

## News Unfit to Print?

The New York Times may now hold the record for the world's longest historical footnote. In a speech last week before the World Press Institute in St. Paul, Minn., Times managing editor Clifton Daniel told the inside story of how the paper agonized over its coverage of the events leading to the Bay of Pigs invasion of Cuba in 1961. For the introspection, Times executive editor Turner Catledge turned over nearly a full page to a 700-word story and 4,000-word text of Daniel's "white paper."

In his speech, the 53-year-old Daniel politely reprimanded historian Arthur M. Schlesinger Jr. for accusing the Times of suppressing a pre-invasion story—both in his Kennedy biography, "A



JFK, Catledge: 'Colossal mistake'

Thousand Days," and on "Meet the Press." In fact, the Times did not suppress the story. Written by Tad Szulc, the paper's veteran Latin American correspondent, it ran on April 7, 1961, and reported that from 5,000 to 6,000 anti-Castro Cuban exiles had been training in the U.S. and Central America for nine months. But the story was played down and censored. According to Daniel, it was originally scheduled to lead the paper with a four-column head on page one. Worried about the wisdom of running such sensitive copy, the late Orvil Dryfoos, then publisher, came to Catledge's office on the evening of April 6. Dryfoos, says Daniel, "was gravely troubled by the security implications of Szulc's story. He could envision failure of the invasion, and he could see The New York Times being blamed for a bloody fiasco."

A telephone call went out to James

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Reston. The columnist, then the paper's Washington bureau chief, strongly advised that the story be toned down by eliminating any reference to the imminence of the invasion. The deletion was ordered and the story ran on page one under a one-column headline. But the huddling and signal changing was thereupon negated, at least in part. As Daniel points out, a shirttail on the Szulc dispatch reported CBS had broadcast the fact that the invasion plan was "in its final stages." Catledge, who was managing editor at the time (Daniel was one of his assistants), maintained last week that the shirttail was not the result of inconsistent editing. He explained that the reference to the invasion being imminent was deleted from Szulc's story not primarily for security reasons but because no one was quite sure just when it would take place. On the other hand, Catledge said he felt he should report the CBS item because the broadcast was news, accurate or not.

**CIA:** Actually, as Daniel states in his speech, a story about a possible anti-Castro invasion had already appeared in another U.S. publication. On November 19, 1960, *The Nation* reported that the CIA was training exiles in Guatemala. But, according to Daniel, President Kennedy argued "it was not news until it appeared in *The New York Times*."

Despite Daniel's protracted clarification, Schlesinger stands by his book. Reached at a conference on Latin America in Peru last week, the former Kennedy aide told *NEWSWEEK* that the story the Times suppressed was not the April 7 dispatch from Szulc that Daniel dealt with in his speech, but a subsequent story Szulc filed closer to the eve of the April 17 invasion. Catledge said last week that at no time did the paper spike any of Szulc's pre-invasion stories.

Whatever the particular chronology, the debate between the Times and Schlesinger seems largely a tempest in an inkpot. But Daniel's description of the paper's self-imposed censorship is another matter. It demonstrates anew how difficult it is during a crisis to determine what is in the national interest—printing all the news or withholding some of it. There is evidence that Kennedy later wished that the Times had run the Szulc story in full. Shortly after the disastrous invasion, Catledge visited the White House. According to Daniel, Kennedy told him: "If you had printed more about the invasion you would have saved us from a colossal mistake."