



The Castro Obsession: U.S. Covert Operations Against Cuba, 1959-1965

By Don Bohning



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At the height of the Cold War, the Eisenhower and Kennedy administrations made removing Fidel Castro's regime one of their highest foreign policy priorities. *The Castro Obsession* provides new insight into the bold U.S. covert war against Cuba that lasted from 1959 until 1965. Eisenhower and Kennedy's fervent desire to get rid of Castro led to the failed Bay of Pigs invasion, but the efforts to oust his regime did not end there. It became an obsession. Primarily through the CIA and the military, the United States resorted to economic and political destabilization, propaganda, sabotage, hit-and-run raids, and assassination plots to try to topple the regime. This secret war was one of the most wide-ranging, sustained, expensive, and ultimately futile covert action campaigns in history.

Was this secret war wise, and did it ultimately promote U.S. interests? Don Bohning says no. Even if the details were murky, the extreme American pressure on Cuba was apparent to all, and this heavy-handedness severely damaged the U.S. image in Latin America and much of the Third World. Instead of ridding the hemisphere of a dictator, these efforts increased his international political fame and provided him the excuse for more repression in Cuba. U.S. attempts to overthrow Castro also had dire unintended consequences, such as contributing to the Soviet decision to install nuclear missiles in Cuba, which produced the most dangerous crisis of the Cold War. Bohning sheds new light on this covert war, revealing that it was even more extensive, risky, and long-lived than previously thought.

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Editorial Review

Review

"[*The Castro Obsession*] details covert operations to undermine the Castro regime and presents valuable lessons on the consequences of this tactic."

"A shocking, intriguing exposé."

"Forget everything else you might have read about Cuba and the Kennedys: Mr. Bohning has done the seminal book on the subject, drawing heavily on CIA document. . . ."

"This book represents the capstone on Don Bohning's distinguished career of reporting on Cuba and all of the Caribbean and Latin America. His reportorial and analytical skills--well known to readers of the *Miami Herald*--are in clear evidence within these pages. This book sheds new light on an important chapter in U.S. policy toward Cuba, which dramatically shaped the history of Florida and of America during the Cold War."

"The execution and failure of the U.S.-sponsored invasion of Cuba at the Bay of Pigs, the frequent nuttiness and occasional lethality of CIA plots against the Castro regime, and the endlessly convoluted politics of Cuban-exile Miami in the 1960s come alive in this thorough, vastly informative, and admirably well-written account of the passions and policies that marked U.S. policy toward Cuba from 1959 to 1965."

"*The Castro Obsession* captures, in abundant detail, the complex plotting and intrigue of covert operations against Cuba. Bohning has catalogued the secret side of an amazing history that remains relevant to this day." --Peter Kornbluh, author of *The Bay of Pigs Declassified*

"[An] engaging, disturbing, and important book . . . Given Bohning's well-deserved reputation for balanced and accurate reporting, his judgment conveys a wisdom from which current policymakers could well benefit in many areas."

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"Any in-depth political science library, particularly those with close coverage of Cuba, will want to be sure *The Castro Obsession* is in their collection."

"An excellent and much needed illumination in a single comprehensive volume of all the strange and counterproductive American covert schemes that Castro has survived . . . balanced and nuanced. . . ."

"Well-paced, insightful, and often fascinating."

About the Author

Don Bohning, a former Latin America editor for the *Miami Herald*, has won numerous journalism awards,

including the James Nelson Goodsell Award for outstanding reporting on Latin America and the Caribbean. He lives in Ft. Lauderdale, Florida.

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