

Excerpts From Speech on Coverage of Bay

NYT-6/2/66
 Following are excerpts from an address delivered yesterday by Clifton Daniel, managing editor of The New York Times, before the World Press Institute in St. Paul—an address that adds information about events preceding the Bay of Pigs to what has been presented before by Arthur M. Schlesinger Jr. and other observers:

of Pigs Buildup

This morning I am going to tell you a story—one that has never been told before—the inside story of The New York Times and the Bay of Pigs, something of a mystery story.

In its issue of Nov. 19, 1960, The Nation published an editorial under the heading, "Are We Training Cuban Guerrillas?"

I had never seen this editorial and had never heard it mentioned until a reader of The New York Times sent in a letter to the editor. He asked whether the allegations in the editorial were true, and, if so, why hadn't they been reported by The New York Times, whose resources for gathering information were much greater than those of a little magazine like The Nation.

The Nation said:

"Fidel Castro may have a sounder basis for his expressed fears of a U.S.-financed 'Guatemala-type' invasion than most of us realize. On a recent visit to Guatemala, Dr. Ronald Hilton, Director of the Institute of Hispanic-American Studies at Stanford University, was told:

"1. The United States Central Intelligence Agency has acquired a large tract of land, at an outlay in excess of \$1-million, which is stoutly fenced and heavily guarded. . . . It is 'common knowledge' in Guatemala that the tract is being used as a training ground for Cuban counter-revolutionaries, who are preparing for an eventual landing in Cuba. . . . United States personnel and equipment are being used at the base. . . .

"2. Substantially all of the above was reported by a well-known Guatemalan journalist . . . in La Hora, a Guatemalan newspaper

"3. More recently, the President of Guatemala, forced to take cognizance of the persistent reports concerning the base, went on TV and admitted its existence, but refused to discuss its purpose or any other facts about it.

" . . . We believe the reports merit publication: they can, and should, be checked immediately by all U. S. news media with correspondents in Guatemala."

Off to Guatemala

With that last paragraph, The New York Times readily agreed. Paul Kennedy, our correspondent in Central America, was soon on his way

to Guatemala.

He reported that intensive daily air training was taking place there on a partly hidden airfield. In the mountains, commando-like forces were being drilled in guerrilla warfare tactics by foreign personnel, mostly from the United States.

Guatemalan authorities insisted that the training operation was designed to meet an assault from Cuba. Opponents of the government said the preparations were for an offensive against the Cuban regime of Premier Fidel Castro. Mr. Kennedy actually penetrated two miles into the training area.

His article was published in The New York Times on Jan. 10, 1961.

The Nation also printed another article in its issue of Jan. 7, 1961, by Don Dwigins, aviation editor of The Los Angeles Mirror.

And now Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr. takes up the story in "A Thousand Days," his account of John F. Kennedy's years in the White House.

"On March 31," Mr. Schlesinger says, "Howard Handelman of U.S. News and World Report, returning from 10 days in Florida, said to me that the exiles were telling everyone that they would receive United States recognition as soon as they landed in Cuba, to be followed by the overt provision of arms and supplies.

"A few days later Gilbert Harrison of the New Republic sent over the galleys of a pseudonymous piece called 'Our Men in Miami,' asking whether there was any reason why it should not be published. It was a careful, accurate and devastating account of C.I.A. activities among the refugees, written, I learned later, by Karl Meyer. Obviously its publication in a responsible magazine would cause trouble, but could the Government properly ask an editor to suppress the truth? Defeated by the moral issue, I handed the article to the President, who

instantly read it and expressed the hope that it could be stopped. Harrison accepted the suggestion and without questions — a patriotic act which left me oddly uncomfortable.

"About the same time Tad Szulc filed a story to The New York Times from Miami describing the recruitment drive and reporting that a landing on Cuba was imminent. Turner Catledge, the managing editor, called James Reston, who was in his weekend retreat in Virginia, to ask his advice. Reston counseled against publication: either the story would alert Castro, in which case The Times would be responsible for casualties on the beach, or else the expedition would be canceled, in which case The Times would be responsible for grave interference with national policy. This was another patriotic act; but in retrospect I have wondered whether, if the press had behaved irresponsibly, it would not have spared the country a disaster."

Article Was Not Suppressed

As recently as last November, Mr. Schlesinger was still telling the same story. In an appearance on "Meet the

Press," he was asked about the article in The New York Times in which he was quoted as saying that he had lied to The Times in April, 1961, about the nature and size of the landing in the Bay of Pigs.

Mr. Schlesinger replied that a few days before he misinformed The Times, the newspaper had suppressed a story by Tad Szulc from Miami, giving a fairly accurate account of the invasion plans.

"If," he said "I was reprehensible in misleading The Times by repeating the official cover story, The Times conceivably was just as reprehensible in misleading the American people by suppressing the Tad Szulc story from Miami. I, at least, had the excuse that I was working for the Government."

"I prefer to think," he said, "that both The Times and I were actuated by the same motives: that is, a sense, mistaken or not, that [it] was in the national interest to do so."

Mr. Schlesinger was mistaken, both in his book and in his appearance on "Meet the Press." The Times did not suppress the Tad Szulc article. We printed it, and here it is, on Page 1 of the issue of Friday, April 7, 1961.

What actually happened is, at this date, somewhat difficult to say.

None of those who took part in the incident described in Mr. Schlesinger's book kept records of what was said and done. That is unfortunate, and it should teach us a lesson. The Bay of Pigs was not only important in the history of United States relations with Latin America, the Soviet Union and world Communism; it was also important in the history of relations between the American press and the United States Government.

We owe a debt to history. We should try to reconstruct the event, and that is what I am attempting to do today.

Late in March and early in April, 1961, we were hearing rumors that the anti-Castro



United Press International

TRAINING FOR BAY OF PIGS: Anti-Castro Cuban exiles as they took part in maneuvers in unidentified Caribbean country a few days before invasion of Cuba in April, 1961. Papers faced difficult decisions on reporting these activities at the time.

forces were organizing for an invasion. For example, the editor of The Miami Herald, Don Shoemaker, told me at lunch in New York one day, "They're drilling on the beaches all over southern Florida."

Tad Szulc, a veteran correspondent in Latin America with a well-deserved reputation for sniffing out plots and revolutions, came upon the Miami story quite accidentally.

He was being transferred from Rio de Janeiro to Washington and happened to stop in Miami to visit friends on his way north. He quickly discovered that an invasion force was indeed forming and that it was very largely financed and directed by the C.I.A. He asked for permission to come to New York to discuss the situation and was promptly assigned to cover the story.

His first article from Miami—the one I have just shown to you—began as follows:

"For nearly nine months Cuban exile military forces dedicated to the overthrow of Premier Fidel Castro have been in training in the United States as well as in Central America.

"An army of 5,000 to 6,000 men constitutes the external

fighting arm of the anti-Castro Revolutionary Council, which was formed in the United States last month. Its purpose is the liberation of Cuba from what it describes as the Communist rule of the Castro regime."

His article, which was more than two columns long and very detailed, was scheduled to appear in the paper of Friday, April 7, 1961. It was dummed for Page 1 under a four-column head, leading the paper.

While the front-page dummy was being drawn up by the assistant managing editor, the news editor and the assistant news editor, Orvik Dryfoos, then the publisher of The New York Times, came down from the 14th floor to the office of Turner Catledge, the managing editor.

He was gravely troubled by the security implications of Szulc's story. He could envision failure for the invasion, and he could see The New York Times being blamed for a bloody fiasco.

He and the managing editor solicited the advice of Scotty Reston, who was then the Washington correspondent of The New York Times and is now an associate

editor.

Recollections Conflict

At this point, the record becomes unclear. Mr. Reston distinctly recalls that Mr. Catledge's telephone call came on a Sunday and that he was spending the weekend at his retreat in the Virginia mountains, as described by Arthur Schlesinger. As there was no telephone in his cabin, Mr. Reston had to return the call from a gas station in Marshall, Va. Mr. Catledge and others recall, with equal certainty, that the incident took place on Thursday and that Mr. Reston was reached in his office in Washington.

Whichever was the case, the managing editor told Mr. Reston about the Szulc dispatch, which said that a landing on Cuba was imminent.

Mr. Reston was asked what should be done with the dispatch.

"I told them not to run it," Mr. Reston says.

He did not advise against printing information about the forces gathering in Florida; that was already well known. He merely cautioned against printing any dispatch that would pinpoint the time of the landing.

Others agree that Szulc's dispatch did contain some phrasing to the effect that an invasion was imminent, and those words were eliminated.

Tad Szulc's own recollection, cabled to me from Madrid the other day, is that "in several instances the stories were considerably toned down, including the elimination of statements about the 'imminence' of an invasion.

Specifically," Mr. Szulc said, "a decision was made in New York not to mention the C.I.A.'s part in the invasion preparations, not to use the

date of the invasion, and, on April 15, not to give away in detail the fact that the first air strike on Cuba was carried out from Guatemala."

After the dummy for the front page of The Times for Friday, April 7, 1961, was changed, Ted Bernstein, who was the assistant managing editor on night duty at The Times, and Lew Jordan, the news editor, sat in Mr. Bernstein's office fretting about it. They believed a colossal mistake was being made, and together they went into Mr. Catledge's office to appeal for reconsideration.

Mr. Catledge recalls that Mr. Jordan's face was dead white, and he was quivering with emotion. He and Mr. Bernstein told the managing editor that never before had the front-page play in The New York Times been changed for reasons of policy. They said they would like to hear from the publisher himself the reasons for the change.

Angry at Intervention

Lew Jordan later recalled that Mr. Catledge was "flaming mad" at this intervention. However, he turned around in his big swivel chair, picked up the telephone, and asked Mr. Dryfoos to come downstairs. By the time he arrived, Mr.

Bernstein had gone to dinner, but Mr. Dryfoos spent 10 minutes patiently explaining to Mr. Jordan his reasons for wanting the story played down.

His reasons were those of national security, national interest and, above all, concern for the safety of the men who were preparing to offer their lives on the beaches of Cuba. He repeated the explanation in somewhat greater length to Mr. Bernstein the next day.

I describe the mood and behavior of the publisher and editors of The New York Times only to show how seriously and with what intensity of emotion they made their fateful decisions.

Mr. Bernstein and Mr. Jordan now say, five years later, that the change in play, not eliminating the reference to the imminence of the invasion, was the important thing done that night.

"It was important because a multi-column head in this paper means so much," Mr. Jordan told me the other day.

Mr. Reston, however, felt that the basic issue was the elimination of the statement that an invasion was imminent.

Ironically, although that fact was eliminated from our own dispatch, virtually the same information was printed in a shirttail on Tad Szulc's report. That was a report from the Columbia

Broadcasting System. It said that plans for the invasion of Cuba were in their final stages. Ships and planes were carrying invasion units from Florida to their staging bases in preparation for the assault.

When the invasion actually took place 10 days later, the American Society of Newspaper Editors happened to be in session in Washington, and President Kennedy addressed the society. He devoted his speech entirely to the Cuban crisis. He said nothing at that time about press disclosures of invasion plans.

Appeal by President

However, a week later in New York, appearing before the Bureau of Advertising of the American Newspaper Publishers Association, the President asked members of the newspaper profession "to re-examine their own responsibilities."

He suggested that the circumstances of the cold war required newspapermen to show some of the same restraint they would exercise in a shooting war.

He went on to say, "Every newspaper now asks itself with respect to every story, 'Is it news?' All I suggest is that you add the question: 'Is it in the interest of national security?'"

If the press should recommend voluntary measures to prevent the publication of material endangering the national security in peacetime, the President said, "the Government would cooperate wholeheartedly."

Turner Catledge, who was the retiring president of the A.S.N.E., Felix McKnight of The Dallas Times-Herald; the

incoming president, and Lee Hills, executive editor of the Knight newspapers, took the President's statement as an invitation to talk.

Within two weeks, a delegation of editors, publishers and news agency executives was at the White House. They told President Kennedy they saw no need at that time for machinery to help prevent the disclosure of vital security information. They agreed that there should be another meeting in a few months. However, no further meeting was ever held.

That day in the White House, President Kennedy ran down a list of what he called premature disclosures of security information. His examples were mainly drawn from The New York Times.

He mentioned, for example, Paul Kennedy's story about the training of anti-Castro forces in Guatemala. Mr. Catledge pointed out that this information had been published in La Hora in Guatemala and

in The Nation in this country before it was ever published in The New York Times.

"But it was not news until it appeared in The Times," the President replied.

While he scolded The New York Times, the President said in an aside to Mr. Catledge, "If you had printed more about the operation you would have saved us from a colossal mistake."

'Sorry You Didn't Tell It'

More than a year later, President Kennedy was still talking the same way. In a conversation with Orvil Dryfoos in the White House on Sept. 13, 1962, he said, "I wish you had run everything on Cuba. . . . I am just sorry you didn't tell it at the time."

Those words were echoed by Arthur Schlesinger when he wrote, "I have wondered whether, if the press had behaved irresponsibly, it would not have spared the country a disaster."

They are still echoing down the corridors of history. Just the other day in Washington, Senator Russell of Georgia confessed that, although he was chairman of the Senate Armed Forces Committee, he didn't know the timing of the Bay of Pigs operation.

"I only wish I had been consulted," he said in a speech to the Senate, "because I would have strongly advised against this kind of operation if I had been."

It is not so easy, it seems, even for Presidents, their most intimate advisers and distinguished United States Senators to know always what is really in the national interest. One is tempted to say that sometimes—sometimes—even a mere newspa-

perman knows better.

My own view is that the Bay of Pigs operation might well have been canceled and the country would have been saved enormous embarrassment if The New York Times and other newspapers had been more diligent in the performance of their duty—their duty to keep the public informed on matters vitally affecting our national honor and prestige, not to mention our national security.

Perhaps, as Mr. Reston believes, it was too late to stop the operation by the time we printed Tad Szulc's story on April 7.

"If I had it to do over, I would do exactly what we did at the time," Mr. Reston says. "It is ridiculous to think that publishing the fact that the invasion was imminent would have avoided this disaster. I am quite sure the operation would have gone forward."

"The thing had been cranked up too far. The C.I.A. would have had to disarm the anti-Castro forces physically. Jack Kennedy was in no mood to do anything like that."

Prelude to Graver Crisis

The Bay of Pigs, as it turned out, was the prelude to an even graver crisis—the Cuban missile crisis of 1962.

In Arthur Schlesinger's opinion, failure in 1961 contributed to success in 1962. President Kennedy had learned from experience, and once again The New York Times was involved.

On May 28, 1963, the President sat at his desk in the White House and with his own hand wrote a letter to Mrs. Orvil Dryfoos, whose husband had just died at the age of 50. The letter was on White House stationery, and the President used both sides of the paper.

The existence of this letter has never been mentioned publicly before. I have the permission of Mr. Dryfoos's widow, now Mrs. Andrew Heiskell, to read it to you today:

Dear Marian:

I want you to know how sorry I was to hear the sad

news of Orvil's untimely death.

"I had known him for a number of years and two experiences I had with him in the last two years gave me a clear insight into his unusual qualities of mind and heart. One involved a matter of national security—the other his decision to refrain from printing on October 21st the news, which only the man for The Times possessed, on the presence of Russian missiles in Cuba, upon my informing him that we needed twenty-four hours more to complete our preparations.

"This decision of his made far more effective our later actions and thereby contributed greatly to our national safety.

"All this means very little now, but I did want you to know that a good many people some distance away, had the same regard for Orvil's character as did those who knew him best.

"I know what a blow this is to you, and I hope you will accept Jackie's and my deepest sympathy.

"Sincerely, John F. Kennedy."

In the Cuban missile crisis, things were handled somewhat differently than in the previous year. The President telephoned directly to the publisher of The New York Times.

He had virtually been invited to do so in their conversation in the White House barely a month before.

That conversation had been on the subject of security leaks in the press and how to prevent them, and Mr. Dryfoos had told the President that what was needed was prior information and prior consultation. He said that, when there was danger of security information getting into print, the thing to do was to call in the publishers and explain matters to them.

In the missile crisis, President Kennedy did exactly that.

Ten minutes before I was due on this platform this morning, Mr. Reston telephoned me from Washington to give me further details of what happened that day.

A Call From Kennedy

"The President called me," Mr. Reston said. "He understood that I had been talking to Mac Bundy and he knew from the line of questioning that we knew the critical fact—that Russian missiles had indeed been emplaced in Cuba.

"The President told me," Mr. Reston continued, "that he was going on television on Monday evening to report to the American people. He said that if we published the news about the missiles Khrushchev could actually give him an ul-

timatum before he went on the air. Those were Kennedy's exact words.

"I told him I understood," Mr. Reston said this morning, "but I also told him I could not do anything about it. And this is an important thought that you should convey to those young reporters in your audience.

"I told the President I would report to my office in New York and if my advice were asked I would recommend that we not public. It was not my duty to decide. My job was the same as that of an ambassador—to report to my superiors.

"I recommended to the President that he call New York. He did so." That was the sequence of events as Mr. Reston recalled them this morning. The President telephoned the publisher of The New York Times; Mr. Dryfoos in turn put the issue up to Mr. Reston and his staff.

And the news that the Soviet Union had atomic missiles in Cuba only 90 miles from the coast of Florida was withheld until the Government announced it.

What conclusion do I reach from all these facts? What moral do I draw from the story?

My conclusion is this: information is essential to people who propose to govern themselves. It is the responsibility of serious journalists to supply that information, whether in this country or in the countries from which our foreign colleagues come.

Still, the primary responsibility for safeguarding our national interest must rest always with our Government, as it did with President Kennedy in the two Cuban crises.

Up until the time we are actually at war or on the verge of war, it is not only permissible—it is our duty as journalists and citizens to be constantly questioning our leaders and our policy, and to be constantly informing the people, who are the masters of us all—both the press and the politicians.