

Woodward, Jr., then Ambassador to Chile, ending the six-month search.

Hence the decision on the Cuban invasion was taken without the participation of a spokesman for hemisphere policy who might look ahead and consider the consequences he might have to cope with after the deed was done. This was another thread in the skein—the transitional confusion that made an orphan of Latin American policy.

For his part, Secretary of State Dean Rusk took a passive attitude toward the CIA adventure in policy-making, partly because his conception of his job was that of an implementer and not an originator of policy. Rusk actively discouraged subordinates from getting involved. A few weeks before the invasion, he placed in his drawer a memorandum prepared by then Under Secretary Chester Bowles, which expressed qualified doubts about the project.

Notwithstanding the confusion, the "new hands" were able to intrude new horsepower into over-all hemisphere policy. The Alliance for Progress became more than a campaign slogan. On March 13, the President spoke at a White House reception for Latin American diplomats and called for a vast Ten-Year-Plan to transform the 1960's into "a historic decade of democratic progress." After years of dilatory indifference, the United States had finally ended its *mañana* attitude toward Latin America and had begun talking in terms of a Marshall Plan for a region that needed nothing less.

But the President's ambivalence toward Cuba was also still apparent. On February 9, it became known that Earl E. T. Smith, the one-time Ambassador to Batista's Cuba and a next-door neighbor in Palm Beach to Joseph P. Kennedy, had been nominated as Ambassador to Switzerland. The announcement startled democratic-minded Cubans, and it troubled the Swiss government, which had undertaken to represent United States interests in Cuba following the diplomatic break between Havana and Washington. Adverse comment from Switzerland led Mr. Smith to withdraw his name. On February 22, President Kennedy accepted Smith's decision with "real regret."

IV

The "disposal problem," in the meantime, was being hastily processed in the mills of bureaucracy. Allen Dulles and his aide, Richard Bissell, submitted the outline of a plan calling for an invasion by exile forces after a bomb-

of Cuba had been broken and Castro had moved on the ground to Mexico. The President's secretaries and staff of a series of meetings that took place over a ten-week period and that the various sessions, besides the CIA spokesman were Secretary of State Rusk; Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara; General Lyman Lemnitzer, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff; Admiral Arleigh Burke, Chief of Naval Operations; Adolf A. Berle, Jr., head of the Latin American task force; and McGeorge Bundy, the President's special assistant for national security affairs.

The attitude of the CIA officials at the discussion was one of enthusiastic partisanship. "Allen and Dick didn't just brief us on the Cuban operation," a White House adviser told Stewart Alsop, "they sold us on it." Subsequent to the invasion, the story went around immediately that the CIA never expected Castro to fall at once and that at best their hope was to establish a beachhead, achieving a partial victory. This view was stated publicly for the first time by Allen Dulles when he appeared on "Meet the Press" on December 31, 1961, shortly after his retirement. John Steele of *Time* magazine asked Dulles "very frankly whether the failure in Cuba was an intelligence failure." Dulles replied: "I do not think it was, Mr. Steele. There was no military hardware that appeared that was a surprise to us. Some of the material was handled a little better than we expected. There is a quite general popular misapprehension that it was felt that there would be a spontaneous uprising. We had never contemplated that. The days of the war I worked a great deal with the French underground. The last thing we wanted was spontaneous uprisings to get slaughtered by the Nazi troops. In the same way we were not looking for a spontaneous uprising, but for other developments."

However, those who were involved in the discussions in March tell quite a different story; they assert that no such limited-victory impression was left by Mr. Dulles. Whatever qualifications he may have offered at the time were lost in his rosy prediction that after a beachhead was secured, large-scale defections could be expected within days.

Among the arguments advanced by the CIA in favor of the plan was the assertion that it was now or never—an estimate that Mr. Dulles reiterated publicly in his "Meet the Press" interview. It was known that Castro had Soviet MIG fighters in crates and that Cuban fliers were training in Czechoslovakia. This meant that Castro would soon be un-

beatable by any outside force that relied on conventional prop-driven aircraft. Moreover, the Cuban exile forces were set to go; further delays would wreck morale. And Chilean President, Miguel Ydigoras Fuentes, was pressing for a solution of "the disposal problem" because the camps in his country had become a difficult political issue. While Ydigoras set no specific deadline, June 1 was spoken of as the date by which the camps would have to be cleared out.

Throughout, the CIA's double role as an intelligence gathering and policy-making instrument hampered an objective appraisal of the assumptions on which the venture rested. In effect, the Agency was saying that its plan was sound and that it was backed up by its own intelligence estimates. There is no evidence that the CIA availed itself of an independent check of its estimates, either by consulting foreign sources or other available American data. Indeed, those close to the operation say that the CIA did not even consult its own intelligence estimates of anti-Castro sentiment within Cuba—estimates that were reportedly more pessimistic than those offered by enthusiastic Cuban exiles in Miami. "They fell in love with the plan and ceased to think critically of it," one official recalls. A CIA colleague of Bissell's added another point. "During these weeks Dick was overworking himself. He was at the office twelve and fourteen hours a day. I'm sure he thought he was serving his country, but he might have served it better by leading a more normal schedule, reading the newspapers, and keeping in contact with common-sense reality. As it was, he was isolated in a kind of weird world of secret reports day and night."

Swayed by the CIA partisanship, the military went along. For some time, Pentagon officials felt restless and frustrated about the Eisenhower policy of "restraint and forbearance." As early as 1958, when Raul Castro's guerrilla forces kidnapped Navy personnel and other Americans working near Cuatanámano, Admiral Burke had reportedly urged direct military reprisals against the rebels. Burke became a frequent orator on the evils of Castroism, and there is reason to believe that nothing would have suited the Admiral more than a chance to show what the Marines could do.

The plan originally prepared during the Eisenhower Administration provided for a greater degree of direct United States participation, in the form of more direct American participation in the air operation. Such American involvement was dropped with the full acquiescence of the CIA

and the force was when Kennedy said that the plan was approved there would be no flights from American soil, no planes except obsolete models, and no fighter escort of the preliminary bombing run because the distance from Cuba to Guatemala was too great.

Subsequent stories, most notably an article in *Fortune* by Charles J. V. Murphy, have sought to exonerate the Joint Chiefs on the grounds that these original concessions weakened the plan and that the subsequent cancellation of a "second strike," along with a few last-minute changes in details, doomed the enterprise altogether. But the Joint Chiefs went along with the preliminary modifications when they might have pointed out that the very ground rules meant that the success of the entire plan would hang by a slender thread.

Some have speculated that there may have been doubts about the military soundness of the plan, but that Pentagon officials expected the President to flash the go-ahead for direct United States intervention should the invasion founder; others assert that this gives the Joint Chiefs too much credit for Machiavellian ingenuity. In any event, the CIA received the stamp of approval at the highest level by men who were supposed to be granite-headed realists—and that approval, let us repeat again, was within the framework of the President's decision that whatever was done should be without direct United States military participation.

V

While Washington debated grand strategy, Cuban exiles were concerned about what the new Administration was going to do about the confused situation in Miami. The more conservative groups were apprehensive; their close working relationship with CIA agents seemed in jeopardy as Mr. Kennedy took over. The left-of-center groups were frankly exultant. They were persuaded that the days of CIA favoritism in Miami to the right-wing were over.

Their hopes were largely in vain. During February, the exiles, and some interested American citizens, repeatedly warned Administration officials of the presence of Batistas in the training camps. At one point, in early March, these sources reported in dismay that a recruiting office for the camps had opened in Miami staffed with Batistas. Felix Gutiérrez, once an officer in Batista's military intelligence

SIM, was in charge, and a zealous but ignorant CIA agent reportedly sat at his side. Among those registered for service in the office was former Senator Rolando Masferrer, the most notorious of the Batista henchmen in Florida. It took a week to remedy the blunder. At the same time, Liberal-minded exiles complained that Radio Swan, the CIA-financed station, was beaming broadcasts to Cuba charging that Manolo Ray and the MRP were "crypto-communists."

One reason for the confusion over the extent of Batistano participation was a semantic problem. Top CIA men frankly did not regard as Batistas those professional soldiers who were majors and colonels in the Batista army but otherwise had clean records. This distinction simply did not exist in Cuba, where any officer who wore a Batista uniform was assumed guilty as a "war criminal" until proven innocent.

By March, MRP representatives who passed through Washington were wholly disheartened. Their disillusionment touched bottom when, on March 18, in a hotel lobby in Miami, unity negotiations with the *Frente* were conducted in the presence of a CIA man. During the meeting, a list of eighteen names was produced, and the Cubans were told that ten of the names had to be included in any coalition front. Among the eighteen listed were Julio Lobo, the Cuban sugar king; Dr. Carlos Márquez Sterling, who was known as "Ambassador Smith's candidate" in the bayonet backed elections held by Batista in November, 1958; and Agustín Batista, no relative to the dictator but one of the wealthiest financiers in the pre-Castro era.

On March 19, the confusion and distemper had reached the point that the MRP met in Miami to discuss disbanding the organization. "We can't fight Castro and the CIA at the same time," a bitter MRP spokesman remarked to one of the authors. But, as the MRP was meeting, a major turn-about in United States policy seemed to occur. White House aides, irritated by CIA favoritism to the right in Miami, of which they had finally become aware, sent down an ultimatum: either the left-of-center MRP would be included in the coalition or the whole venture would be dropped.

On March 20, astonished MRP leaders were offered the very terms that had been rejected in unity negotiations the week before. The central points were solemnly agreed upon: (1) any military operations would be under Cuban control; (2) priority would be given to helping the underground in Cuba; and (3) all Batistas would be removed from the training camps.

As it developed, none of the conditions worked out at the unity meeting were honored. Moreover, MRP leaders were told that the unpopular Mr. Bender had been assigned to other duties; later, they learned that the ubiquitous Mr. B. had simply changed locale but was still very much in command of the Miami operation.

Events moved swiftly. On March 22, agreement was reached on a "provisional government" under the leadership of Dr. José Miró Cardona, with the Front's "Tony" Varona and the MRP's Manolo Ray as his chief lieutenants. Dr. Miró Cardona, a respected moderate, had served as Fidel Castro's first premier. In his new role he tried to serve as an honest broker, but like other men caught in the middle, the warm and affectionate Cuban was unable to do more than preside over a conflict between basically opposing attitudes.

The new coalition was obviously a shotgun marriage. The MRP still held to its view that an internal solution, relying on the underground, was the sound approach, and that the appeal of the new rebels had to be based on a genuine acceptance of the revolution's usable legacy of social reform. But the Front was oriented toward an invasion and advanced an essentially cautious social program. The Revolutionary Council suffered from the incurable defect of being an artificial creation which threw together representatives of the new generation and aging stalwarts of the old democratic movement in Cuba who were honorable but ineffective men.

At a March 22 press conference at the Biltmore Hotel in New York City, the birth of the Revolutionary Council was announced. Dr. Miró Cardona said that the Council would become the provisional government of Cuba as soon as its forces had secured "a piece of Cuban soil." Shortly afterwards, the Council released its "minimum program"—with an assist from Adolf Berle, who, ironically, had to caution the Cubans against placing excessive stress on the restoration of American property seized by Castro.

The program was an effort to paper over basic differences. The Council pledged a return to the model Cuban Constitution of 1940 and endorsed land reform, but its pledges on private enterprise seemed to be addressed more to an American than a Cuban audience. "We emphatically assure those who have been unjustly dispossessed," the Council declared in its declaration of war against Castro, "that all their assets shall be returned."

At the same time, it was specifically noted that the MRP maintained a separate position on two points: (1) that those

foreign-owned utilities—power, telephones, transportation, etc.—that had been nationalized would remain state enterprises with fairer compensation to previous owners; and (2) that foreign banks would remain under national direction.

With this "jerry-built" structure finally assembled, the Cubans were ready to mobilize. At this point, a misunderstanding occurred that was to persist for months. Evidently, Dr. Miró Cardona and Tony Varona were under the impression that the United States was prepared to backstop the entire operation. On April 7, Dr. Miró Cardona came to Washington and conferred with Adolf Berle, who attempted to make clear that the Cubans were on their own. On April 14, three days before the invasion, Berle and Schlesinger flew to New York and saw Miró Cardona again, informing him that the President meant what he said in asserting that no United States forces would be involved.

The Cubans apparently heard the assurances with only one ear—and did not inform their countrymen in the invasion force, who subsequently protested that the United States had let them down. It is possible that the Cuban leaders simply could not believe that Washington could stand by and watch the venture fail after investing so much prestige in the plan. Perhaps the Cubans were acting on a reflex born of their experience in living on an island where the United States traditionally had the final say. This might explain why the Council's leaders accepted CIA direction so passively; the more the United States took over the management of the invasion, the less the chance the venture would fail. The shadow of the Platt Amendment hung over the frenetic deliberations between Cuba and the United States.

VI

As the "disposal problem" came near resolution, the United States found itself caught in a net of contradictions and confusions arising from a situation with no parallel in American history.

There was the ideological muddle caused by the difference in approach between the White House and the CIA political strategists. On April 3, the State Department released a White Paper on Cuba, a brilliantly written document from the pen of Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr. It began with indictment of the Batista regime:

The character of the Batista regime in Cuba made

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... a source of... The... of the... the... the... to the... for... all... them, in Cuba as elsewhere, constituted an open invitation to revolution.

The White Paper went on to outline in detail how Castro had promised a democratic revolution and delivered a totalitarian regime. It gave chapter and verse on the relentless communist advance, and concluded with this exhortation:

The people of Cuba remain our brothers. We acknowledge past omissions and errors in our relationship to them. The United States, along with other nations of the hemisphere, expresses a profound determination to assure future democratic governments in Cuba full and positive support in their effort to help the Cuban people achieve freedom, democracy and social justice....

Because the Castro regime has become the spearhead of attack on the inter-American system, that regime represents a fateful challenge to the inter-American system. For freedom is the common destiny of our hemisphere—freedom from domestic tyranny and foreign intervention, from hunger and poverty and illiteracy, freedom for each person and nation in the Americas to realize the high potentialities of life in the twentieth century. [Emphasis in the original]

Hailed at the time by liberal-minded Cubans, the White Paper was made to sound like a cynical joke when Castro was all to prove extensive Batistiano participation in the Cuban invasion.

A second dilemma was posed by the legal ambiguity of the CIA operation in Florida, which ran counter to international treaties and national law. Department of Justice and FBI officials were often unaware what another agency of the United States Government was doing. It became impossible to enforce the law without running the risk of one Government agency handcuffing henchmen of another Government agency.

The dilemma was uncomfortably posed by the indictment, early in April, of Rolando Masferrer on grounds of violating the Neutrality Act. The political purpose of the indictment was to demonstrate that the United States was not working with the Batista exiles, of whom Masferrer was

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the most notorious. The statute under which Masferrer was indicted (U.S. Code, Title 18, Section 960) is aimed at a suspect who "knowingly begins . . . or provides or prepares a means for" a military expedition against a country with which the United States is at peace. At a Justice Department press conference, a reporter asked if Dr. Miró Cardona could not be indicted under the same law. There was no comment. Others needlingly pointed out that Allen Dulles could also be booked on the same charges.

A related problem concerned Ambassador Adlai Stevenson at the United Nations. Stevenson had been informed, but not consulted, on the CIA plan. The President expressed concern several times that whatever was done, Stevenson was to be protected and not placed in the position of having his prestige at the U.N. impaired. The President's apprehension was real, but in the confusion his fear was to be realized.

All these and other problems were in the air when the President called an April 4 meeting of the National Security Council in order to have a full-dress debate on the plan. The meeting took place in a conference room in the new wing of the State Department. Those attending included Allen Dulles, Richard Bissell, General Lemnitzer, Secretary of State Rusk, Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara, Adolf Berle, Arthur M. Schlesinger Jr., McGeorge Bundy, Assistant Secretary of State Thomas Mann, Assistant Secretary of Defense Paul Nitze, Secretary of the Treasury Douglas Dillon, and Senator J. William Fulbright, Chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee.

After Dulles and Bissell outlined the plan, the President pointed his finger around the room, inviting opinions. All members of the official family who were asked supported the plan, including Secretary of State Rusk. According to Stewart Alsop, whose version of the meeting has been authenticated as essentially accurate, one adviser said "Let 'er rip." Schlesinger, who opposed the plan on the ground that it would not work, was not asked to comment; he did not volunteer his views, feeling reluctant as a new man in town to pit his expertise against the Joint Chiefs and CIA.

The one dissenting voice at the pivotal meeting was that of Senator Fulbright.

VII

If any figure emerges with honor during those distraught days, it is the junior Senator from Arkansas. Character-

Senator Fulbright has refused to state any explicit viewpoint on his opposition to the invasion. He has been embarrassed by those who frame his presence. The Senator declined to see the authors for an interview to discuss his part in the decision.

In December, Fulbright had been among the candidates Mr. Kennedy was considering for Secretary of State. But objections were strong, especially from liberal groups critical of Fulbright's opposition to civil-rights legislation.

The Senator's position on the Cuban controversy was outlined in a detailed, single-spaced memorandum which he submitted to the President on March 29. According to those familiar with Fulbright's views, his memorandum followed these lines:

Two courses, the Senator felt, were open to the United States in dealing with Cuba. The choice was between a policy aimed at overthrow of the Castro regime or one of toleration combined with efforts to isolate Castroism.

Concerning overthrow, unaided internal forces are not strong enough to do this job. But the problem posed by an outside attack, the Senator contended, is that it would be impossible to conceal the United States' role. The long-range damage, therefore, would probably outweigh any short-term gain in getting rid of Castro.

Furthermore, the Senator doubted that the exile groups favored by the United States as a successor government to Castro possessed effective leadership. The result would be that the United States would be blamed for the failings of a post-Castro regime.

If the invasion should fail, Senator Fulbright cautioned, the United States could be driven to direct intervention of a kind that would undo the work of thirty years in developing a Good Neighbor policy.

The Senator felt that the venture would be a violation of the spirit and possibly the letter of United States laws, as well as treaties which this country had signed. This point would be damaging in the United Nations and would not rest easily on the American conscience.

As an alternative approach, the Senator suggested a policy of toleration based on the premise that the Castro regime was a thorn in the flesh but not a dagger at the heart. While Castro offers a worrisome base for communist penetration, the long-range prospects are that by virtue of his extravagances he will isolate himself in the hemisphere and will be vulnerable to internal opposition.

The United States, Fulbright held, should place its em-

Phasis on the Alliance for Progress as a means of isolating Castro and providing a competitive attraction to the Cuban revolution.

These were Fulbright's major contentions. What is striking about his case is that it is precisely the argument that one would expect the Secretary of State to make in behalf of a Department that must consider the manifold implications of a gamble like the invasion. But the case was made by the chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, outside the official family.

At the April 4 meeting, Senator Fulbright reiterated his position with force and eloquence. Some who were present felt that the Arkansas Senator had carried the day. The President, they say, was visibly impressed by Fulbright's statement. But Mr. Kennedy did not disclose his own views. He retired to the White House to give "the disposal problem" a final night's thought.

VIII

That April night, as President Kennedy mulled over a cruel decision, he was in a markedly different position from that of any of his advisers. He had to view the Cuban venture not as a game in itself, but as a single chess-piece on a constantly shifting board. Remember that at that time the United States also confronted the possibility that American troops might have to be committed to distant Laos. What would have pleased Mr. Khrushchev more than seeing the United States mired in two exasperating limited wars at the same time? Moreover, if the United States acted directly against Cuba, the result would surely be to cloud Washington's claim of aggression against the communist bloc in Laos. Those who say that Mr. Kennedy assured the failure of the Cuban venture for mere "political" reasons tend to overlook the anguishing choices that faced the President.

Ironically, in the case of both Laos and Cuba, the CIA was blamed for similar independent machinations that committed the United States. In Laos, too, the CIA reportedly had shown a predilection for the right and a tendency to decide for itself what the foreign policy of the United States should be.

Regarding Cuba, this was the dubious legacy Mr. Kennedy inherited:

1. A costly investment in an exile army of about 1,500 men who were insistently demanding a chance to show

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...the operation ... the ...
...the ... the ...
...the ... the ...

2. A policy making muddle in which the CIA had become at least on the all-important operating level, a power unto itself.

3. An ideological mixup in which the United States had become identified with the conservative exiled factions with the most support in Miami, and was regarded as hostile to the anti-Castro faction with the broadest support in Cuba.

Certainly the President can be criticized for approving the plan; but those responsible for initiating the venture in the first place seem scarcely in a position to fault Mr. Kennedy for badly finishing a project badly begun.

As the President reviewed the matter, the temptation to go ahead must have been irresistible, whatever his doubts about the over-all soundness of the plan. Recall that his chief intelligence and military advisers were united in endorsing the plan—and that the plan they were endorsing did not call for direct United States military intervention. If the decision to withhold direct American support robbed the venture of a chance to succeed, then presumably it was the duty of the Joint Chiefs and the CIA to say just that.

Some argue that the President's aides—specifically the "new hands"—failed to do their duty by making their strenuous objections felt. But it was part of the web of circumstance that none of the men around Kennedy really knew very much about Cuba, Castro and guerrilla warfare. New to the world of secret intelligence reports, they credited the CIA with an acumen the Agency lacked.

Why didn't they object on principle, following Fulbright's lead? But the "new hands" were just that—new to their jobs—and were extremely uncertain of their ground in dealing with the President and fearful of seeming soft-headed in an atmosphere of *realpolitik*. Suppose the experts were right? Wouldn't the lonely objector look foolish after the fact? The "new hands" were not made of the stuff of martyrs, wearing their ideals on rolled-up sleeves.

Thus, on that lonely night, the President made the most damaging and embarrassing decision of his first year. The next day, he called a smaller meeting attended by Secretary Rusk, Secretary McNamara and Allen Dulles. He told them that the plan had won his final approval.

On April 12, the President made public the general lines of his decision. He told the news conference that not "under any conditions" would the United States directly participate

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in the coming showdown with Cuba. "The basic issue in Cuba is not one between the United States and Cuba," he explained, "it is between the Cubans themselves. I intend to see that we adhere to that principle." Some critics contended subsequently that the President erred grievously by invoking a principle that handcuffed him when the invasion foun-dered and when only direct U. S. intervention would have saved it.

The invasion was five days off.

IX

After it was over, the press and the public asked, "How did it happen?" In reviewing the chain of events between January and April, the question might properly be reversed: How could it have happened otherwise? Every link in the chain—the transitional confusion in government, the momentum of an operation already underway, the ten-derment of those who met behind closed doors—all seemed to predetermine "the disposal problem."

In the view of some who were involved, one factor might have altered the outcome. The American press, if it had fully and simply reported the facts, might have given an uncertain President the pretext he needed for scrapping or altering the basic character of the CIA plan.

But the press, like the President, also faced anguishing dilemmas in dealing with a venture unprecedented in Ameri-can history. Here was an operation partly based on Ameri-can soil, deeply involving the American Government, aimed at an objective that most Americans would approve—the elimination of Castro.

To report the invasion preparations and the peccadilloes of the CIA would be to compromise the Government and possibly jeopardize the success of the plan. Yet to ignore the news would be a disservice to readers and a breach of the lofty pretensions of a free press.

Some editors resolved the dilemma by becoming active accomplices of the CIA. This was especially true in Flori-da; at one point, a Philadelphia editor called up a Miami publisher to ask if the rumors about Guatemala training camps were true. He was told by his friend in Florida that there was nothing to the story.

Other papers took to hinting obliquely at what was going on. The first report on the Guatemala camps came in the unlikely pages of the *Hispanic-American Report*, a schol-arly journal published by the Institute of Hispanic Ameri-

114 *Continued on Next Page* This was in October 1961. Dr. Kenneth E. Hillen of the Institute followed up with an article in the *Nation* in November. Further stories had appeared in *La Hora*, a Guatemala paper, written by Clemente Marreroquin Rojas. On December 22, Donald Dwight, aviation editor of the Los Angeles *Mirror*, reported to his readers about the strange goings-on he encountered during a trip to Guatemala. At the same time, Richard Dudman of the St. Louis *Post-Dispatch* made a trip to Guate-mala and confirmed the existence of the camps.

On January 6, 1961, *Time* carried a frank report that disclosed the exiles' maneuvers: "The underground Big Two are wide apart on politics and on who gets what funds. The Frente apparently gets virtually all U.S. financial aid to Cuba's underground (estimated to range from \$135,000 monthly to as high as \$500,000 on occasions), and 'Mr. B,' the CIA agent in charge, reportedly has suggested that the MRP get help from the Frente."

The most direct story appeared in the *New York Times* on January 10, by Paul Kennedy. It gave an account of United States help for the exiles' forces at the main Guate-malan base in Retalhuleu. This was followed by other re-ports from Miami as the invasion buildup began, reports that described what everyone in the city knew was going on. The stories revealed no secrets to Fidel Castro, but they did attempt to let the American people know what was going on. At this point the White House might have reasonably deduced that it would be impossible really to conceal United States participation.

By April, the essential elements of the CIA plan were known. On April 9, William V. Shannon, Washington cor-respondent of the *New York Post*, reported accurately that Cuba was about to get "the Guatemala treatment" and that the CIA had cast Captain Manuel Artime in the role of Colonel Castillo Armas. The April 8 edition of the *Saturday Evening Post* carried an article by Harold H. Martin that described the various exile factions and United States favoritism for the "Catholic, conservative and sternly anti-Communist" *Frente*.

Thus, by piecing together various reports, the careful reader could deduce what was happening. But he would have to tread warily through planted and inspired stories put out by insiders who favored the invasion—stories that told of Russian destroyers sailing to Cuba and of MIG fighters that were already being flown in Cuban skies.

After it was over, in the emotions of the moment, some

Administration spokesman was quick to blame the press for its alleged indiscretions in describing the invasion buildup. The argument was that press publicity stripped the cover from the United States operation and made it impossible for the Government to disassociate itself from a venture into the political black market.

Surely, in retrospect, the question takes a different shape. Was it the fault of the press that the CIA undertook to organize an army and form a government from American soil, using as much discretion as carnival skills before a sideshow tent? It was like plumping Disneyland in the middle of Times Square and then asking newspapermen to obligingly look the other way. After it was over, some of the same insiders who talked magazines and newspapers out of running factual articles on the CIA venture conceded that they wished the editors hadn't listened. If there is any utility in freedom of the press, it is precisely that the press can act as an independent corrective on the blunders of government. With the best and most patriotic intentions, a great many newspapermen and some Administration officials failed to rely on the very principles of freedom for which the Cuban invaders were ready to die.

This, then, was the clinching link in the chain as "the disposal problem" was about to be definitely solved.

CHAPTER SEVEN



ON THE BEACH

Shortly after six o'clock on the morning of Saturday, April 15, the population of Havana was awakened by the roar of low-flying aircraft, scattered bomb explosions, and the bark of anti-aircraft artillery. Looking up, the *Habeneros* could see a pair of B-26 bombers with the insignia of Castro's FAR—the Revolutionary Air Force—making diving passes at the Camp Libertad airfield on the outskirts of the city. A few minutes earlier, the attacking bombers had strafed the big air force base at San Antonio de los Baños, not far from Havana. A third B-26 made passes about an hour later over the airfield at Santiago in the eastern province of Oriente.

Militarily, air strike number one was not effective. It was

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The first of the massive CIA war to come 48 hours later. The CIA had been in the process of preparing for an amphibious attack planned for Monday. The chief effect was to alert Castro that the long-awaited invasion was imminent. The objective of the raid was to destroy on the ground as many Castro aircraft as possible so that the invaders on Monday would not be subject to air attack. It was believed that the Cubans had about fifteen B-26's, which Castro inherited from Batista, three T-33 jet trainers, and a half-dozen British-built Sea Fury light attack bombers. CIA reports had indicated that Castro had a certain number of Soviet MIG fighters, but it was not known whether the planes had been taken out of their crates and made operational.

The air attack was to be the last preparatory touch before the landings. Early in April, as the operation was about to be set in motion, the CIA had made another attempt to weaken the Cuban defenses, but it too was largely unsuccessful. This effort involved a plan in which a number of Cuban torpedo boats, many of them fast craft built in East Germany, would escape from the naval base of Baracoa in Oriente Province and make a dash for freedom. Anti-Castro elements in the Cuban navy had advised that this would be possible, provided that the torpedo boats could be refueled on the high seas, since the political unreliability of the crews caused the regime to keep the craft on short gasoline rations.

Several boats escaped to Haiti on their own in late March, whereupon the Cubans reduced the fuel ration even further. To help the potential defectors, a privately owned undersea cable repair ship, the *Western Union*, put in at Guantánamo to load on her deck several thousand drums of high-octane gasoline. But on her way to the Baracoa rendezvous, the vessel was intercepted by a Cuban warship. Anguished radio messages to Guantánamo sent a United States destroyer and Navy aircraft rushing toward the *Western Union*, and, in the end, the Cuban captain let himself be started down by the American forces and allowed the cable ship to go. Once discovered, however, the *Western Union* could no longer pursue her mission and she sheepishly sailed to Key West, Florida, where Federal agents prevented the captain from speaking to newsmen.

Meanwhile, the final preparations for the attack were underway. A general mobilization of the rebels was ordered in Miami by the Cuban Revolutionary Council about April 1, and volunteers drove nightly to the building of the Demo-

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cratic Front in Coral Gables to report for duty. They were accompanied by weeping relatives who parted from them in tearful scenes, handing the soldiers paper bags of sandwiches and cold chicken. Scores of Cuban doctors and nurses who had earlier volunteered for duty were notified to depart for a hospital ship that was being outfitted somewhere in Florida, and for medical units in Guatemala. Surgical supply stores in Miami were virtually emptied by Cubans.

From the Front's offices, the volunteers were driven in trucks to the Opa-Locka airport, placed aboard unmarked transport aircraft and flown to Guatemala. Before boarding the planes, they were issued khaki uniforms and were deprived of their own clothes and all identification. These were the security measures being taken by the CIA to conceal the mobilization, but they were about as effective as concealing an elephant with a bath towel. The mobilization was a public spectacle, the families were fully aware of what was happening, and only sublimely unobservant Castro agents in Miami could have failed to report all the details.

About ten days before the invasion, at least one newspaper correspondent in Miami was notified by Cuban friends that the attack would be launched on April 18, a guess that was only a day off. The deduction was sensibly based on advance orders to exile broadcasting stations to leave the air on April 18 so that the frequencies would be available for operational communications.

So feverish was the atmosphere that the CIA relented and began to supply some equipment to Manuel Ray's long-neglected MRP underground. Ray had been named coordinator of the Revolutionary Council's underground activities and at last felt his arguments were making an impact. Navy planes from the Key West naval station flew cover over the international waters for the MRP speedboats carrying explosives and weapons.

Thus encouraged, and sensing that an attack was near, the underground moved into action during the week of April 10. Explosions shook Havana, as the city's largest and closely guarded department store, El Encanto, went up in flames. The big Hershey sugar mill was also burned, along with a large wholesale house in Santiago. MRP leaders in Miami were promising a major sabotage campaign as soon as a shipment of two tons of C-4 plastic explosives—the best available—was received in Cuba. It appeared that a well thought out softening-up process had begun and that the

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Cuban underground, now displaying its effectiveness, would be brought into the operation.

Ray and his military adviser, Colonel Ramón Barquín, talked of several weeks of mounting sabotage, culminating in a series of multiple landings by guerilla forces coordinated with uprisings by the underground. This, they said, would be a victorious "war of liberation" and not a "war of conquest" that would be bound to create resentment in Cuba and throughout Latin America. Some CIA agents hinted that this was indeed the plan, and in Washington stories based on high Administration sources asserted that the United States was determined to avoid all appearance of a "Hungary in reverse."

But by this time the CIA had already made the decision for a one-thrust invasion. Earlier plans calling for multiple attacks coupled with internal insurrection were scrapped when the CIA concluded that the underground in Cuba could not be supplied properly by air and therefore could not be built into a reliable force. By a circular process, the CIA was in a position to discourage the growth of the underground and then cite the very lack of growth as the reason for minimizing the role of internal resistance. A second argument was that the underground was not sufficiently "security" conscious and thus could not be trusted—even though the CIA evidently trusted the equally loquacious Cubans in Miami. In the end, the CIA failed to alert the Cuban underground and went all out for one big invasion; even the diversionary strike by a commando group on the coasts of Oriente and Pinar del Río provinces never materialized because of confused directives and operational breakdowns.

Early in the week of April 10, Operation Pluto entered the final phase. Captain Artime was named the military delegate of the Revolutionary Council to the camps. Manuel Ray, who was beginning to sense disaster, saw the appointment as a violation of the pact which set up the Council. The choice of Artime meant the passing over of Colonel Ramón Barquín, an experienced officer with impeccable democratic credentials who had been jailed by Batista—and who had insistently warned of the folly of an all-or-nothing invasion. Ray considered pulling out of the Council altogether, but in the interests of unity he finally agreed to stay.

That week, the Guatemalan camps began to be emptied as unmarked United States aircraft ferried the rebel troops to Puerto Cabezas, Nicaragua, where they were visited by President Luis Somoza before boarding the invasion ships. Besides the men, about fifty freight carloads of aerial bombs,