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ADVANCE FOR 5 P.M. EST (760)

(ADVANCE) NEW YORK, JULY 18 (AP)-THE LATE PRESIDENT JOHN F. KENNEDY WAS SKEPTICAL ABOUT THE ADVISABILITY OF THE 1961 CUBAN INVASION RIGHT UP TO THE MOMENT HE GAVE THE FINAL GO-AHEAD, HISTORIAN AND FORMER PRESIDENTIAL ADVISOR ARTHUR M. SCHLESINGER JR. SAID TODAY.

THE REPORT, THE SECOND IN A SERIES IN LIFE MAGAZINE, IS FROM SCHLESINGER'S FORTHCOMING BOOK, "A THOUSAND DAYS: JOHN F. KENNEDY IN THE WHITE HOUSE."

KENNEDY FIRST HEARD ABOUT THE CUBAN INVASION PLANS FROM CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY DIRECTOR ALLEN DULLES 12 DAYS AFTER THE PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION, SCHLESINGER SAID.

AT THAT TIME, THE PLAN ALREADY WAS FAR ADVANCED AND KENNEDY GAVE DIRECTIONS FOR IT TO PROCEED, WITH THE UNDERSTANDING THAT HIS INTEREST DID NOT MEAN COMMITMENT TO THE OPERATION.

"HE THEN AUTHORIZED THE CIA TO CONTINUE ON THE ASSUMPTION THAT THE INVASION WOULD OCCUR," SCHLESINGER WROTE, "BUT HE...ADDED, CAREFULLY AND CATEGORICALLY, THAT THE EXPEDITION MUST BE LAID ON IN A WAY WHICH WOULD MAKE IT POSSIBLE FOR HIM TO CALL IT OFF AS LATE AS 24 HOURS BEFORE D-DAY."

SCHLESINGER SAID THAT ON MARCH 28, 1961, HE ASKED KENNEDY WHAT HE THOUGHT OF THE INVASION. "I THINK ABOUT IT AS LITTLE AS POSSIBLE," HE SAID THE PRESIDENT REPLIED.

THE HISTORIAN ADDED, "IN HIS JUDGMENT, THE CRITICAL POINT--THE WEAK PART OF THE CASE FOR GOING AHEAD--LAY IN THE THEORY THAT THE LANDINGS WOULD TOUCH OFF A MASS INSURRECTION AGAINST THE REGIME (OF CUBAN PREMIER FIDEL CASTRO). THE PRESIDENT, IT SEEMED TO ME, WAS GROWING STEADILY MORE SKEPTICAL AS HIS HARD QUESTIONING EXPOSED ONE PROBLEM AFTER ANOTHER IN THE PLANS."

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BUT SCHLESINGER SAID THE INITIAL GO-AHEAD SET IN MOTION DIPLOMATIC AND MILITARY MACHINERY KENNEDY LATER FOUND IT IMPOSSIBLE TO FULLY CONTROL.

SCHLESINGER WROTE THAT FEDERAL SECRECY SURROUNDING THE INVASION KEPT SOME GOVERNMENT EXPERTS FROM GIVING SOUND ADVICE ON THE ILL-FATED PROJECT TO KENNEDY.

SCHLESINGER NOTED THAT, IN THE WEEKS THAT FOLLOWED THE BRIEFING, THE GOVERNMENT "FLOATED AS IN A VOID."

"NEITHER THE OUTGOING NOR THE INCOMING ADMINISTRATIONS WANTED TO MAKE FUNDAMENTAL DECISIONS," THE HISTORIAN ADDED, "AND MOST MATTERS CONTINUED TO MOVE ALONG EXISTING TRACKS."

DULLES, SCHLESINGER SAID, WAS NOT ABLE TO PROVIDE THE PRESIDENT-ELECT WITH ANY GOOD, ANALYTIC ADVICE BECAUSE HE WAS SO PERSONALLY INVOLVED IN THE PLAN.

AND, HE INDICATED, SOME WHO MIGHT HAVE GIVEN SOUND ADVICE -- SUCH AS ROBERT AMORY JR., DEPUTY DIRECTOR OF THE CIA FOR INTELLIGENCE -- WERE NOT INFORMED OF THE OPERATION.

"THE NEED-TO-KNOW STANDARD, I.E., THAT NO ONE SHOULD BE TOLD ABOUT THE PROJECT UNLESS IT BECAME OPERATIONALLY NECESSARY, HAD THE IDIOTIC EFFECT OF EXCLUDING MUCH OF THE EXPERTISE OF GOVERNMENT AT A TIME WHEN EVERY ALERT NEWSPAPERMAN KNEW SOMETHING WAS AFOOT," SCHLESINGER WROTE.

HE ALSO SAID THAT KENNEDY WAS NEVER SHOWN A MEMORANDUM STRONGLY OPPOSING THE PLAN WRITTEN BY CHESTER BOWLES, THEN UNDERSECRETARY OF STATE.

SCHLESINGER SAID KENNEDY WAS FORCED TO RELY ON ADVISORS WITH WHOM HE WAS NOT FAMILIAR, PARTICULARLY THE "ENTRENCHED" MILITARY AND INTELLIGENCE PERSONNEL WHO WERE UNANIMOUS IN THEIR APPROVAL OF THE PROPOSED BAY OF PIGS AMPHIBIOUS ATTACK PLAN.

"DULLES AND RICHARD M. BISSELL JR., ALSO OF THE CIA, ACCEPTED PROGRESSIVE MODIFICATIONS (IN THE PLAN) SO LONG AS THE EXPEDITION IN SOME FORM REMAINED; PERHAPS THEY UNCONSCIOUSLY SUPPOSED THAT ONCE THE OPERATION BEGAN TO UNFOLD, IT WOULD NOT BE PERMITTED TO FAIL," SCHLESINGER SAID.

"NOTHING HAD BEEN MORE DEPRESSING...THAN TO WATCH A COLLECTION OF OFFICIALS PREPARE TO SACRIFICE THE WORLD'S GROWING FAITH IN THE NEW AMERICAN PRESIDENT IN ORDER TO DEFEND INTERESTS AND PURSUE OBJECTIVES OF THEIR OWN."

SCHLESINGER REPORTED KENNEDY AS REMARKING, "IF SOMEONE COMES IN TO TELL ME THEIR OR THAT ABOUT THE MINIMUM WAGE BILL, I HAVE NO HESITATION IN OVERRULING THEM. BUT YOU ALWAYS ASSUME THAT THE MILITARY AND INTELLIGENCE PEOPLE HAVE SOME SECRET SKILL NOT AVAILABLE TO ORDINARY MORTALS."

PART OF THE DETERMINATION TO KEEP THE SCHEME ALIVE, SCHLESINGER SAID, SPRANG FROM THE EMBARRASSMENT OF CALLING IT OFF. EVEN IF THE CUBAN BRIGADE WERE SUCCESSFULLY DISBANDED, ITS MEMBERS WOULD DISPERSE, DISAPPOINTED AND RESENTFUL, ALL OVER LATIN AMERICA.

CONFRONTED BY THIS ARGUMENT, THE PRESIDENT GAVE HIS OKAY TO THE INVASION WITH THE STIPULATION THAT THERE BE "NO UNITED STATES MILITARY INTERVENTION," A STIPULATION TO WHICH NO ONE INVOLVED MADE ANY OBJECTION, THE HISTORIAN REPORTED.

WHEN THE MISSION BEGAN TO FALTER, SCHLESINGER ADDED, SOME PEOPLE ARGUED THAT THE UNITED STATES SHOULD COMMIT FORCES SAYING U.S. PRESTIGE WOULD SUFFER IF THE REBELLION DIED.

THE PRESIDENT WAS DEEPLY DISTURBED BY THE FAILURE, SCHLESINGER WROTE.

"THE VISION HAUNTED HIM OF THE MEN ON THE BEACHES, THE MEN WHO HAD GONE OFF WITH SUCH SPLENDID HOPES, HAD FOUGHT SO BRAVELY AND NOW WOULD BE SHOT DOWN LIKE DOGS OR CARRIED OFF TO CASTRO'S PRISONS," THE HISTORIAN SAID.

"THE ONLY TIMES JACKIE HAD SEEN HIM WEEP WERE IN THE HOSPITAL AT MOMENTS OF SHEER DISCOURAGEMENT OVER HIS BACK; TEARS WOULD FILL HIS EYES AND ROLL DOWN HIS CHEEKS. NOW, IN THE BEDROOM, HE PUT HIS HEAD DOWN INTO HIS HANDS AND ALMOST SOBBED."