

Kennedy Bitter to Last on Bay of Pigs Fiasco

Late President Blamed CIA, Military Aides, Former White House Aide Sorensen Says

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NEW YORK (UPI)—Until the day of his death, President John F. Kennedy never stopped blaming the Central Intelligence Agency and his military advisers for leading him into making the worst mistake of his career—the Bay of Pigs disaster.

While publicly and privately assuming full blame for the tragedy, he was aghast at the enormity of his error and bitter at having been badly misled by his advisers.

Theodore C. Sorensen, the late President's top aide, revealed Mr. Kennedy's personal reaction in an article published Wednesday in Look magazine. The article is the first installment of a series based on Sorensen's forthcoming book "Kennedy" to be published in October.

White House Walk

The full extent of Mr. Kennedy's bitterness was expressed to Sorensen during a walk around the White House several days after the Cuban invaders had been defeated.

"How could I have been so far off base?" Sorensen said Mr. Kennedy remarked. "All my life I've known better than to depend on the experts. How could I have been so stupid to let them go ahead?"

Sorensen said the key to Mr. Kennedy's error lay in the fact that he approved an invasion plan "bearing little resemblance to what he thought he had approved."

"That so great a gap between concept and actuality should exist at so high a level on so dangerous a matter reflected a shocking number of errors in the whole decision-making process, errors that permitted bureaucratic momentum to govern instead of policy leadership," he said.

The former White House aide said that Mr. Kennedy had "grave doubts" about the invasion's success from

the moment he was briefed on the operation as President-elect in Palm Beach in 1960.

As to the CIA plan ultimately presented to Mr. Kennedy for his approval, Sorensen listed "five fundamental gaps" between pre-invasion theorizing and what later proved to be reality.

1—Mr. Kennedy thought he was approving an infiltration of 1,400 Cuban exiles back into their homeland and had been assured that from a publicity standpoint, the landing would be unspectacular. In reality, the whole operation was highly publicized in advance and "deliberately trumpeted" as an invasion.

2—Mr. Kennedy thought he was approving a plan whereby the exiles could take up guerrilla warfare in the mountains if they could not hold a beachhead. In reality, the exiles were told to fall back on the beaches in case of failure because the area was unsuited for guerrilla warfare.

Misunderstanding

3—The President thought he was permitting Cuban exiles to decide for themselves whether they wished to risk their own lives without the promise of any overt American support. In reality, most members of the brigade were under the mistaken impression "apparently from their CIA contacts" that U.S. troops and planes would "directly assist them and prevent their defeat."

4—The President thought he was approving a plan calculated to succeed with the help of the Cuban underground and mass military desertions. In reality, Fidel Castro's popularity, police state measures and army proved far stronger than the operation's planners had claimed.

5—The President thought he was approving a plan rushed into execution on

grounds that Castro soon would acquire the military capability to defeat it. In reality, Castro already had that capability. END