

# Who's to Blame for

# Cuba?

Reviewed by Henry Raymond

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**THE CUBAN INVASION.** By Tad Szulc and Karl E. Meyer. Praeger. 156 pp. \$3.95, hardbound. Ballantine Books. 50 cents, paperbound.

"IN A TRAGEDY, nothing is in doubt and everyone's destiny is known. That makes for tranquility. There is a sort of fellow feeling among characters in a tragedy; he who kills is as innocent as he who gets killed; it's all a matter of what part you are playing. Tragedy is restful; and the reason is that hope, that foul, deceitful thing, has no part in it. There isn't any hope. You're trapped. The whole sky has fallen on you, and all you can do about it is to shout."

Jean Anouilh's definition of tragedy could well be applied to the admirable study by Tad Szulc and Karl E. Meyer of one of the darkest chapters of modern United States history. There is the shout so vital to the healthy functioning of a democratic society.

The ill-conceived landing by a band of 1500 Cubans in the Bay of Pigs on April 17, 1961, was not merely a military blunder by a young and inexperienced Administration. Nor was it the product only of intelligence mistakes by a handful of arrogant and opinionated CIA operatives in Miami.

ONE OF THE facts demonstrated in this fair and authoritative book is that the conception of the invasion was largely a by-product of the pathetic inability by the Eisenhower Administration to understand the psychology and motivations of Latin American revolutionaries. Nothing is more revealing of its archaic mentality than the account of a State Department official using his first contact with Castro's representative in Washington to request the return of the Batista Ambassador's dog! Szulc and Meyer offer more

than a conscientious chronicle of the developments that led to the disastrous Cuban adventure. They also write as citizens of a democracy who are outraged by an action that placed the United States "in the distressing position of breaking the same treaties that Dr. Castro had been exhorted to respect and which raised grave questions about compromising the in-

stitutions on which a free society rests."

Castro apologists, on the other hand, will find the book no more comforting than advocates of the "tough" policy.

THE AUTHORS, who both have a thorough, first-hand knowledge of the Cuban revolution, make it sound quite plausible that social and economic change could have been achieved peacefully and democratically "if the leaders in Havana had not been determined to confirm their darkest suspicion about Yan-

kee imperialism by inviting the very retaliation they professed to dread."

The big question remains whether Washington needed to have accepted the Communist bait. To Szulc and Meyer the senseless United States action — like the passion-driven Cuban behavior — was as inevitable as a classical Greek tragedy "in which the myriad actors seem fated to perform their assigned roles, although they know the drama is bound to end in calamity."

One wonders if the emphasis on "a conspiracy of circumstances" is warranted in the light of the book's own narrative of appalling diplomatic blunders, political misjudgments and short-sighted decisions.

WHO CAN TELL how history would have been written had President Kennedy relied on the wisdom of such principled men as Sen. J. W. Fulbright and Chester Bowles who urged a reliance on diplomacy more in keeping

with the traditions of a great Nation?

The final judgment undoubtedly will have to wait for some years, until more facts are available and our own Government can take a more dispassionate view of the Cuban crisis. Meanwhile, we can be thankful that two distinguished and busy writers have taken time off to provide us with some lucid insights that go far in dispelling the clouds of confusion kicked up on April 17, 1961.