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Castro and the Kennedys

To the Editor:

I am sorry that Tom Wicker chose to rely in his June 2 column on the incomplete version of the George Smathers oral history as printed in Richard J. Walton's "Cold War and Counterrevolution." Had Mr. Wicker checked the Smathers transcript himself, he would have discovered that President Kennedy, in Senator Smathers' words, "finally said to me, 'George, I love to have you over, I want you to come over, but I want you to do me a favor. I like to visit with you, I want to discuss things with you, but I don't want you to talk to me any more about Cuba.'" And later: "I raised the question about Cuba and what could be done and so on. And I remember that he took his fork and just hit his plate and it cracked and he said, 'Now, dammit, I wish you wouldn't do that. Let's quit talking about this subject.' And so I said all right, it's fine with me. I appreciate this opportunity to come over and visit with you, and this subject I won't bring up again.' And I never did."

Quite apart from all the other reasons, moral and prudential, that led John and Robert Kennedy to reject the idea of assassinating Castro, it must be remembered that both men were deeply concerned, almost obsessed, with the fate of the Bay of Pigs prisoners. Nothing would have doomed these prisoners more certainly than an American attempt to kill Castro.

ARTHUR SCHLESINGER Jr.
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