

The Raids

Raids of the sort which an exile group made on the Cuban coast early Wednesday serve almost every purpose and need for the Castro regime and none for the United States or for the cause of a free Cuba. These raids may please single-minded swashbucklers, rhetoricians of the right and others at home with illusion. The fact is, however, that if Fidel Castro had been allowed to design an event to bolster his rule at home, draw foreign sympathy, justify the Soviet presence and embarrass the United States, he might well have chosen this bit of pinprick pantomime.

His regime has badly needed a boost. This year's sugar crop is expected to be unusually poor, with consequent drains on foreign earnings, the standard of living and morale. At the same time the Soviet Union has refused to shoot down the American reconnaissance planes which crisscross his land, and has also apparently refused to give him the assurances he requires in order to shoot down the planes himself. To divert attention from his country's economic difficulties and political humiliations, Castro needed an "aggressive" act by his pet devil, the United States. For a pittance in damage to property and pride, he got it in the exile raid.

We have no information that allows us to challenge the State Department's denial of "any" American involvement. But it would be foolish not to concede that a great many people are going to take that denial with a grain of salt. The exile group which claimed the raid, and trumpeted it at a press conference in Miami, is widely credited with CIA ties. The few glimpses of that agency which the public has been given does not make it entirely clear whether it informs the State Department, or the White House, of its affairs.

The United States should take measures to prevent any exile group from using its soil, its ships, its funds or its sponsorship, openly or secretly, to launch military attacks on Cuba. The overflights, as we have said before, should continue; their purpose is defensive. But raids, however small and ineffective, are offensive. The raiders doubtless are brave men, all of them patriots and many of them democrats. But they should not be allowed to act for the United States, and to the extent that Washington can separate itself from their wayward heroics, it must do so.