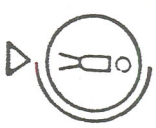


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THE CUBAN INVASION

The Chronicle of a Disaster

by KARL E. MEYER and TAD SZULC



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BOOKS THAT MATTER

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It is the tragedy of a world where man must walk by sight that the discovery of the reconciling formula is always left to future generations, in which passion has cooled into curiosity, and the agonies of peoples have become the exercise in the schools. The devil who builds bridges does not span such chasms till much that is precious to mankind has vanished down them forever.

—R. H. TAWNEY



PROLOGUE

A few minutes before three o'clock on the morning of Monday, April 17, 1961, a landing craft filled with silent men in jungle camouflage uniforms nosed into the sand of Playa Girón; just east of the entrance to the Bay of Pigs on the swampy coast of southern Cuba. About thirty minutes later, other landing craft touched land at Playa Larga, a tree-bordered beach at the apex of the Bay. Within minutes, the dry crackling of M-1 rifles and the staccato fire of Thompson submachine guns echoed along the dark beaches, punctuated now and then by the thud of bazooka rockets hitting the high ground.

The air waves of the Caribbean came alive with weird, exciting words about the rising red moon and the running fish. At hidden strips in Nicaragua and Guatemala, B-26 bombers and C-54 transport planes revved up their engines, ready to take off with their load of bombs and paratroopers. And when daylight broke over the Cuban shores, a full-scale miniature invasion, materializing from phantom bases, was underway.

For the next 72 hectic, incredible hours, Operation Pluto—the attack on Fidel Castro's fortress by a band of brave but totally unprepared Cuban exiles—ran its inexorable course toward defeat. When it was over, the incident on the Bay of Pigs earned its place in the annals of modern history as one of the great fiascos in military leadership, intelligence gathering, and psychological preparation and execution.

Invasions had failed before, but seldom had a great power like the United States allowed itself to be caught in so embarrassing a predicament as in the attack on Cuba, mounted, financed and executed by the Central Intelligence Agency. The military implications of the disaster were obvious: an operation bearing the stamp of approval of the Joint Chiefs of Staff of the world's most powerful nation was destroyed in less than three days by half-trained, part-time militia

troops of a disorganized, revolutionary state led by a bearded guerrilla leader who had somehow taught his men to use with devastating effect the most modern Czech and Soviet weapons.

But the political repercussions were even more humiliating. As the invasion approached its tragic denouement, the United States buried itself deeper into the white lies, contradictions and deceptions stemming from its own confusion and uncertainty. There was the poignant spectacle of Adlai E. Stevenson, the respected Ambassador to the United Nations, telling the world forum that the planes that had bombed Castro's airfields—and missed their targets—were defecting Cuban aircraft, when it was painfully evident that they had come from the United States-built Guatemalan bases. There were the words of Secretary of State Dean Rusk declaring on the morning of the landing that it was a purely Cuban undertaking.

And, as perhaps the strangest counterpoint to the drama that was unfolding in the Cuban marshes, there was the stunned bewilderment of the Cuban Revolutionary Council—the men in whose name the invasion was being carried out—as they learned from a portable radio in a shack at the abandoned airfield of Opa-Locka in Florida where they were being held in friendly custody that their troops had gone ashore.

The backdrop was in accord with the rest of the phantasmagoric operation. A New York press agent was handing out war communiqués, drafted in the style of a great army's headquarters, that were telephoned to him by an exiled Cuban judge, who in turn was receiving them from the CIA. His assistants were signing up news correspondents for the trip to the beachhead that was to start any minute, but they never left the lobbies of Miami hotels. In a private house in Georgetown, ten minutes away from the White House, a small dinner celebration was underway—until the news from the elusive front, relayed by walkie-talkies from the bloody and swampy beach to a United States destroyer laying offshore, turned the party into a mournful wake.

No melodramatic and tragicomic touch was missing in the hours that Operation Pluto lived its short life as the strangest tragedy of errors in which the United States was ever involved.

When it was all over and only the tears, the anger and the recrimination were left, the great question arose of how such a debacle could have occurred.

How indeed did events move in the 27 months of the

Cuban revolution to a point where the United States resolved to stake its prestige on a thoughtless, madcap operation against an island republic that in its more than half century of nominal independence had been little more than an exotic appendage to the State of Florida?

CHAPTER ONE



THE SEARCH FOR A DEVIL

The history of the Cuban revolution has an air of inevitability about it in the grand manner of classical tragedy, in which the myriad actors seem fated to perform their assigned roles although they know the drama is bound to end in calamity.

Finding the plot is no simple matter. Among Fidel Castro's incontrovertible gifts is the ability to cloud his course in confusion, like a squid emitting ink as it retreats to the deep. He performed a superb job on his own people, and as the melancholy events of April 17, 1961, testify, the meaning of his movement clearly mystified the Central Intelligence Agency. Hence it is a formidable task to unravel the knots that compose the web of Cuban-American relations 1959-1961.

Some threads lead nowhere, and belong to the fabric of deception that Dr. Castro, or some of his cohorts, wove carefully from the day the rebels set foot in the Sierra Maestra. Others constitute myths that ought to be pulled from the knot.

The first myth, favored by those who see all history as a murky conspiracy, is that the Cuban revolution was plotted in the Kremlin and subsequently abetted by shadowy subversives on the sixth floor of the State Department. But the record suggests that what happened in Cuba was as much a surprise to Moscow as to Washington—notwithstanding Dr. Castro's confession that he had long ago become a Marxist-Leninist. If any conspiracy existed, it was a conspiracy of circumstance that pitted a large, affluent nation led by complacent men who had forgotten the meaning of a revolution against a proud, small country led by gifted and intolerantly zealous men.

A second myth, propounded by Castro's well-wishers in

Latin America and the United States, is that drastic social changes in Cuba were impossible without scuttling democratic methods and provoking the implacable hostility of the United States. Retrospect suggests that Cuba could have pursued its revolutionary goals in a democratic fashion with at least the passive acquiescence of Washington—which was anxious to come to terms with a revolution it hardly understood—if the leaders in Havana had not been determined to confirm their darkest suspicions about Yankee imperialism by inviting the very retaliation they professed to dread. Doubtless the United States was clumsy, but there should not be excessive masochism about American ineptitude; for reasons of pure revolutionary dynamics—aside from communism—the Castro regime could not flourish without anti-Americanism.

All this leads to the final and special myth about the invasion itself. Some contend that the only thing wrong with the venture was that it was poorly done. If there had only been an air cover by United States planes, one argument runs, the invasion would have succeeded. It is our contention that the invasion was not only wrongly executed but wrongly conceived.

It was based on a grievous misreading of the Cuban revolution and an ignorance of the internal forces at work on the island. It put the United States in the distressing position of breaking the same treaties that Dr. Castro had been exhorted to respect, and it raised grave questions about compromising the institutions on which a free society rests. It did all this without shedding needed light on the very real dilemma of how to counteract the "wars of national liberation" that Mr. Khrushchev has vowed to support. This dilemma did not end with the April invasion and it may be posed again as internal discontent on Dr. Castro's captive island rises once more.

These are some of the myths. In trying to unsnarl the knot, a more promising lead lies in the thread of inevitability that runs through the entire unhappy history. From the beginning, the specter of impending tragedy was apparent; it was bound to materialize when impatient and frustrated men felt impelled to turn a sword on the Gordian knot.

II

The seed of tragedy began to germinate in Havana almost from the day that Fidel Castro plummeted into the

capital after his triumphant march across the island in January 1959 proclaiming that the defeat of the Batista dictatorship marked the beginning, and not the end, of Cuba's great revolution. In a deeper sense, to be sure, the seed had been planted when the United States ejected the Spaniards from Cuba at the turn of the century and then allowed the island to become a nominally sovereign republic, politically controlled from Washington and economically directed from New York's banks and big sugar houses.

For 57 years, since her independence was established in 1902, Cuba had functioned for all practical purposes as a dependent territory of the United States. Her political life, a grotesque chain of dictatorships and venal administration interrupted by short-lived attempts at revolutionary democracy, was manipulated by the State Department and the American Embassy in Havana. Huge tracts of her sugar land were owned by United States companies and, as Castro remarked in his famous speech in 1953 addressed to a Batista tribunal, the land owned by two sugar companies linked the northern and southern coasts of Oriente Province. Such industry as existed in Cuba was made up of subsidiaries of mainland corporations; the hotels and casinos were owned by American syndicates, often deeply infiltrated by gamblers and gangsters.

The relationship was scarcely healthy, and it was not surprising that Cuba's entire history was punctuated by fierce tides of anti-American sentiment. Still, it is important to note that this anti-American animus did not extend to the masses of Cubans, even in the subsequent hate-infected days when the Castro government had selected the United States for its chief target of invective and derision.

Gay, emotional and mercurial, the Cubans had by and large developed a comfortable rapport with Americans. In it, tolerance of American ways was mixed with some envy and a tendency toward imitation of the mainland mannerisms.

As a result, Havana—the country's showplace—turned into a lovely but weird caricature of a stateside pleasure town. Set against the natural beauty of the Caribbean and with its charming old Spanish streets and castles, the capital acquired the worst characteristics of Floridian, Californian and Nevardian garishness. Multicolor neon signs flickered at night, inviting the tourists to partake of pleasures in the small back rooms of "Joe's" or "Harry's," where nervous fun girls were paid at the atmosphere of rumshaws and chas-chas has fought a losing battle with the tourists and the tourists' parents.

financially in varying degrees, catered to the American tourists and Cuban millionaires whose fortunes stemmed from sugar land and generous graft. In the suburbs, the elegant homes of American permanent residents and members of the Cuban ruling class were reminiscent of the best of the Gold Coast of Florida.

It was colonial life at its feudal, opulent and amusing best. The mainland was just one hour away, and Cuba's aristocracy commuted to the stateside metropolises to do business, to rest, to shop and to plot revolutions against the "ins" of the day.

The tinsel facade was supported by the labor of *guajirros* on the sugar plantations and of the city workers, thus spreading to the whole smiling island the utter distortion that a corrupt colonial life can cause. It is true that Cuba's living standards, measured by the Latin American yardstick, were fairly high. But it is also true that life in Cuba, taken as a whole, presented the image of a country seen in the distorting mirror of an amusement park—or through the wrong end of a telescope set up in the United States. The country was like a composite of West Germany and Egypt, affluence and harsh feudal poverty side by side. This very discrepancy helps to explain the accumulated tension that exploded into violent revolution.

Rebellion first arose in Cuba among politically conscious students and young professionals. The revolution against the Machado dictatorship in 1933 was a movement against political oppression as well as against graft—and the exaggerated American influence. A new generation fought against the same excesses after Batista's second *coup d'état* in 1952. And Fidel Castro and his leftist friends saw in all these ills the inspiration of a Cuba purified by revolution.

Despite all this, the Cuban masses were passive enough to turn out in hundreds of thousands to cheer Batista, even though students died in futile attacks on the Presidential Palace and army barracks. The sentiment against the United States was strong among young reformers, who saw American influence as the root of evil, but in the nation at large there was none of that sullen anti-Americanism that is found elsewhere in the world.

III

Yet, as Castro stepped upon the Cuban stage, there existed the tremendous potential of Cuban resentment against the United States government, a latent hostility that was ag-

gravated during the two years of the rebellion against Batista by the Eisenhower Administration's frank attitude of sympathy for the entrenched dictatorship. The bearded fighters of the Sierra Maestra took as their theme the charge that American-made bombs sold to Batista and dropped by Batista fliers trained by United States military missions had killed civilians in the cities as well as rebel soldiers.

Therefore, Castro faced an immediate fundamental decision. Should he allow this natural resentment to run its course by ignoring it—as was done in the South American countries where military dictatorships favored by Washington were overthrown? Or should he feed, exploit and build up popular passions by making anti-Americanism a basic theme of his regime? Either choice was possible from a political viewpoint in those first, joyous, exhilarating days of the Castro triumph. There was no popular clamor against the United States, and the "Maximum Leader" was under little pressure to turn his guns on the Americans. Adored as he was by millions of Cubans, Castro had no need to practise demagogic anti-Americanism in order to win greater support.

To some degree, the United States had learned a lesson from the antidictatorial revolutions of the preceding years. There was talk about a warm *abrazo* for democrats and a cool handshake for dictators, and the United States was fairly bursting with anxiety to show its friendship for this latest revolution. On January 8, when hardly a week had elapsed, Washington granted diplomatic recognition to the new regime and the State Department hurried to assure it of America's "sincere good will."

There was, then, some basis for a new relationship between Cuba and the United States. But from the beginning it seems evident that Castro was determined that it was not to be so; the kind of revolution he evidently had in mind required an enemy image, uniting Cubans under a patriotic banner of resistance to a predatory foreign foe. The pattern is familiar. Other great revolutions needed foreign enemies to consolidate power at home and maintain dynamism. The French revolutionary armies marched into Italy and Germany for reasons more powerful than the need to dispose of scheming *émigrés*. The Soviet Union invaded Poland in 1920 for reasons that went beyond her anxiety to protect herself from the White Russian forces that attacked her at Vladivostok on the Sea of Japan. Communism (China has been displaying her revolutionary dynamism and aggression since 1949) has not only been a powerful force in the world since 1917, but also a powerful force in the world since 1917.

mild a new nation as India felt impelled to reach out for Goa.

Fidel Castro could not very well invade the United States; instead he chose it as his political target and soon engaged in invasion attempts against four Caribbean and Central American countries, a prelude to the subsequent and more sophisticated efforts to "export" his revolution. Here, the parallel is closer to Colonel Nasser of Egypt, and there is ample reason to think that Castro saw himself as a comparable rallying symbol for an entire region.

Even when he was in the mountains, Castro saw the importance of his rebellion, not in national, but in hemisphere terms. Isolated as he was, his thinking was never insular; he viewed his movement as marking a turning-point for Latin America because it would demonstrate that a popular revolt could win fighting "neither with the army nor without the army—but *against* the army, contrary to all previous Latin American experience," as he told one of the authors at the time. "Condemn me! It doesn't matter!" Fidel cried at his 1953 trial for leading an attack against a Batista army barracks, "History will absolve me!" This familiar shout of defiance suggests that from the outset Castro saw himself as the chosen instrument of history and welded the personal pronoun to the cause he led.

Castro could hardly have realized his vaulting ambition as a junior partner to Washington; the elevation of his name required that he speak for the hemisphere in the role of avenging adversary. And the world, too, would pay attention if a David so close to Goliath let loose with a sling.

Before long, Castro began to rationalize his policy by arguing that the capitalistic United States, so influenced by business lobbies, would never stand still and accept a social revolution in what had for nearly six decades been a private American preserve. But the argument runs aground when it is recalled that Castro launched his anti-Yankee campaign, subtly at first, and then more and more openly and blatantly, months before the Agrarian Reform law went into effect, providing the United States with a conceivable reason for wanting to destroy his revolution.

This campaign was insinuatingly begun on January 13 in a speech Castro delivered before the Havana Rotary Club, in which he pointedly reminded his audience that Cuba had always been governed by foreigners and that the United States had forced the notorious Platt Amendment on Cuba as a license to intervene if "we do not behave."

"Cuba," he went on to say, "was not free because when

a foreigner arrogates for himself the right of intervening in the affairs of a country, that country is not free."

All this was palpably true; the Platt Amendment, abrogated in 1934, permitted the United States to intervene in Cuba and was one of the less glorious pages in American relations with weaker Latin American neighbors. But the timing and context of Castro's speech was significant, coming as it did in the opening days of the revolution at the very moment when the United States was casting about for ways of embracing the Cuban revolution with belated tenderness. On January 13, therefore, the first link was forged in the chain of events that was to culminate in the debacle at the Bay of Pigs.

Part of the explanation may perhaps be found in Castro's admission that he was a Marxist-Leninist—a euphemism for Communist—for some time in the past. If so, then his hostility to the United States was ideologically motivated and his policies, unrolling gradually, were an impressively adroit performance designed to introduce communism in Cuba under the guise of defending the revolution from the island's giant neighbor, using the theme that to be anticommunist is to be antirevolutionary. This would have made the course of events until 1961 wholly inevitable, because the United States was bound to react against the establishment of a Communist state closely allied to the Soviet bloc ninety miles from Key West.

An incident that suggested the direction the Cuban revolution was taking occurred in Havana during March 1959, and involved Costa Rica's former President, José "Pepe" Figueres, the man who had dispatched the first airplane load of weapons to Castro in the Sierra Maestra. On its face, it seemed at the time like one of those hot-headed, nationalistic outbursts for which the Cuban revolutionaries were making themselves famous. But the follow-up was highly significant.

Figueres had come to Havana and found himself in the midst of a speech-making affair with Castro. When his turn at the microphone came, Figueres said, in the context of a general discussion of the position of Latin America in the world, that in case of a war the hemisphere, and Cuba, should stand with the United States and the Western alliance. The microphone was yanked away by David Salvador, the president of the Cuban Labor Federation, who roared to the crowd that Cuba under the circumstances should own the American arms as a war. The shouting Figueres heard up to

Castro, as if hoping for a denial, but the "Maximum Leader" averted his eyes and failed to intervene.

The incident was a slap in the face for Figueres—an act of rudeness aimed at a man who had been one of the principal early supporters of the war against Batista. Yet, it would have been overlooked if Castro had not ten days later chosen to launch a personal attack on Figueres, calling him a "false friend" and a misguided revolutionary.

With this attack, we can see in retrospect, Castro drew the line between his movement and the democratic revolutionary tradition in Latin America. Other revolutionary movements in the hemisphere had an element of anti-Americanism, but this was related to a general opposition to dictators. The enemy for other revolutionaries was the dictator; for Castro, it became the United States.

As Theodore Draper has pointed out, Castro promised one kind of revolution and delivered another. Perhaps the reason was that the Cuban revolution was bound up in the personality of its champion, whose need for self-dramatization required something exceptionally daring and provocative. In addition, Marxist stereotypes played their part in shaping Castro's attitude toward the capitalist power of the north. The point that is significant is that Castro disguised these tendencies and seemed to speak in the accents of the general democratic movement in the hemisphere when he first came out of the mountains.

Curiously, it took a long time and repeated attacks by Castro on the democratic revolutionary tradition before much of Latin America—and even the liberal sector in the United States—slowly accepted the fact that the Cuban revolution was taking a highly dubious direction in its surge forward. Venezuela's President Rómulo Betancourt was one of the first to lose his illusions about Castro: As early as August 1959, he told friends privately that Castro was emerging as an evil problem in Latin America. Colombia's President Alberto Lleras Camargo was equally perturbed and prescient.

Yet, many Latin American democrats resisted these conclusions even after Castro, sounding like an angry Adolf Hitler, denounced both Betancourt and Lleras in that gutter language of revolutionary propaganda that became so common over Cuban air waves.

Taken all together, the actions of Fidel Castro in the first months of the revolution, seen in perspective and as explained by the Premier himself in his confession that he had disguised the radicalism of his movement in its early

days, had part of the foundation for the whole unavoidable process of deterioration of Cuban-American relations, leading to the drama of the April invasion and doubtless to new dramatic chapters.

Yet this is not the whole story. While Castro himself had laid to rest the argument energetically advanced by many of his early sympathizers that the United States through its fumbling pushed Cuba into communism, the fact does remain that Washington's inability to understand the mechanics of revolution and the subtlety of Castro's policies played right into his hands. The United States abetted Castro's capture of his people and contributed vastly to the tragic cycle of events.

IV

During the first year of the revolution, the Castro regime operated on two levels. The first level, the visible part of the revolutionary iceberg, was the program of social reform hectically and enthusiastically advanced by a regime that initially included moderates who saw no real conflict between what they were setting in motion and a friendly relationship with the United States.

The second level was the quiet but nonetheless efficient process of transferring the levers of real power to a small group of communists and their ebullient bearded allies. The very existence of the hidden level of operation was indignantly denied by Castro and his companions and skeptically regarded by liberal opinion in the United States. Castro frequently denied that he was a communist and even expressed concern that communists might take over his movement. His "26th of July Movement" printed millions of stickers in English and Spanish proclaiming that "We Are Humanists and Not Communists." The procommunists in Castro's entourage made the denials for obvious tactical reasons. His moderate supporters denied it because they believed it or wanted to believe it. Years of extravagant and patently spurious charges of "communism" by Batista propagandists gave a ring of plausibility to the assertion that to every right-wing military dictator all foes are automatically "communist." Castro benefited by the scattershot defamation tactics of the Batista clique—whose members now, ironically, claim that they were "right" on asserting that only communists opposed Fulgencio Batista.

The fall of the moderates came late in November 1959, as the denouement of a power struggle that began in July.

when Castro dismissed President Manuel Urrutia Lleó and replaced him with Osvaldo Dorticós Torrado, an unknown provincial lawyer who, as it turned out later, was one of the most skillful members of the Cuban communist apparatus.

It is a moot point whether the moderates ever had a chance of carrying the day and keeping an obviously hesitant Fidel Castro under a modicum of their influence. Recalling those days in a speech in December 1961, Castro remarked that it was "convenient" at the time to have "conservatives" in his government. But it can be argued that these men—who, in fact, were far from being "conservative" in the accepted sense of the word—could have been more than just a convenience for Castro, if they had been given a chance.

And, as we shall see, there is a great body of evidence to suggest that private and public attitudes of the United States deprived them of this chance, undercut their position and virtually handed the victory to the extremists.

This, too, seemed inevitable, because the United States government and much American public opinion, including segments of the press, had not fully perceived the depth of the Cuban revolution. They insisted on treating it in their mind and through their actions, as just another Latin American political convulsion, although Castro almost every night was telling his own nation and the United States that this was a different revolution from anything yet seen in the Western Hemisphere. "We are," he said, "a small country making a big revolution."

Though the official pronouncements from Washington played intellectual lip service to the social aspects of the Cuban revolution, Cubans—radicals and moderates alike—were convinced that the United States simply had not understood what was happening under its nose despite its big embassy, its extensive intelligence network and its immense press so fascinated by Cuban events.

Premier Castro had convinced himself from the very beginning that the United States understood just enough of his revolution to be determined to smash it. This belief fitted perfectly into his early decision to portray Cuba as a victim of American imperialism and to use this impression as a lever to mobilize Cuban sentiment against the United States and then to carry his country to the extreme left. The United States obliged him fervently and blindly at a time when the communists were still far from complete control and the moderates still had at least a fighting chance.

The first point about the Cuban revolution in its early

years and the period that the United States seemed to have missed altogether was that it was a transporting emotional experience. It was the release of pent-up feelings of frustration, it was an overwhelming welling up of pride, it was a dizzying sense of participation in building a new nation and a new epoch. It was zeal, dedication, excitement. And it was a raw-nerve feeling of sensitivity about the whole undertaking. "What do you think of *our* revolution?" was the first question that met American visitors.

The American response, more often than not, was dry, legalistic and phlegmatic. To be sure, much good will existed in the first weeks and even months of the revolution. Six United States companies in Havana advanced to the Castro regime \$1,500,000 in future taxes to help the "Maximum Leader" stabilize the stricken economy. American managers of sugar mills and plantations who had seen their workers grow from childhood and then helped them hide from the Batista forces, were still seen as friends instead of the imperialist monsters of subsequent times.

But, as will be recounted in the next chapter, this good will was largely wiped away by the shocked and sanctimonious American reaction to the wave of mass executions of "war criminals" that Cubans regarded as substantially just, even though scarcely measuring up to the procedural standards of Anglo-Saxon law.

V

Then there was the problem of the exiles. On January 19, Castro appealed to the United States to "return war criminals and the money they stole," in reference to the hundreds of Batista officials who had fled to Florida with suitcases full of pesos. The United States ignored the appeal. This suited Castro and played into the hands of those who were engaged in making the United States appear as the hypocritical enemy of the beloved revolution.

Presumably, the United States could not deport the Batista refugees to Cuba to face certain death—and Castro assuredly knew this. But the United States could and should have prevented the exiles from plotting against the revolutionary regime, smuggling weapons into Cuba and sending light planes to throw incendiary bombs on the sugar fields.

On March 7, Castro charged that the enemies of the revolution were buying up arms in Miami, and on March 24 he warned that "reactionary Americans" were planning an invasion. Whether or not his charges were justified, the

fact is that a Batista organization known as the "White Rose" began functioning in Miami. Such activities could hardly have served the best interests of the United States and it is astonishing that American authorities were unable or unwilling to prevent them. This policy, or lack of a policy, made little sense at a moment when Philip W. Bonsal, the new United States Ambassador chosen for his reputation as a liberal, was telling Cubans in Havana of Washington's sympathy for the revolution.

A charitable explanation is that one arm of the United States Government did not know what the other arm was doing, a bureaucratic phenomenon that was repeated with more fateful results on April 17, 1961. But it was incomprehensible to the Cubans; Castro and his companions exultantly pointed to this evidence of United States duplicity.

On July 1, Major Pedro Luis Diaz Lanz, chief of the Cuban air force, turned up in Florida after he had fled the island by boat some days before. Ten days later he was delivered by the Immigration and Naturalization Service, a division of the Justice Department, to the Senate Internal Security Subcommittee, where he testified that communists were taking over Cuba.

The news of his appearance shocked Cubans in Havana as well as the State Department and Central Intelligence Agency. Although some of Major Diaz Lanz's accusations turned out to be true, the circumstances of his appearance played right into Castro's hand. The Premier charged immediately that the United States had intervened in Cuban affairs and he would not accept the explanation that the Executive Branch had nothing to do with it. The occasion provoked Castro's first violently anti-American speech.

The entire Diaz Lanz affair dealt a devastating blow to the moderates in the revolutionary regime who opposed the now visible communist infiltration and advocated closer ties with the United States. As one former moderate-minded minister put it, "This shut us up." Thus the United States became actively engaged in the suicidal process of undercutting its friends within the Cuban government.

An immediate result of the incident was the removal of President Urrutia by Castro in a wild speech before a battery of television cameras. Urrutia's sin had been to couple his denunciation of Diaz Lanz as a traitor with an attack on communism, and his punishment at Castro's hands was an extraordinary feat of character assassination.

By then, the over-all American reaction to the social revolution had already begun to weaken the moderates and

weakened the extremists by handling the latter factors the way that nothing favorable could be expected from the United States.

The land-reform law had been promulgated in May. The United States reaction was to express the hope that prompt and effective compensation would be paid to the American owners of expropriated land. It was, to be sure, the proper juridical attitude, but it failed to take account of the psychological transformation of Cuba.

Cuba is basically an agricultural country. The notion of distributing lands to the peasants and in theory making them smallholders had enormous appeal and the program rapidly became the most popular measure of the revolutionary regime. It should not have come as a surprise to the United States because Castro had mentioned agrarian reform at length in his 1953 defense speech—his famous "History Will Absolve Me" exhortation—and talked about it intermittently in the Sierra Maestra.* After he took office in Havana, he repeatedly spoke of the need for land reform. Yet Washington reacted as if the agrarian reform had dropped from the sky, and it responded with a prissy legalism that chilled its best friends in Havana.

This inability to understand the revolution remained the counterpoint to the entire history of Washington's relations with Castro's Cuba. Cubans are warm and emotional; the land reform had caught their imagination. Hotel elevators, operators greeted callers with the slogan, "The Land Reform Is Moving," and Carlos Puebla, the popular composer and singer made up a song about it that thousands sang and whistled.

But to Washington, the reform was a question of the payment of compensation, although it was perfectly clear that Cuba was in no position to do more than promise twenty-year land bonds. That Castro never bothered even to print the bonds is beside the point; the United States did not have to give him the pretext for ridiculing its response to the law.

Throughout, the Eisenhower Administration seemed to

*Specifically, in that speech Castro described the second revolutionary law as granting the untransferable title of property "to all the tenants (*colonos*), subtenants, leasees . . . who occupied lots of five or less *caballerias* [a *cab* is 33 acres], with the state indemnifying its former owners on the basis of the rent they would have derived from the land in a ten-year average." The fourth revolutionary law would have given a share of sugar revenues to all tenants.