Excerpts From Speech on Coverage of Bay of Pigs Buildup

Following are excerpts from an address delivered yesterday by Clifton Daniel, managing editor of The New York Times, before the World Press Institute in St. Paul—an address that adds information about events preceding the Bay of Pigs to what has been presented before by Arthur M. Schlesinger Jr. and other observers:

This morning I am going to tell you a story—one that has never been told before—the inside story of The New York Times, and the Bay of Pigs, something of a mystery story.

In its issue of Nov. 19, 1960, The Nation published an editorial under the heading, "Are We Training Cuban Guerrillas?"

I had never seen this editorial and had never heard it mentioned until a reader of The New York Times sent in a letter to the editor. He asked whether the allegations in the editorial were true, and, if so, why hadn't they been reported by The New York Times, whose resources for gathering information were much greater than those of a little magazine like The Nation.

The Nation said: "Fidel Castro may have a sounder basis for his expressed fears of a U.S.-financed 'Guatemala-type' invasion than most of us realize. On a recent visit to Guatemala, Dr. Ronald Hilton, director of the institute of Hispanic-American Studies at Stanford University, was told: "'The United States Central Intelligence Agency has acquired a large tract of land, at least as much as 800 acres, in excess of $1-million, which is steadily fenced and heavily guarded. . . It is 'common knowledge' in Guatemala that the tract is being used as a training ground for Cuban counter-revolutionaries, who are preparing for an eventual landing in Cuba. . . United States personnel and equipment are being used at the base. . .""  

"2. Substantially all of the above was reported by a well-known Guatemalan journalist. . . In La Hora, a Guatemalan newspaper . . ."  

"3. More recently, the President of Guatemala, forced to take cognizance of the persistent reports concerning the base, went on TV and admitted its existence, but refused to disclose its precise location or any other facts about it. . ."  

"We believe the reports mean something we can, and should, be checked inside and out by all U.S. news media with correspondents in Guatemala. . ."  

TRAINING FOR BAY OF PIGS: Anti-Castro Cuban exiles as they took part in maneuvers in unidentified Caribbean country a few days before invasion of Cuba in April, 1961. Papers faced difficult decisions on reporting these activities at the time.

And now Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr. takes up the story in "A Thousand Days," his account of John F. Kennedy's years in the White House. "On March 31," Mr. Schlesinger says, "Howard Handie-  
man of U.S. News and World Report, returning from 10 days in Florida, said to me that the exiles were telling everyone that they would receive United States recognition as soon as they landed in Cuba, to be followed by the overt provision of arms and supplies. . ."  

"A few days later Gilbert Harrison of the New Republic sent over the galleys of a pseudonymous piece called "Our Men in Miami," asking whether there was any reason why it should not be published. It was a careful, accurate and devastating account of C.I.A. activities among the refugees, written, I learned later, by Karl Meyer. Obviously its publication in a responsible magazine would cause trouble, but could the Government properly ask an editor to suppress the truth? Defeated by the moral issue, I handed the article to the President, who instantly read it and expressed the hope that it could be stopped. Harrison accept-  

"About the same time Ted Sorel filed a story to The New York Times from Miami describing the recruitment drive and reporting that a landing on Cuba was imminent. Turner Catledge, the managing editor, called James Reston, who was in his weekend retreat in Virginia, to ask his advice. Reston counseled against publication: either the story would alert Castro, in which case The Times would be respon-  

sible for casualties on the beach, or else the expedition would be canceled, in which case The Times would be respon-  

sible for grave interference with national policy. This was another patriotic act; but in retrospect I have wondered whether, if the press had behaved irrespon-  

sibly, it would not have
Tad Szulc's own recollection, calling it a mistake. In Madrid the other day, it is that in "insecurity" and "sensationalism" were considerably toned down, including the elimination of statements about the imminent of an invasion. "Specifically," Mr. Szulc said, "a decision was made in New York not to mention the CIA's part in the invasion preparations, not to use the date of the landing in the Bay of Pigs, and on April 15, not to give away in detail the fact that the first air strike on Cuba was carried out from Guatemala."

After the dummy for the front page of The Times for Friday, April 7, 1961, was changed, Mr. Bernstein and Mr. Catledge went to appeal for reconsideration. Mr. Catledge recalls that Mr. Johnson, the president, said he would not make a comment on that story.

An angry intervention by the president himself the reporter, the managing editor, sat in Mr. Bernstein's office on night duty. He was angry at the assistant managing editor, the news editor and the assistant news editor, who were working on the story. The New York Times is being blamed for misreporting the invasion of Cuba, which was carried out on April 17, 1961, by anti-Castro forces financed and directed by the Central Intelligence Agency.

The New York Times published a story on April 15, 1961, by Tad Szulc, a veteran correspondent in Latin America, about the training of anti-Castro forces in the United States. The story was based on information obtained from several sources, including the CIA.

Mr. Szulc's story was published in The New York Times on April 15, 1961, under the headline "Tad Szulc's story was dummied for Page 1 under a dummy that was the important thing done that night.

Mr. Bernstein and Mr. Catledge were angry at the intervention. They believed a colossal mistake was made and, together they went into the room to talk.
talking the same way. In a conversation with Orvil Dryfoos in the White House on Sept. 13, 1962, he said, "I wish you had run everything on Cuba... I am just sorry you didn't tell it at the time."

Those words were echoed by Arthur Schlesinger when he wrote, "I have wondered whether the press had behaved irresponsibly. It would not have spared the country a disaster."

They are still echoing down the corridors of history. Just the other day in Washington, Senator Russell of Georgia confessed that, although he was chairman of the Senate Armed Forces Committee, he didn't know the timing of the Bay of Pigs operation.

"If only I had been consulted," he said in a speech to the Senate, "because I would have strongly advised against this kind of operation if I had been." It is not so easy, it seems, even for Presidents, their most intimate advisers and distinguished United States Senators to know always what is really in the national interest. One is tempted to say sometimes—even a mere newspaperman knows better.

My view is that the Bay of Pigs operation might well have been canceled and the country and the world could have been saved enormous embarrassment if The New York Times and other newspapers had been more diligent in the performance of their duty—their duty to keep the public informed on matters vitally affecting our national honor and existence, not to mention our national security.

Perhaps, as Mr. Reston believes, it was too late to stop the operation by the time we printed Ted Sorensen's story on April 17. "If I had it to do over, I would do exactly what we did at the time," Mr. Reston says. "It is ridiculous for you 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."

"The thing had been cranked up too far. The C.I.A. would have had to disarm the anti-Castro forces physically. Jack Kennedy was in no mood to do anything like that."

Freidel to Graver Crisis

The Bay of Pigs, as it turned out, was the prelude to an even graver crisis—the Cuban missile crisis of 1962.

In Arthur Schlesinger's opinion, failure in 1961 contributed to success in 1962. President Kennedy had learned from experience, and once again The New York Times was involved.

On May 28, 1963, the President sat at his desk in the White House with his own hand written a letter to Mrs. Orvil Dryfoos, whose husband had just died at the age of 50. The letter was on White House paper, and the President used both sides of the paper.

"Dear Marian:

"I want you to know how sorry I was to hear the sad news of Orvil's untimely death.

"I had known him for a number of years and two experiences I had with him in the last two years gave me a clear insight into his unusual qualities of mind and heart. One involved a matter of national security—the other his decision to refrain from printing on October 21st the news, which only the man for The Times possessed, on the presence of Russian missiles in Cuba, upon my informing him that we needed twenty-four hours more to complete our preparations.

"This decision of his made far more effective our later actions and thereby contributed greatly to our national safety."

"All this means very little now, but I did wish you to know that a good many people some distance away, had the same regard for Orvil as character as did those who knew him best.

"I know what a blow this is to you, and I hope you will accept Jackie's and my deepest sympathy."

"Sincerely, John F. Kennedy.

"In the Cuban missile crisis, things were handled somewhat differently than in the previous year. The President telephoned directly to the publisher of The New York Times.

"He had virtually been invited to do so in their conversation in the White House barely a month before.

"That conversation had been on the subject of security leaks in the press and how to prevent them, and Mr. Dryfoos had told the President what was needed was prior information and prior consultation. He said that, when there was danger of security uniformation getting into print, the thing to do was to call in the publishers and explain matters to them.

"In the missile crisis, President Kennedy did exactly that.

"Ten minutes before I was due on this platform this morning Mr. Reston telephoned me from Washington to give me further details of what happened that day.

A Call From Kennedy

"The President called me," Mr. Reston said. "He understood that I had been talking to Mac Bundy and he knew from the line of questioning that we knew the critical fact — that Russian missiles had indeed been emplaced in Cuba."

"The President told me," Mr. Reston continued, "that he was going on television on Monday evening to report to the American people. He said that if we published the news about the missiles Khrushchev could actually give him an ultimatum before he went on the air. Those were Kennedy's exact words.

"I told him I understood," Mr. Reston said this morning, "but I also told him I could not do anything about it. And this is an important thought that you should convey to those young reporters in your audience.

"I told the President I would report to my office in New York and if my advice were asked I would recommend that we not publish. It was not my duty to decide. Still, he said it was the same as that of an ambassador—to report to my superiors."

"I recommended to the President that he call New York. He did so." That was the sequence of events as Mr. Reston recalled them this morning. The President telephoned the publisher of The New York Times; Mr. Dryfoos in turn put the issue up to Mr. Reston and his staff.

"And the news that the Soviet Union had atomic missiles in Cuba only 50 miles from the coast of Florida was withheld until the Government announced it."

What conclusion do I reach from all these facts? What moral do I draw from my story?

My conclusion is this: Information is essential to people who propose to govern themselves. It is the responsibility of serious journalists to supply that information to the people in this country or in the country they serve, and to make sure that the foreign colleagues come.

Still, the primary responsibility for safeguarding our national interest must rest always with our leaders and our policy, and to be constantly informing the people, who are the masters of us all—both the press and the politicians.