

than 72 hours the army organized during many months by the imperialistic government of the United States." The sad and needless tragedy ended not with a bang, but with a press release. At 9 p.m., this final communiqué was issued:

CUBAN REVOLUTIONARY COUNCIL

Via: Lem Jones Associates, Inc.
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New York, New York
Oregon 9-5636

IMMEDIATE RELEASE

April 19 - 9 p.m.

Bulletin No. 6

The Revolutionary Council wishes to make a prompt and emphatic statement in the face of recent astonishing public announcement from uninformed sources.

The statement indicates that "several thousand" Cuban patriots have fallen in the battle which took place today in southern Cuba. This is a pronouncement which will certainly please Castro but would dishearten the Cuban people who are eagerly waiting to break the chains that bind them to Communism.

The recent landings in Cuba have been constantly though inaccurately described as an invasion. It was, in fact, a landing mainly of supplies and support for our patriots who have been fighting in Cuba for months and was numbered in the hundreds, not the thousands.

Regrettably, we admit tragic losses in today's action among a small holding force which courageously fought Soviet tanks and artillery while being attacked by Russian MIG aircraft—a gallantry which allowed the major portion of our landing party to reach the Escambray mountains.

We did not expect to topple Castro immediately or without setbacks. And it is certainly true that we did not expect to face, unscathed, Soviet armaments directed by Communist advisers. We did and survived!

The struggle for the freedom of six million Cubans continues!

So it happened. Viewed strictly as a military venture, everything that could possibly go wrong on the Bay of Pigs seemed to go wrong. It turned into a war without a battle, and encounter that was over almost before it began. The assumption was that the invaders could hold the Bay of Pigs long enough

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to fly to a provisional government—and then, if matters went badly, the provisional government could appeal to the outside world for help and the United States would be in a position to respond.

But, incredibly, little attention was given to the possibility that the invaders might never hold the beachhead. Calamity followed upon calamity to make this the melancholy outcome. First, there was the failure to assure control of the air. Second, there was the inability of the paratroop detachments to blow up the causeways and paved roads leading into the beachhead area, a failure that has still not been fully explained. Third, there was the disaster of the sinking of the *Houston*—and with it, the vital communications system and the ammunition stores.

In effect, what happened was that some 1,500 men were dumped on a beach without cover from the sky or from artillery aboard ships at sea. There was no real command center and no provision for alternative plans in the event of a major disaster. The men on the beach behaved well under catastrophically demoralizing circumstances—remember that the invaders had been solemnly assured air cover. The insurgents fired as best they could at Castro's encircling force—but Fidel had only to wait until their ammunition ran out before mopping up with scarcely a fight. This is precisely what occurred in the invasion that never had a chance to succeed.

VIII

In Washington, Wednesday was the morning after for President Kennedy, and during the darkest moment of his first year, the young Chief Executive was impressively composed. The day was occupied by lengthy meetings at which the President set the tone by refusing to vent his anger in recriminations. Mr. Kennedy and Harry Truman, so unalike in background and temperament, shared the inner iron that enables a leader to assume final responsibility without flinching or heaping blame on subordinates.

In the Cabinet room, congressional leaders as well as members of his official family were gathered to discuss the debacle. Mr. Kennedy, who calmly smoked two cigars, made no attempt to sugar over the news. Nor did Senator Richard Russell and Representative Carl Vinson, chairmen of the armed services committees of Congress, conceal their feeling that the United States had suffered a cruel defeat.

After the meeting, the President told his aide, Theodore Sorensen, to scrap a speech that had been prepared for a

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meeting the next day of the American Society of Newspaper Editors. The talk would have to be about Cuba.

The six leaders of the Cuban Revolutionary Council, in the meantime, had been flown to the Capital in an Air Force plane from their enforced confinement at Opa-Locha. The President agreed to see them. Dr. Miró Cardona, president of the Council, spoke for the Cubans and made two requests. First, he asked that the United States intervene directly to salvage Operation Pluto. The President explained that this could not be done in the light of his repeated pledges against direct intervention. Secondly, the Cuban appealed to the President to do all that he could to save the lives of the captured rebels. Dr. Miró Cardona's son was one of the prisoners, and the President responded to the father's moving appeal by promising that he would do all that was in his power to save the men. This promise was the genesis of the President's subsequent decision to take up Premier Castro's impulsive offer to swap the prisoners for tractors. Throughout the meeting, the Cubans bore the defeat with dignity. The President was apologetic about their confinement and assured the Cubans that they were free to go where they wished.

On Thursday, the President met the press, rounding out a curious cycle. Almost exactly two years after Castro spoke before the ASNE, the President of the United States was addressing the same audience from the same rostrum—the flower-decked head table in the Statler-Hilton's main ballroom. The editors and their wives rose from their seats and gave Mr. Kennedy prolonged applause as the strains of *Hail to the Chief* heralded his entrance.

The President's composure once more was impressive, but the strain told. His speech was not an immortal utterance. He abjured contrition and took an aggressive tack that was bound to inspire the expectation of something dramatic to come which would erase the humiliating defeat. The rhetoric was Churchillian, but the tone was of a thwarted leader finding release from a sense of defeat through a rush of martial words:

If the nations of this hemisphere should fail to meet their commitments against outside Communist penetration, then this government will not hesitate in meeting its primary obligations, which are the security of this nation. Should that time ever come, we do not intend to be lectured on intervention by those whose charac-

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ter was steeped for all time in the bloody secrets of Madrid!

The message of Cuba, of Laos, of Latin America, these messages are all the same. The complacent, the self-indulgent, the soft societies are about to be swept away with the debris of history. Only the strong, only the industrious, only the determined, only the courageous, only the visionary, who determine the real nature of our struggle can possibly survive.

I am determined upon our system's survival and success, regardless of the cost, and regardless of the peril.

After this flourish of trumpets, the news of the following days was bound to be anticlimactic. Nothing happened to Castro, and Mr. Kennedy's primary follow-up was a round of meetings that came to include General Eisenhower, General Douglas MacArthur, Richard M. Nixon, Governor Nelson Rockefeller and Senator Barry M. Goldwater. Within the Administration, the President assigned his brother, Attorney General Robert Kennedy, and General Maxwell Taylor, to examine the procedures that led to the debacle. The results of the inquiry are still secret.

In public, the President continued his policy of avoiding reproaches. "There is an old saying," he remarked ruefully at his April 21 news conference, "that victory has a hundred fathers and defeat is an orphan." Considering the scale of the disaster, it is striking that there were no firings and no major resignations. Indeed, the only public chiding administered by the President was aimed at the press. Administration circles were clearly vexed with the press, contending that too much publicity stripped the "cover" from the invasion. Some officials even seemed to imply that the invasion failed because of excessive publicity. On April 27, Mr. Kennedy spoke before the American Newspaper Publishers Association in New York, and at one point admonished:

Every newspaper now asks itself, with respect to every story: "Is it news?" All I suggest is that you add the question: "Is it in the national interest?" . . . And should the press of America consider and recommend the voluntary assumption of specific steps or machinery, I can assure that we will cooperate wholeheartedly with those recommendations.

To many editors and reporters, keenly sensitive to the

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difficulties of governing the "black" service, the President's apparent call for self-censorship was perplexing. In the specific instance of the Cuban invasion, the operation was scarcely a "secret" to Fidel Castro. The very scale of the operation, the laxness of security, the volubility of Cuban exiles, the crude hoax of the pre-invasion raid—all these assured that Castro himself would not be "fooled." It was not the press that embarrassed the Government. The Government embarrassed itself by sponsoring a venture that sought to put a free press in the position of conveying flimsy lies that might more appropriately appear in *Pravda* or *Revolución*.

IX

In Cuba, it was a mad carnival in which a gifted ringmaster missed not a single showman's trick. For five successive nights, Fidel Castro gloatingly paraded his prisoners before TV cameras. Viewers in Key West could watch the audience chant "to the wall" as an announcer asked Cubans to telephone if they spotted any "war criminals" among the captives.

A woman burst forward and identified Ramón Calviño as a Batista torturer; even exiles acknowledged that this "freedom fighter" had fifteen murders on his record. Others among the prisoners were broken and confused. Some talked back spunkily, including Carlos Varona, son of "Tony" Varona, who snapped back: "If you have so many people on your side, why don't you hold elections?"

May Day was boisterous in Havana, and Premier Castro made it official by proclaiming his country a "socialist" state. Soon, he began playing cat-and-mouse with the United States by putting up his prisoners for barter and then hagglings over how many tractors each man was worth. The negotiations came to nothing, but not before a flock of newspapermen entered Cuba and were given a grand battlefield tour by the Premier, who was every bit the great general musing philosophically about battles past.

Castro's battlefield tour provides perhaps the best epilogue to the Cuban invasion. One of the authors vividly recalls the "Maximum Leader's" at Playa Giron on June 15, 1961, putting his foot on the wreckage of a rebel B-26 and asking his guests to come closer.

"You see," he said, briskly waving his cigar, "they underestimated us and they used their own forces incorrectly."

As a result, the beach was the main fronted workers beach resort at the edge of the marshes.

The Premier listed as tactical errors in the deployment and timing of the attacking force. During his trek around the beach Castro said that he had no idea where the landing would come and that he expected his enemies to make several simultaneous landings instead of committing all their forces on a single front.

"That was their first error," he expounded. "And because they had established a large beachhead, it became an urgent political problem for us to oust them as quickly as possible so that they would not establish a government here."

Castro said that his government kept most of its heavy military equipment in Havana, and as soon as news of the attack had come, flat-bed trucks were ordered to start carrying tanks to the area. That the attackers permitted this to happen, he said, was their second major error. The paratroopers, he held, were brought on the scene too late to cut communications.

Then, he went on, several units of the rebel army waited too long after the first wave went ashore thus allowing Cuban aircraft to sink the ship *Houston* with its battalion of troops and communications equipment. The ship, her superstructure jutting from the water, could be seen from the beach where we talked.

Continuing his critique, the Premier elaborated his belief that the rebels had used their paratroopers "too conservatively." When asked how they should have been used, he wagged his finger and laughed, saying, "I am not going to tell you that."

The problem, he said, is that the rebels did not have a "guerrilla mentality, like we do, and they acted like a conventional army." He was wearing his usual olive-green fatigue boots and brown beret during a lecture he obviously enjoyed. "We used guerrilla tactics to infiltrate their lines, while attacking steadily from the air and on the ground," he said. "You must never let the enemy sleep."

He was in agreement with the surviving rebels that they had first-rate equipment and excellent fire-power. Most of the equipment was captured intact, including four tanks in serviceable condition. Castro conceded that his forces had made the error of advancing on the open road that rises above the quicksand of the marshes where they were easy targets for rebel mortars and aircraft.

The Premier would not say how many men he had in

action, but he said that his losses neared ninety men—most killed by aircraft action. The rebel survivors said they were sure they had killed many more.

Throughout, the Cuban stressed the role of his airpower and said that the invaders had made a major miscalculation in believing that their April 15 raid had destroyed aircraft on the ground. Actually, he said, no aircraft had been destroyed because they had been dispersed. When the invasion came, he continued, he had more planes than pilots to fly them. Ground crews worked feverishly to put as many aircraft into flying shape as possible.

Visiting the beachhead two months later, it was difficult to imagine that heavy fighting had taken place there. There was a crater caused by a 500-pound bomb near a beach house. On a concrete landing strip that the rebels held briefly there was the wreckage of a B-26. Nearby lay a rocket with United States Navy markings.

And the sky above was as blue as the Caribbean, as deceptively peaceful as the waves lapping against the shore.

CHAPTER EIGHT



EPILOGUE

Looking backward through the telescope of retrospect a year later, the Cuban invasion seems a less implausible catastrophe than it did in the cruel April of 1961. Time, however, has not scaled down the dimension of the fiasco. The Cuban invasion was, as Theodore Draper has remarked, one of those rare events in history—a perfect failure.

It was a failure of mind, of imagination, of common sense—a failure that seems all the more grotesque now as the bright insiders in the Kennedy Administration discuss it with a certain mordant relish. It solved nothing. It won nothing—indeed, perhaps its one redeeming virtue was that it was settled with blessed speed before thousands of brave men rounded up in Cuban jails were slaughtered by a panicky regime.

As a mechanical failure, defeat was built in by the very flimsy pretense on which the invasion was based. For political reasons, and surely not unreasonable ones, President

Kennedy felt that overt involvement by the United States was out of the question. Mr. Kennedy did not want what his aides described as a "Hungary in reverse" in which it would seem to the world that Washington was no different from Moscow and would act just as ruthlessly to crush a rebellious neighbor.

From beginning to end, therefore, the pretense was officially maintained that the invaders had the hearty good wishes of the United States, but little else. The seemingly obvious fact that it would be impossible to conceal American complicity—at least in a free society with a free press—able to hear the gossip of loquacious Cubans—this fact never seemed to dawn on the operators at the top.

Mr. Kennedy set the ground rules by proscribing any direct United States support. Both the CIA and the Joint Chiefs of Staff, let it be stressed again, accepted this limitation—and acquiesced in every modification aimed at preserving the fiction of a "spontaneous" Cuban invasion. Yet these modifications had the effect of perhaps fatally impairing the military feasibility of an already risky plan.

The key to the military outcome, in terms of holding a beachhead, was largely control of the air. In order to conceal the United States role, it was agreed that no American pilots would participate, that no planes would fly from either mainland United States or Puerto Rico, and that only obsolete prop-driven planes would be supplied to the invaders. Finally, at the last minute, a second air strike aimed at crippling Castro's air power was canceled. The net effect of these self-imposed restraints was to enable Castro to sink a good part of the invasion armada before the fight had really begun. In the air battles over the Bay of Pigs, the lumbering rebel B-26's had no protection against the faster Castro T-33 trainer jets and Sea Furies. Yet within the limitations of operation, it was impossible to supply the invaders with fighters because the base in Guatemala was beyond fighter range.

As a military failure, the debacle might have been prevented if the Joint Chiefs had frankly advised that the self-imposed limitations robbed the venture of a chance to succeed. The Joint Chiefs approved the plan, apparently without looking ahead to the next moves in the chess game based on Castro's capabilities. They did not insist on contingency plans based on the possibility of partial or total failure.

Mechanical failure was also built in by the very assignment to the CIA of a military-political task beyond its competence. With no independent checks operating on the

CIA, the Agency quickly became the captive rather than the master of its own operation. Lulled by its easy earlier success in Guatemala, the CIA over-estimated its ability to manipulate history. Step by step, the Agency became infatuated with its own judgment as it plunged deeper into a labyrinth of its own making. Instead of a hard-headed, realistic plan, the Agency opted to gamble.

In February 1960, President Eisenhower gave the Agency authorization to proceed with the training of an exile force. By early fall, the camps in Guatemala were in full swing and an army of about 500 was in existence. At this point, the CIA thought in terms of a multiple operation involving a series of scattered landings tied in with an underground insurrection. But the Agency had little patience with or knowledge of the Cuban underground, and as time went on more and more reliance was placed on a single, all-or-nothing invasion strike. Indeed the steady expansion of the exile army had the effect of predetermining the way it would be used.

The CIA's misadventures in political policies tied in closely with its military preconceptions. Distrusting the underground, wary of the left-liberal MRP, CIA agents placed their main reliance on aging Cuban politicians of honorable intentions but limited appeal and on adventurous youngsters with conservative leanings who was cast in the role of Guatemala's Castillo Armas. If the invasion had succeeded, the government literally glued together by the CIA would have seemed to all the world like phant proxies for Washington, in the pattern of Colonel Castillo Armas in Guatemala.

Taken together, the CIA operation was like a car decked out with flashy accessories—a musical horn, a two-way radio and tailfins three feet high—but lacking a motor. The motor could not be installed by outside mechanics—the vital missing part was the participation of the Cuban people in whose name the invasion was fought. From the beginning, there was a preconception that Cubans so loathed Fidel Castro that they would jump to the barricades at the first opportunity and throw the rascal out. But there was more to the Castro revolution than a simple question of communism. Although many of the Cubans in Miami lost because of Castro, hundreds of thousands of Cubans on the island gained. A meaningful insurrection would have to come from within, and the incentive for revolt would have to be stronger than diatribes, no doubt deserved, about a Red specter that meant little to *guaitos* in the hills. Even if American air power had enabled the rebels to hang on a

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while hector on the beach, it is highly debatable whether there would have been any mass defections from Castro. External invasion was the form of attack that would best enable Castro to rally even wavering supporters. And the fact that the CIA failed to alert the underground neutralized the one internal group that might have altered the outcome.

Thus, the invasion accomplished just the reverse of its objectives. Instead of eliminating Castro, it strengthened his hold on his people and inflated his prestige in the world. Instead of isolating Castroism, it ended up by momentarily isolating the United States. And in place of dramatizing the aggressive intent of Castroite communism, it seemed to dramatize the bullying tactics of the United States.

II

It was a failure of mechanics and imagination—and it was also a moral failure. The immorality, in our view, did not lie in assisting the genuine democrats who opposed the perversion of the Cuban revolution. Rather, it lay in the way the assistance was rendered, leaving this country with only a few shreds of defense against the charge of violating national, hemisphere and international laws. Yet, in fact, the United States was not willing to go the limit, so that America earned the opprobrium for transgressing without winning any of the benefits.

Some feel that the United States should hew to the strictest letter of nonintervention pledges, withholding either overt or covert help for democrats who are struggling against some odious foreign despot. But adherents of this view must contend with an argument made more than a century ago by John Stuart Mill, the unimpeachable apostle of liberal political philosophy. In his little-known essay, "A Few Words on Non-Intervention," first published in 1859, Mill wrote:

The doctrine of non-intervention, to be a legitimate principle of morality, must be accepted by all governments. The despot must consent to be bound by it as well as the free states. Unless they do, the profession comes to this miserable issue—that the wrong side may help the wrong, but the right must not help the right.

Intervention to enforce non-intervention is always rightful, always moral, if not always prudent. . . . It might not have been right for England (even apart

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from the question of prudence) to have taken part with Hungary in its noble struggle against Austria, although the Austrian government in Hungary was in some sense a foreign yoke.

But when, the Hungarians having shown themselves likely to prevail in this struggle, the Russian despot intervened, and joining his forces to that of Austria, delivered back the Hungarians, bound hand and foot, to their exasperated oppressors. It would have been an honorable and virtuous act on the part of England to have declared that this should not be; and that if the Russians gave assistance to the wrong side, England would aid the right.

A great deal has changed in the world since 1859, although the Russian despot still binds Hungary hand and foot. In the military sphere, nuclear weapons have given more importance to the question of the prudence of intervention. In world diplomacy, treaties now set some limits on overt intervention.

But in Cuba, would it have been more "moral" if the Russians gave assistance to the wrong side while the United States turned its back on the right? The Cuban people have by now become the victims of what Mill called a "native tyranny upheld by foreign arms." Surely it is dissembling to invoke the phrase "self-determination" in discussing the plight of a people who since Castro took power have never had a chance to cast a vote, despite the most explicit promises that elections would be held. When Raúl Roa sanctimoniously lectures the United States on nonintervention, it is well to remember that his own government refuses to respect the same principle.

We have attempted in our narrative to point out that United States blunders abetted Castro's communization of Cuba. But we cannot accept the argument that the United States "drove" Castro into Khrushchev's arms. Getting the "Maximum Leader" to embrace the Russians was like bribing Don Juan to have a date with Venus.

In the light of the foreign-backed autocracy that Castro has imposed on Cuba, in our view there was nothing immoral about helping the dictator's opponents. But surely prudence should have indicated a quite different method of aid. The United States is party to a series of treaties that proscribe overt intervention into a neighbor's affairs. These were the same treaties cited repeatedly by the State Depart-

ment in condemning Castro's own attempts to "export" his revolution.

Moreover, in Latin America, the United States has yet to live down the long era when a squadron of Marines and gunboats were regarded as the indispensable tools of Caribbean diplomacy. Latin Americans are hypersensitive to the question of intervention, and the invasion was an affront to those sensibilities. Remember that in April 1961, Castro was also an unsullied idol to millions of Latin Americans, who saw events in Cuba from a quite different perspective than they were seen in Washington.

For all these reasons, the United States approach to helping the forces of freedom in Cuba ought to have taken a different and more sophisticated form. In the long run, no communist satellite can flourish only 90 miles from the soil of Florida. Not even the euphoria of revolution could forever blind the Cuban people to the simple reality that their island has no future in trading its major crop halfway around the world to a country that has ample sugar stocks of its own. Finally, few people in the world have shown a more persistent willingness to rise up again and again to oppose odious tyrants. Indeed, Mr. Khrushchev, with a peasant's shrewd sense, was smarter in this respect than the CIA. While Moscow has found it useful to provide help for Castro, the Russians have refused to invest their rubles heavily in a country with so uncertain a future and such effervescent leadership.

The invasion was an attempt to hurry history; a slower, surer, more politically defensible course would have been to provide discreet help to the Cuban underground. Such assistance could have been genuinely covert, and even if detected, could have been disclaimed officially by the United States. Castro himself, it should be recalled, smuggled guns from Florida.

Intelligence sources maintain that the underground was not sufficiently "security" conscious, that the Castro police was too efficient, and that it was difficult to smuggle "communicators" with radio equipment into Cuba. Strangely, the CIA was able to overcome the logistic problems of organizing an entire miniature army in Guatemala, but was seemingly unable to manage sneaking a few men, radios and explosives into an island 90 miles from Florida.

In any event, this course was not followed before (or after) the invasion. Three times, within the space of a decade, the United States has managed to undercut its best democratic friends in Cuba. The first time was during the

Batista era, when Washington paid little attention to the embattled, and noncommunist, opposition groups; the second time was after the Castro revolution, when clumsy United States policy seemed time and again to play into Castro's hands and to impair the influence of moderates; finally, there was the invasion, in which the United States engendered a sense of betrayal among Cuban democrats in exile and in the underground.

It is not a happy record.

III

Who, in the end, was responsible for the Cuban calamity? It is difficult to single out villains, because the tragedy sprang from a conspiracy of circumstance. Clearly, the President of the United States must accept the responsibility for approving the venture and for failing to heed the counsel of his own common sense. And whatever the reason, the President's decision to cancel the second aid strike before the invasion was a serious blow to an already risky plan—although those who talk only about this decision often conveniently overlook the other mistakes for which the President bore more limited responsibility.

The men around Mr. Kennedy, too, must share in the blame. These bright and able aides failed to see that the scale of the invasion was too big to conceal United States complicity. Strangely, no effort was made to probe deeper into the Miami operation despite the warnings that American prestige was hanging on the work of men miscast for their role. And the Joint Chiefs, as we have pointed out, also failed to apply the brakes by using some foresight about the capability of an adversary.

In essence, the invasion was rooted in a military miscalculation compounded by political miscalculations that in turn rested on intelligence miscalculations. The burden of the institutional blame falls most heavily on the Agency that conceived and directed the invasion itself. The CIA was simply not equipped to make the military and political decisions thrust upon it. The Agency, in building up the invasion force, became involved in questions of almost metaphysical nicety in trying to conceal its own hand. Obsolete bombers were permitted the invaders—presumably because they could be purchased on the open market—but obsolete aircraft carriers that might have assured air support were withheld because that might give the show away.

In the command strategy, CIA operatives seemed to pass

over the points of psychological preparation that are as vital as military preparation. The island itself was not thrown into confusion by preparatory sabotage, and the invaders themselves landed on the beach with the complete confidence that air support would shelter them. Thus the island was not prepared for the invasion—and the invaders were not prepared for the devastating blow to morale that came when Castro's planes dominated the air.

Yet the CIA was not behaving idiotically; it was in many senses responding to the insulated rationalism that infects a sheltered bureaucracy. Indeed, if there is an institutional villain, it is bureaucracy itself—that hulking, stubborn giant that seemingly can only look where it has been and not whither it is tending.

Max Weber, the German sociologist and great natural historian of bureaucracy, would not have been overly surprised by the Cuban invasion. Glance at these attributes that Weber detected in the modern bureaucracy (quoted from H. H. Gerth and C. Wright Mills, translators of *From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology*):

Under normal conditions, the power position of a fully developed bureaucracy is always overpowering. The "political master finds himself in the position of the "dilettante" who stands opposite the "expert," facing the trained official who stands within the management of administration.

Every bureaucracy seeks to increase the superiority of the professionally informed by keeping their knowledge and intentions secret. Bureaucratic administration always tends to be an administration of "secret sessions"; in so far as it can, it hides its knowledge and actions from criticism.

The concept of the "official secret" is the specific invention of bureaucracy, and nothing is so fanatically defended by the bureaucracy as this attitude. . . . In facing a parliament, the bureaucracy, out of a sure power instinct, fights every attempt of parliament to gain knowledge by means of its own experts or from interest groups.

The absolute monarch is powerless opposite the superior knowledge of the bureaucratic expert—in a certain sense more powerless than any other political head. All the scornful decrees of Frederick the Great concerning the "abolition of serfdom" were derailed, as it were, in the official mechanism simply ignored them as the occasional ideas of a dilettante.

Max Weber was propounding the traits of bureaucracy in general; the case of a secret bureaucracy raises special questions even more difficult to answer because the bureaucrat is free from the normal controls of parliamentary inquiry or press comment. Once it has ventured down a blind alley, there is little built into our system that can redirect the secret bureaucracy on a different course.

In the case of the Cuban invasion, a segment of a powerful bureaucracy committed itself to a specific approach to a particular problem. Its money, its prestige, its *esprit de corps* were enrolled in a project the bureaucratic experts adjudged to be sound. The wheels ground forward and the momentum of the bureaucracy seemed to become irreversible as it swept along an entire government behind a plan that rested on the secret knowledge of those who were steering in darkness. One over-all lesson of the Cuban invasion is that in the cathedral of bureaucracy an outspoken atheist can perform an essential function.

IV

But there are further "sobering lessons for us all to learn," as the President said on April 20, 1961, when the gall of defeat was bitterest. Surely a few general reflections on the role of the CIA are in order. Palpably, the agency is in a difficult position. Its officers cannot—or at least should not—engage in public debate in defending the CIA's deeds. Obvious blunders receive sensational headlines; quiet successes go (as they should) unreported. At the higher levels, the Agency is staffed by men of probity and experience, and one can assume that the CIA does a competent job in gathering information.

Yet during the past years, the Agency has tended to assume an activist role in many areas of the world—a tendency that was especially marked during the Eisenhower years when a passive Chief Executive allowed the CIA wide latitude. The result of the near-autonomous status was not always happy. American ambassadors complained that at times the CIA seemed to be running its own foreign policy in the field; reporters exchanged horror stories about what CIA operatives were doing in scattered corners of the world, notably in Southeast Asia. A recurring theme was the tendency of CIA agents, often working with military mission officers, to gravitate to the right and support the most effusive but often least effective anti-communists.

Some of this bias may spring from a selection process that frequently brings into the Agency covert operators whose

particulate zeal does more credit to their hearts than heads. To this can be added the unheralded legacy of the CIA from its predecessor agency, the Office of Strategic Services. When World War II was over, most of the ablest veterans of the OSS returned to civilian work. But those who found a vocation in the conspiratorial twilight world of the "black" service tended to stay on, and many later joined the CIA.

The conspiratorial personality at its worst is memorably described by Rebecca West in *The Meaning of Treason*:

Sweet it is to be not what the next man thinks one, but far more powerful . . . to charm the confidences from the unsuspecting stranger; to put one's finger through the whimsical darkness and touch the fabric of state . . . and to do all this for nobility's sake.

It is the misfortune of our age . . . that the life of the political conspirator offers the man of restricted capacity but imaginative energy greater excitement and satisfaction than he can ever derive from overt activities.

The description snugly fits the bizarre cast that romped around Miami, making and breaking future governments of Cuba. At one point, reportedly, Captain Artime jokingly offered the job of Cuban Sports Commissioner to Mr. Bender who, with equal hilarity, accepted. "They come by plane, by train and by bus," one exile in Miami observed, "and in half an hour everyone knows who they are." Indeed, Mr. Bender's telephone number was casually offered to a reporter in a bar by a Cuban friend within an hour of the newspaperman's arrival in Miami in March 1961.

Power corrupts; secret power intoxicates. Our men in Miami lived beyond the law's reach, spent vast and unaccounted-for funds; posted satisfying cryptic reports to Washington; and savored to the hilt the giddy sense of being the secret makers of history.

This is not a cast of characters to whom one would confidently entrust the most delicate mission of making foreign policy in a controversy close to home but with ramifications around the world. Here, ultimately, rests one of the main springs of the Cuban tragedy: the delegation of American prestige into the hands of agents who by normal personnel standards might be adjudged misfits or adventurers.

One painful lesson of the Cuban invasion is that there must be limits to the kind of clandestine ventures that the CIA may sponsor. Put succinctly, the Agency should be an instrument and not an originator of foreign policy, and the scale of

its operations ought not to compromise the free institutions the CIA is defending. It is one thing to fabricate covert operations to fit within the framework of a free society, and quite another to try and remake the free society to suit the convenience of a secret bureaucracy. In organizing a miniature army recruited from American soil, the CIA was counting on a degree of collaboration for essentially lawless activities that only a monolithic despotism can exact. That it was done so badly suggests that this kind of clandestine operation is not one that Americans can do well. That so many political blunders were made suggests that the founding fathers were wise to delegate the administration of foreign affairs to the Department of State.

A larger lesson involves the total American reaction to the Cuban revolution. The invasion plan was in some sense a logical extension of prevailing attitudes to a revolutionary situation. Like it or not, Americans must learn to work within the swift currents of change that are sweeping through the world. In terms of simple realism, it is impossible to emulate King Canute and order the waves to recede.

If the CIA plan, based on its Guatemala success, was not an attempt to reverse the wave,—it was clearly carried out in a fashion that implied the tide did not exist. Like so much of the American reaction to the Cuban revolution, the CIA did not take seriously enough the depth and breadth of the change signified by the emergence of Fidel Castro. There was a reluctance to face the fact that Cuba was in rebellion against the past—a past in which American interests were deeply implicated. What happened in Cuba, in its initial phases, was a declaration of independence; if subsequently Castro perverted the revolution, he has not stifled the demand for independence. Indeed, the same impulse that he once encouraged may yet turn against him and bring about his downfall. The Cuban drama has not yet ended, and the island's genuine partisans of freedom will surely still have the last word.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

For obvious reasons, the authors cannot list the names of the many Cubans and Americans whose confidential interviews went into the making of this chronicle. What can be said is that we have made an honest effort to seek out varying views and to subject points in dispute to careful examination. But in describing an event of such manifest complexity, some errors may be inescapable.

As journalists, the authors have followed the Cuban revolution since its first days and know most of the leaders whose decisions played a part in the story. Besides our first-hand experience, we have drawn on the vast body of published material about Cuba and the April invasion.

Among the post-mortems, Stewart Alsop's "The Lessons of the Cuban Disaster," *Saturday Evening Post*, June 24, 1961; Theodore Draper, "Cuba and U. S. Policy," *New Leader*, June 5, 1961; and Charles J. V. Murphy, "Cuba: The Record Set Straight," *Fortune*, September, 1961; are especially useful, although the Murphy material must be consulted with caution since the writer's facts and interpretation are in serious dispute.

Other articles worth examining include Stuart Novins, "The Invasion That Could Not Succeed," *Reporter*, May 11, 1961; Louis J. Halle, "Lessons of the Cuban Blunder," *New Republic*, June 5, 1961; and the reports of the two major news magazines, "The Cuban Disaster," *Time*, April 28, 1961; and "Cuba: What Went Wrong?" *Newsweek*, May 1, 1961. The May 6, 1961 "Letter from Washington" by Richard Rovere in the *New Yorker* contains valuable sidelights. Michael Walzer, "Cuba: The Invasion and the Consequences," *Dissent*, June, 1961, is a view from the left. See also Ronald Hilton, "The Cuba Trap," *Nation*, May 7, 1961. Hanson W. Baldwin presented a military interpretation in a two-part series in the *New York Times* beginning July 31, 1961. "The Exiles' Story," a four-part series by George Sherman, appeared in the *Washington Star* commencing on May 17, 1961. "What Went Wrong?" a critique in the May 1, 1961 *New Republic*, presents an informed analysis.

The problem of the press is discussed in Douglass Cater and Charles Bartlett, "Is All the News Fit to Print?" *Reporter*, May 11, 1961; and in a master's thesis, *The Cuban Invasion and the American Press*, now being submitted to George Washington University by Allen Bradford. In the mass of official literature, the most memorable State Department White Paper is entitled *Cuba*. Department of State Publication 7171, Released April 1961. The transcript of post-mortem hearings conducted by a Senate Foreign Relations Subcommittee has not yet been made public.

On the Cuban side, we have drawn on *Playa Giron*, an 114-page booklet published in Havana and giving the Castro version of the fight. Ernesto Guevara's *Guerrilla Warfare* is now available in translation, published by Frederick Praeger, New York, 1961.

We also owe special thanks to the many busy persons who generously gave us their time in order that this second draft of history might not be needlessly in error. It goes without saying, however, that any errors of fact or judgment rest solely with the authors, and that our opinions are not to be attributed to any person or institution other than ourselves.

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