

'What a Tangled Web'

By Henry J. Taylor



ON May 20 New York harbor saw a touch of color added to the Statue of Liberty. Until snatched down, the red, blue and white flag of Cuba fluttered from it.

Anti-Castro Cuban refugee Pedro San Juan, 26, had put the flag there. May 20 was Cuba's Independence Day.

"We owed our independence to the United States," explained young San Juan. "I wanted that relationship, and my country, remembered."

It is fashionable to forget Cuba today. But history will not forget it.

The long-range evaluation of President Kennedy's stewardship of the United States will start with the Bay of Pigs and end with the fact that Cuba remains a Soviet bastion fringed with fire to this very day.

Posthumous memorials will not influence the long-range evaluation. Behind President Kennedy's sheen and the horror of his distardly assassination, history will always mark him as the man who began the Retreat of the West.

This is exactly what President Johnson is trying to reverse in Viet Nam.

It is especially ironic and unconscionable that Sen. Robert F. Kennedy should so zestfully and unfairly add to Mr. Johnson's problems there in order to advance himself.

"Oh, what a tangled web we weave, when first we practice to deceive," said Sir Walter Scott.

After the Cuban debacle allowed our ancient Monroe Doctrine to be shattered, our Army was sent to Viet Nam. President Kennedy, not Presidents Truman, Eisenhower or Johnson, ordered our commitment there.

Robert Kennedy's propaganda machine tries to make us forget that when the Kennedy Administration took office there were only 750 American military men in South Viet Nam serving only as advisers.

A glamorous trip abroad was contrived as a distraction from the Bay of Pigs — literally overnight, and contrary to all Mr. Kennedy's previous declarations about staying home. The headlines would be on everything except Cuba. Mrs. Kennedy would accompany the President.)

Editorials thruout our country commented that, with U.S. prestige driven so low by the Cuban fiasco, this was obviously the wrong moment for Mr. Kennedy to meet Khrushchev. All was sure to grow worse as a result, and it did.

Here, James Reston of the New York Times should be quoted again and again: "A few minutes after this meeting President Kennedy told me that apparently Khrushchev had decided that anybody stupid enough to get involved in that situation (the Bay of Pigs) was immature, and anybody who didn't see it thru was timid and, therefore, could be bullied."

Mr. Reston says President Kennedy then put 12,000 American soldiers into Viet Nam as an offset to Khrushchev's estimate of him, altho he was amply warned that he was creating an unlimited commitment and was violating all his pronouncements about not allowing the United States to get into an Asian land war.

The Kennedy war commitment, made at the wrong place to recoup after the Bay of Pigs, is the commitment President Johnson inherited.

The blame goes to President Johnson. It would have gone to President Bobby Kennedy had he lived. Remember this the next time you hear Bobby Kennedy speak about Viet Nam.)