mass media was punishable with up to fifteen years in prison. This particular law is a prime example of how the CIA-sponsored terror war forced the Cuban government to implement invasive anti-terror laws.

Time went on and attacks continued to take their toll on the safety of Cuba’s citizens. As a response, the Communist Party continued to curtail human and civil rights in order to protect what it perceived as the best interests of the Cuban people. Similar draconian laws have been enacted in numerous countries affected by terrorism such as the United Kingdom, France, Israel and the United States, liberal democracies that are quick to criticize Cuba for being authoritarian. This fact undermines the argument that Cuba is particularly deserving of reproach or sanctions for the way it has dealt with terrorism. Cubans could easily criticize the UK for setting up the most closed-circuit television cameras in order to defend against IRA terrorists as tyrannical, but considering the context in which these measures were taken, most in the developed world overlook this security measure. One wonders: why are invasive anti-terrorist security measures acceptable in the West but not in developing nations such as Cuba? A defender of the Cuban social system could easily claim that this is a double standard.

43 Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Cuba, *Criminal Legislation.*  
Even with the increased security measures enacted earlier in the year, 1974 was an active time for the CIA’s exile operatives. In addition to biological and conventional terror within Cuba itself, 1974 saw a terror campaign against Cuba’s assets abroad. There was a string of bombings in Cuban embassies during that year, including one in January in Mexico City, and a February letter bombing in Lima, Peru, that seriously burned a government official; several bombings in Jamaica in March, followed by an explosion that destroyed the Cuban embassy in Madrid. These attacks were followed in May by bombings at the Cuban embassy in London, and the Cuban consulate in Mérida, Mexico. In June of 1974, Orlando Bosch, an individual who had been intimately, involved in terrorism since the revolution, admitted to Venezuelan authorities his personal responsibility for bombing Cuban embassies in Lima, Peru; Ottawa, Canada; Madrid, Spain and Buenos Aires, Argentina. The war against Cuba was becoming more and more deadly year after year, and the Cuban government became increasingly entrenched as the war continued.

Though the CIA had moved its focus away from Cuba in the late 1960s, it never lost its commitment to fighting communist and leftist movements in the Western Hemisphere. Operation Condor, the covert anti-leftist program proposed by numerous South American dictatorships and sponsored by the CIA, was initiated in 1975. By sponsoring death squads in the Southern Cone countries of Chile, Argentina, Paraguay and Uruguay, the CIA hoped to prevent those countries from emulating the Cuban model. So, on June 11, 1976, in the Dominican Republic, Posada and Bosch—along with other exile terrorists—founded the Coordination of United Revolutionary Organizations (CORU). CORU was an amalgamation of different anti-Castro militant groups,
including Acción Cubana, Cuban Nationalist Movement, the Cuban National Liberation Front, the Association of the Veterans of the Bay of Pigs Brigade 2506, and the 17th of April Movement.\footnote{Ibid.}

The terrorist campaign came full circle as the major exile groups joined forces, making the group far more dangerous than Posada, Bosch or their associates alone. Along with more than a dozen acts of terror in 1976, CORU was also implicated in the assassination in Washington, D.C. of Orlando Letelier, the foreign minister of the deposed Allende government.\footnote{Bardach, “Twilight of the Assassins,” 4.} CORU was allied with the National Intelligence Directorate (DINA), Pinochet’s secret police, and DINA made the decision to eliminate Letelier for criticizing the Pinochet dictatorship and poisoning the reputation of the regime. Observers were stunned that the Pinochet regime had the audacity to commit a terrorist attack in the heart of the capitol of the United States, but neither DINA nor CORU was held accountable for the attack.

Even the assassination of a former Allende official in cold blood could not sate CORU’s hunger for retribution against the Latin American left. On October 6, 1976, two bombs ripped through the interior of a McDonnell Douglas DC-8 on its way from Barbados to Jamaica, engulfing it in smoke and fire.\footnote{Bolender, \textit{Voices From The Other Side}, 22-23.} Panic spread through the plane as the pilot and co-pilot desperately attempted to contact flight control and land safely. Despite the best efforts of the crew, the plane quickly descended into the sea in a ball of flame. All 78 on board Cubana Airlines Flight 455 perished; only eight bodies were recovered.\footnote{Ibid.} This was the deadliest airline bombing in the Western Hemisphere to date, at a time when airline bombings were a relatively new and rare phenomenon. Local authorities worked hard to discover the culprits.

Investigators quickly discovered, however, that the attack was not committed by Carlos the Jackal (1949- ) or another terrorist with a high profile in the Western media. Rather, the attack was
planned by Luis Posada Carriles (1928-) and Orlando Bosch (1926-2011), two of the most
dangerous – and least talked about - terrorists of the twentieth century. Posada and Bosch were
Cuban exiles and former CIA agents operating under the aegis of the Coordination of United
Revolutionary Organizations (CORU). The background behind this particularly heinous crime
highlights the dark history behind Cuban exile terrorism.

Both Posada – a medical and chemistry student from Cienfuegos - and Bosch – a pediatric
doctor from Portrerillo- originally supported the revolution against Batista. They quickly broke with
the revolutionary government after Castro’s radical reforms and the execution of former Batista
functionaries. Bosch was a provisional governor for the revolutionary government but, after a falling
out with the regime, involved himself in the failed anti-Castro rebellion in the Escambray
Mountains, known as the War of the Bandits. He relocated to Miami in July of 1960 and began
working for the CIA in. Luis Posada started carrying out terror and sabotage operations in Cuba for
the CIA in 1959 and continued until he was caught and left for Florida in 1961. Periodically, Posada
would retrieve “time-bomb pencils, fuses, detonator cords, and everything necessary for acts of
sabotage” in Miami and return to Cuba to commit acts of terror.

From March 1963 to March 1964, Posada joined the US Army where he was trained in
demolitions as one of the two-hundred-and-twelve Cuban exiles selected for officer candidate
school at Ft. Benning, Georgia. Posada would later use the expertise he learned in the Army in
bombings across Latin America. During 1964, Posada was the leader of a group of Cubans
sponsored by JURE, an exile terrorist group, training them in guerrilla warfare in Central Florida.
His connections with CIA allowed Posada to attack Cuban targets with virtual impunity, and his
attacks were supported by numerous Miami exiles. Luis Posada officially became a CIA agent in
April 1965, and the CIA supplied him with ample funds and explosives in order to destroy Cuban
targets.
Posada left Miami for Caracas in 1967. He joined the Venezuelan intelligence service and became head of the Directorate of Intelligence and Prevention Services (DISIP) – the Venezuelan secret police - two years later while retaining his job as a CIA agent. Under the assumed name Comisario Basilio, Posada ordered the torture of suspected Venezuelan guerrillas and continued to work against Cuba’s interests abroad. Posada continued to prove his ruthlessness to his CIA handlers, and continued to fight the war against perceived Communist threats in Latin America. Posada was dismissed by the Venezuelan government in 1974, and Bosch was freed that year as well. Although it is impossible to summarize the entire history of exile terrorism through the careers of two of its worst, the careers of Bosch & Posada clarify the general trends.

Herman Ricardo and Freddy Lugo, employees at Posada’s Venezuelan private investigation firm Investigaciones Comerciales y Industriales (Business and Industrial Investigations) were instructed to blow up a Cuban airliner. They planted two bombs on Cubana 455 in Trinidad and disembarked in Barbados, sealing the fate of the seventy-three souls on board. After the flight took off from Barbados, the bombs exploded in midair, leading to the frantic last moments of the people on board. Lugo and Ricardo were arrested soon after, and they quickly informed on their bosses. It soon became clear that Bosch and Posada planned the attack from Venezuela, and the pair went on trial in that country. Posada and Bosch were detained and imprisoned after the attack, but Bosch was pardoned and Posada escaped in the mid-1980s.

The actions of CORU were, in many ways, the culmination of the exilio war against Castro’s Cuba. The exile terrorists had failed multiple times to assassinate Castro; they could not get the Cuban people to revolt against their government; nor could they keep the Cuban social system from becoming increasingly entrenched. The creation of CORU was a final push to remove Cuba’s Marxist-Leninist government from power. According to Robert Parry, in the latter half of 1976,

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CORU was behind “17 acts of international terrorism (at least three of which took place in the US).”\(^{54}\) The sheer volume of attacks by CORU was on par with several contemporaneous Palestinian terror groups, but the heavy toll of the Cubana 455 attack made it far deadlier.\(^{55}\) In a way, CORU acted as a Caribbean counterpart to Operation Condor, fighting against leftism in Latin America using the methods most familiar to them. The CIA had foreknowledge of the Cubana 455 attack but did not act to stop its execution.\(^{56}\) This is a perfect example of how the CIA was complicit—if albeit indirectly—in Cuban exile terrorism.

On October 15, 1976, Fidel Castro explained the Cuban account of CORU’s actions. In the speech, Castro implicated Cuban exiles in numerous attacks during that year, asserting that these attacks were launched at the behest of the CIA. He included the death of a fisherman on an attack on two fishing boats, the death of two Cuban citizens in a bombing of the Cuban embassy in Portugal, an attack on the Cuban mission to the United Nations as well as other bombings and assassination attempts.\(^{57}\) “Last July, a group of terrorist counterrevolutionary organizations, all located in the United States …most of them consisting of elements who have worked for the CIA for several years and have been trained by it—met in Costa Rica to create a so-called Command of United Revolutionary Organizations, CORU.” Castro continued to make plain the CIA connection to CORU: “These groups not only operate freely and with impunity within the territory of the United States, but also their principal leaders, through the CORU organization, are closely linked to CIA activities against Cuba.”\(^{58}\)

With the terror seeming to continue without end, many Cubans argue that the Cuban government had little choice but to further restrict freedoms of movement, speech and association.

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\(^{55}\) Ibid.


\(^{58}\) Ibid.
Ramón Torreira of Cuba’s Center for Sociological and Psychological Research, believes that “[t]he Cuban government had to take measures to secure the population under this aggression and terrorism, and Cuba is criticized for some of these policies. But what right does one government have to tell another what to do?” he asks. “…[W]hat right do they have to conduct such aggression, such terrorism, against that country? What should a country do to protect itself and its citizens?”

These rhetorical questions obviate exile arguments that Cuba’s government was inherently oppressive by pointing out the necessity of heightened security.

But even terrorism could not keep the grassroots, revolutionary nature of the Cuban system in check. On February 15, 1976 the Cuban people passed a new constitution in a referendum vote. This new constitution created a distinctly Cuban form of democracy. The 1976 Constitution created an electoral system in Cuba that, while dissimilar to that of liberal democracies, does give its citizens some measure of popular representation. Citizens can register complaints, and suggest changes so long as those suggestions do not threaten the socialist nature of Cuba’s social system. This is also proof that the Cuban government was trying to create some kind of democratic system in Cuba, and suggests that creating a democracy when under the constant threat of terrorism makes creating democracy difficult. The 1976 constitution created the National Assembly of People’s Power, Cuba’s unicameral legislature. Though all of the members had to support the Cuban government’s policies, members of the Assembly would be elected by Cuba’s citizens with a secret ballot. This novel electoral process, while arguably not as democratic as the electoral process in most liberal democracies, was far more democratic than the system that existed in Augusto Pinochet’s Chile or Alfredo Stroessner’s Paraguay in 1976. This suggests that the post-revolutionary system Cuba

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59 Bolender, *Voices From the Other Side*, 210-211.
created was not the main reason for a restricted political discourse; rather, counterterror laws and measures created a climate of fear in which a liberal democracy cannot be created.

Despite some of the shortcomings of the Cuban system, many Cubans are quick to point out its strengths in spite of CIA-sponsored terrorism and decades of economic and military siege. Haymel Espinosa Gómez, daughter of Cubana Airlines co-pilot Miguel, contends that there was a form of democracy in Cuba after the 1976 constitution was adopted. “There is liberty here, democracy, we don't tell lies, our judicial system is fair - not like what has happened to the Cuban Five [a group of Cuban counterterror agents who infiltrated some of Miami's terrorist groups]. There is so much propaganda from the Americans who shout that they want to bring liberty to Cuba. We have liberty here, our liberty. We have a society created by us, it is different but it is ours.”

It is telling that a Cuban citizen - a victim of terror - is so vociferous in her defense of the Cuban system.

Louis A. Perez Jr. explains that “[t]he Cuban version of the history of Cuban-U.S. relations was, of course, wholly incomprehensible to the United States, and therefore easy to dismiss and even easier to attribute to persons who either knew no better or were engaged in possible mischief.” In United States scholarship, there is a tendency to ignore or misinterpret Cuban historical discourse as backwards or even dangerous. It is vital that Estadounidenses - citizens of the United States- understand that Cubans view exile terrorists in the same light that Americans view al-Qaeda or some other terrorist group.

Luis Posada escaped from Venezuelan prison in 1985, and went on to run resupply operations for the Nicaraguan Contras in the 1980s, and bombed a string of Cuban hotels in the

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61 Ibid. 208.
1990s.\(^{63}\) Sadly, most *gusano* terrorists have been shielded from justice by the CIA and many die of old age at home rather than in a prison cell. Moreover, these terrorists look back on their inhuman actions as a great crusade for justice. In a note written to Ann Louise Bardach, a renowned journalist and expert on Cuba, Luis Posada rationalized the pain he inflicted through his terror. He argued that “the absence of freedom of expression, of freedom of movement for a hungry people oppressed and terrorized by communist repression … gives all free Cubans a right to take up arms against the tyrant, using violence or whatever means at our disposal to derail this terrible system and bring freedom to our country.”\(^{64}\) This is the polar opposite of the views held by Cubans on the island. The observations presented in this paper show that, rather make the Cuban people more free, Cuban exile terrorism caused Cuba to be more authoritarian and less liberal.

**All Dissent is Treason**

The ultimate irony—and perhaps the ultimate injustice— in the history of the CIA’s proxy war against Cuba was the Reagan Administration’s placing Cuba on the list of State Sponsors of Terrorism in 1982.\(^{65}\) The Reagan administration accused the Castro government of supporting the Puerto Rican *Macheteros*, Colombia’s ELN and other groups. On May 30, 2013, the State Department announced that it would keep Cuba on the list, despite claims that Cuba is on the list purely for political reasons.\(^{66}\) Being placed on this list makes it difficult for Cuba to loosen the trade embargo because of the additional trade restriction the List imposes. Understanding the history of counterrevolutionary CIA-sponsored terrorism makes the continuation of this policy glaringly absurd.

\(^{63}\) Bardach, “Twilight of the Assassins,” 5-6.

\(^{64}\) Ibid., 2.


Cuba is perhaps the ultimate case study in the result of terrorism. St Ignatius Loyola said that “in a besieged castle, all dissent is treason,” and Cuba was a perfect example of such a castle. Few other countries have endured such a long history of terrorism in the contemporary sense of the word. The execution of counterrevolutionary terrorists, the creation of a massive domestic spying network and the implementation of draconian counterterrorist laws are all examples of terrorism creating a restrictive security culture in Cuba.

The history of exile terrorism is still very relevant in contemporary US-Cuba relations. The laws, security measures and anti-terror policies that the Cuban government enacted as a result of Cuban exile terrorism are pertinent in a post-9/11 world. Instead of the DGI monitoring political dissidents, the United States has Homeland Security and the FBI surveying benign – if controversial – activists. Rather than being surveyed by the neighborhood CDR, Estadounidenses have the National Security Agency to monitor their lives. The discourse on public safety versus civil rights is one that takes place in all nations victimized by terror, and raises the timeless question: how much will we restrict our freedoms in order to be safe? It would be dangerous to ignore the Cuban example in the quest for an answer to that question.