

When I saw the entire cover of Civilization, the magazine of the Library of Congress, devoted to saying, "Wayward Spy," with a picture under it of him and then the legend beside it, "How Richard Bissell, the golden boy of the CIA, pushed the U.S. into the Bay of Pigs," I was surprised.

But after reading the story I was less surprised.

The story, really from the coming book by the Newsweek Washington bureau chief, Evan Thomas, is from his coming book, The Very Best Men, blames it all on Bissell. In this it exculpates the institution. Except to the degree it did not control Bissell, and that is not really spelled out.

Those in or retired from the CIA who spoke to Thomas for this book of course had to have had CIA approval.

Thomas wonders how they could have been so crazy, "they" the word of the widow of ~~Richard~~ Bissell's top assistant, Tracy Barnes.

Thomas makes passing mention of a few believing the Bay of Pigs could not succeed. But he does not add it to the craziness to understand that it was not Bissell alone and that the failure that was certain was intended to give JFK no choice but to invade Cuba. Nor does he report that the far-right of the CIA, E. Howard Hunt, was in charge of the political end and was to have written Cuba's new constitution. (Until he quit the project because the mildly liberal refugees were forced to collaborate with those of the right. He could not abide that.)

Anyone knowing nothing else and reading this would believe that the Francis Gary Powers U-2 flight that ended detente between Eisenhower and Khrushchev and that scheduled conference at Paris to carry it forward would believe that it was Bissell alone who was responsible for it. That, too, was institutional, and Allen Dulles left little doubt about that in his Senate Foreign Relations Committee testimony, which I have. It was his decision and he said it was so urgent, long after the fact, because the weather was about to change and they so urgently needed ^{the} weather observations the plane would make! That was urgent enough to do what would certainly end the rapprochement between Ike and Khrushchev, which was inevitable without that plane being brought ^{down?} ~~down~~.

The idea may have been Thomas's but the effect is another exculpation of the CIA for the CIA's mistakes, including controlling national policy and writing it other than as president's formulated it.