

EDITORS' DECISION ON CUBA RELATED

Kennedy Later Wished Times
Had Printed All It Knew

ST. PAUL, June 1 (AP)—President Kennedy told an executive of The New York Times that if the paper had printed all it knew about preparations for the Bay of Pigs invasion, the nation would have been saved from a "colossal mistake," a Times editor disclosed today.

The disclosure was made by Clifton Daniel, managing editor, in a speech at MacAlester College before a forum of the World Press Institute. The forum was held in honor of recent Pulitzer Prize winners and foreign journalists studying at the college.

Mr. Daniel recalled a number of difficult decisions at The Times, before both the Bay of Pigs invasion and the Cuban missile crisis a year later, as to whether the paper's responsibility to publish the news conflicted with national security.

He traced in detail some strong differences of opinion among Times executives that led to the toning down of a dispatch describing plans for the invasion of Cuba.

The dispatch, by Tad Szulc, appeared on Page 1 of The Times in the edition of Friday, April 7, 1961. Invasion forces landed in Cuba on Monday, April 17, 1961.

Kennedy of Two Minds

Mr. Daniel depicted President Kennedy as apparently torn in two directions by the course The Times took during the Bay of Pigs buildup.

At one point, meeting with a group of editors after the incident, President Kennedy "ran down a list of what he called premature disclosures of security information," mostly in The Times, Mr. Daniel said.

"While he scolded The New York Times," he went on, "the President said in an aside to Mr. Catledge, 'If you had printed more about the operation you would have saved us from a colossal mistake.'"

Turner Catledge was then managing editor of The Times. He is now executive editor.

"More than a year later," Mr. Daniel said, "President Kennedy was still talking the same way."

Mr. Daniel said that in a White House conversation on Sept. 13, 1962, never made public before, the President told the late Orvil Dryfoos, publisher of The Times:

"I wish you had run everything on Cuba. . . . I am just sorry you didn't tell it at the time."

A Historical Footnote

Mr. Daniel added another historical footnote to the Bay of Pigs invasion.

In both a television interview on Meet the Press and in his own book, "A Thousand Days,"

Arthur M. Schlesinger Jr. said that The Times had suppressed an article giving "a fairly accurate account of the invasion plans," Mr. Daniel said.

Holding up a copy of the April 7, 1961, edition of The Times, Mr. Daniel said:

"Mr. Schlesinger, was mistaken, both in his book and in his appearance on 'Meet the Press.'"

Mr. Daniel told of detailed and heated exchanges among Times executives before the decision was made to give the controversial dispatch a smaller headline, eliminate a reference to an "imminent" invasion, and drop a reference to participation of the Central Intelligence Agency in invasion preparations.

Mr. Daniel said his own view today is that the Bay of Pigs operation "might well have been canceled and the country would have been saved enormous embarrassment if The New York Times and other newspapers had been more diligent in the performance of their duty."

He added, however, that James Reston, then chief of The Times's Washington Bureau and now an associate editor, disagrees.

'62 Article Withheld

"If I had it to do over, I would do exactly what we did at the time," Mr. Daniel quoted Mr. Reston as saying. "It is ridiculous to think that publishing the fact that the invasion was imminent would have avoided this disaster. I am quite sure the operation would have gone forward."

By contrast, Mr. Daniel said, when the Cuban missile crisis of 1962 reached a climax, The Times, at the personal request of President Kennedy, withheld an exclusive article until the Government had had an opportunity to complete plans to counter its effects.

Mr. Daniel also made public a letter from President Kennedy to Mrs. Dryfoos some time after the death of her husband in which the President praised the decision to withhold the article as having been in the interest of national security.

In describing The Times's decision on the Bay of Pigs dispatch, Mr. Daniel said that the recollections of some executives who took part still differed as to when Mr. Reston was consulted and where he was at the time.

No Records Kept

"None of those who took part . . . kept records of what was said and done," Mr. Daniel said. "That is unfortunate, and it should teach us a lesson. The Bay of Pigs was not only important in the history of United States relations with Latin America, the Soviet Union, and world Communism; it was also important in the history of relations between the American press and the United States Government."

Mr. Daniel described a tense scene at The Times after the Bay of Pigs article was ordered toned down. He said:

"After the dummy for the front page . . . was changed, Ted Bernstein, who was the assistant managing editor on

night duty at The Times, and Lew Jordan, the news editor, sat in Mr. Bernstein's office fretting about it. They believed a colossal mistake was being made, and together they went into Mr. Catledge's office to appeal for reconsideration.

"Mr. Catledge recalls that Mr. Jordan's face was dead white, and he was quivering with emotion. He and Mr. Bernstein told the managing editor that never before had the front-page play in The New York Times been changed for reasons of policy. They said they would like to hear from the publisher himself the reasons for the change.

"Lew Jordan later recalled that Mr. Catledge was 'flaming mad' at this. However, he turned around in his big swivel chair, picked up the telephone, and asked Mr. Dryfoos to come downstairs. By the time he arrived, Mr. Bernstein had gone to dinner, but Mr. Dryfoos spent 10 minutes patiently explaining to Mr. Jordan his reasons for wanting the story played down.

"His reasons were those of national security, national interest and, above all, concern for the safety of the men who were preparing to offer their lives on the beaches of Cuba. He repeated the explanation in somewhat greater length to Mr. Bernstein the next day."

"I describe the mood and behavior of the publisher and editors," Mr. Daniel said, ". . . only to show how seriously and with what intensity of emotion they made their fateful decisions."

Schlesinger Unavailable

Mr. Schlesinger could not be reached for comment. His secretary at the Institute for Advanced Study in Princeton, N. J., said he was in London and would be flying to Peru. She said he would not be available for several days.