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The Bay of Pigs

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THE BAY OF PIGS

by

Arnold E. Larson

B.A. in History, Concordia College 1932

A Thesis

Submitted to the Faculty

of the

University of North Dakota

in partial fulfillment of the requirements

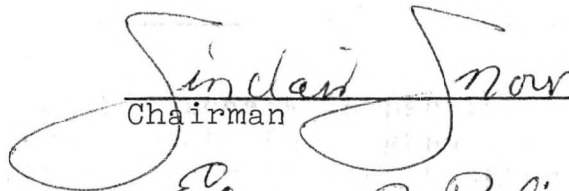
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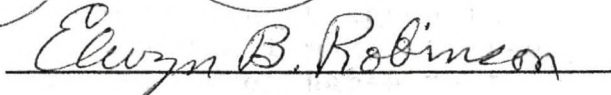
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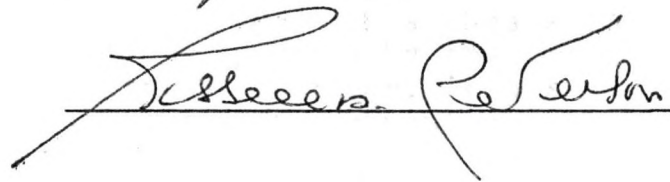
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This thesis submitted by Arnold E. Larson in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Degree of Master of Arts in the University of North Dakota is hereby approved by the Committee under whom the work has been done.


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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this thesis is to investigate the events leading up to the Bay of Pigs debacle to determine how a venture so greatly misconceived came to be approved. The study gives attention to the beginnings of the exile brigade in the Eisenhower administration, how the election campaign influenced its growth, and the evolution and commitment in the Kennedy administration.

The procedure involved a review of the historical backgrounds, an objective chronicle of the disaster, and a look at the national and midwest reaction and response. The study is based on accounts written by those who participated in decision making, press interviews with members of the invasion force, and on-the-spot stories as related in books, newspapers, and magazines.

The results emphasize some of the inherent weaknesses of our system of government and how virtually impossible it is to engage in operations of this size and keep them secret in an open society.

In conclusion, Cuba is a dramatic demonstration of the ineptness of United States Latin-American policies or lack of policies; a demonstration also of prevailing American attitudes to any revolutionary change. The concept of trying to impose a right-wing government on Cuba that would immediately be labelled a Yankee creation was completely wrong.

CHAPTER I

Introduction

When Columbus discovered Cuba, in the course of his first voyage, on Sunday October 28, 1492, he was so impressed, he said: "It is the most beautiful land human eyes have ever seen." The island was one of Spain's first footholds in the new world, remained a Spanish colony for 400 years, and was the last colony to gain its independence. Cuba has been dominated by foreign power almost from the time of Columbus. After it was lost to Spain it fell under the shadow of the United States, and is now, under Castro, thought to be the target of communist takeover.

Diego Velasquez, with a force of 300 men, began the conquest of the island in 1511. It was first used by the Spaniards as a stepping stone to wider discoveries in the New World, and following the period of explorations, it became a base of supplies for the Spanish fleet moving to and from the New World. A plantation economy to supply local needs and also provisions for the ships that called created a need for a large labor supply. The rapid destruction of the Indians made necessary the importation of slave labor, which began in 1522. It was this period also that saw the beginnings of the large sugar plantation which soon ruled the island and became both a curse and a blessing to it

in the years that followed.¹

Almost from its beginning as an independent nation, the United States has looked longingly at Cuba. The early sense of Manifest Destiny, beginning with the purchase of Louisiana in 1803 and the acquisition of Florida in 1819, created an appetite for ever-expanding frontiers, and the conviction grew that Cuba must some day be included in the Union of States.²

Jefferson was the first to describe a Latin-American policy when he suggested the exclusion of European influence from this hemisphere. What he probably had in mind was the exclusion of Spain's authority and the substitution of United States sovereignty in Cuba as well as Florida. The No-transfer Resolution of 1811 stated that no part of Florida territory should pass into the hands of a foreign power. In 1823 John Quincy Adams extended this to include Cuba.³

England and France, fearing United States ambitions, proposed in 1852 a tripartite agreement that the three powers "severally and collectively disclaim, now and for hereafter, all intention to obtain possession of the Island of

¹Hubert Herring, A History of Latin America from the Beginnings to the Present (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1955), pp. 393-96 passim.

²Samuel Flagg Bemis, The Latin American Policy of The United States (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1943), p. 28.

³Ibid., p. 30.

Cuba." Secretary of State Edward Everett in his famous reply disclaimed for his government any coveting of Cuba but refused to bind the United States against ever acquiring the Pearl of the Antilles:

The United States . . . would . . . disable themselves from making an acquisition which might take place without any disturbance of existing foreign relations, and in the natural order of things. The island of Cuba lies at our doors. It commands the approach to the Gulf of Mexico, which washes the shores of five of our States. It bars the entrance of that great river which drains half the North American continent, . . . It keeps watch at the door-way of our intercourse with California and the Isthmus route.⁴

The islands closeness to the United States, and the possibility of its fine harbors being used by enemy navies to threaten the nation's commerce was the reason for its early interest. With the expanding commerce with Cuba, and because of its strategic position in respect to the Panama Canal, United States felt the need to secure a naval base there.

When other Spanish colonies declared their independence of Spain early in the nineteenth century, despite its discontent and restiveness, Cuba did not. Failure to move for freedom was in part a lack of effective aid from the outside and in part a lack of agreement among Cubans themselves as to what they wanted--autonomy within the Spanish Empire, annexation with the United States, or complete independence. As time went on, desire for independence increased, especially as Spanish repressive

⁴Ibid., p. 96.

measures increased. In 1837 Spain excluded Cuban deputies from the Spanish cortes and said Cuba would now be governed by "special laws."

Into this scene was injected the desire on the part of many United States groups to annex Cuba. Proslavery elements, especially, wanted the island to offset the growing power of the antislavery forces in the United States Congress. Freebooting expeditions originating on the mainland were attempted. Narciso López, a Venezuelan who had fought under the Spanish flag against Bolívar, later moved to Cuba where he shifted to the patriot side against the mother country. He was forced to flee to the United States where he recruited three filibustering invasions to the island-- in 1848, 1850, and 1851; all failed and López was caught and garroted as a traitor.⁵

Franklin Pierce and James Buchanan tried in vain to purchase Cuba from Spain. A secret offer of \$100 million was made, but Spain angrily rejected it. The American ministers to Spain, France, and England then contrived together and issued the Ostend Manifesto, which announced American intention either to buy Cuba or to take it "without consent of Spain."⁶

⁵Bemis, The Latin American Policy of the United States, p. 95.

⁶Leo Huberman and Paul M. Sweezy, Cuba: Anatomy of a Revolution (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1961), p. 12. This is a study of the Castro Revolution by the co-editors of the socialist Monthly Review.

Sporadic revolts continued and increased and in 1868 Cubans rose in armed rebellion, contending that Cuba "naturally belonged" to the Cubans. For ten years the Cuban struggle for independence, with declining vigor, kept the island in confusion. War ended in 1878 when Spain made promises of sweeping government reforms, amnesty for political prisoners, liberty for rebel slaves, abolition of slavery, and representation in the cortes.⁷ Eighty thousand Spanish soldiers died and a half a billion dollars was spent by the mother country, as a result of Spain's failure to bring badly needed reforms to Cuba. Much of the Cuban countryside was laid waste, representing complete loss to the farmers, and some American merchants who had financed Cuban sugar estates picked up additional properties at advantageous prices.⁸

The struggle for political freedom continued. The Cuban people, spurred on by the writings of José Martí, rebelled again in 1895--a continuation of the Ten Years War. Spain dispatched more than 200,000 men to Cuba under the command of General Valeriano Wyler, who earned for himself the epithet of el carnicero, the butcher. Several thousand men, women, and children were herded into concentration camps, where inadequate food and lack of sanitation brought

⁷Jenks, Leland Hamilton, Our Cuban Colony (New York: Vanguard Press, 1928), pp. 13-17.

⁸Huberman and Sweezy, Cuba: Anatomy of a Revolution, p. 12.

death to many thousands and also brought the sympathy of the American people, who clamored for intervention.

In 1898 when the battleship Maine was blown up in Havana harbor, United States public opinion demanded war against Spain. Many forces provoked American intervention: American investments wanted their profits protected; the pending Isthmian Canal made it unwise to leave Spain in control of the island that dominated the Caribbean; Hearst and Pulitzer, in an effort to sell papers, sold the war to the American public.⁹

Spanish rule ceased on December 10, 1898, and was followed immediately by United States military rule. A stable government was established, yellow fever eradicated, the island economy bolstered, great new public facilities constructed. America generously provided, but neglected to provide what Cubans wanted most--independence. A Cuban Constitutional Convention met and adopted a constitution on February 21, 1901; the American Congress met and adopted the Platt Amendment and demanded that it be a part of the Cuban Constitution. Herring said: "Cuba was now free--but not free to make her own mistakes. That was the meaning implicit in the Platt Amendment, under whose protection, or threat, Cuba lived for thirty-two years."¹⁰ American troops

⁹Huberman and Sweezy, Cuba: Anatomy of a Revolution, p. 13.

¹⁰Herring, A History of Latin America, p. 400.

intervened under the Amendment for the first time in 1906, a second time in 1912, and a third time in 1917. In 1920 American political and financial advisors controlled the Cuban government without benefit of troops.

Cuba is rich in many resources, but sugar has always dominated the island. In the 1880's and 1890's American investment in sugar plantations greatly increased, by 1896 it was valued at \$30 million. Investments were not confined to this one industry however: Bethlehem Steel and Rockefeller interests invested heavily in mining properties. By 1896 American investments in Cuba totaled 450 million. In 1903, a reciprocity treaty approved by Congress, gave Cuban imports a tariff reduction of 20 percent, and American products going into Cuba a like amount. This meant that American refiners could buy Cuban sugar cheaper than the price on the open market, and made it possible, through increased demand, for Cuban sugar producers to expand their output. The import rates into Cuba gave American farmers and manufacturers advantages over other countries. This distortion of free enterprise made Cuba dependent on American imports instead of developing her own resources¹¹

During the First World War, a shortage of sugar resulted in tremendous profit and expansion in the industry.

¹¹Jenks, Our Cuban Colony, pp. 31-35 passim.

In the aftermath, however, as prices went down to an all-time low, sugar millowners could not repay their loans to the banks; banks could not pay their depositors and were forced to close. The large Cuban banks, the Banco Nacional and the Banco Espanol, were taken over by the National City Bank of New York. By the 1950's Americans owned 90 percent of the telephone and electric services, 50 percent of the public service railroads, and about 40 percent of the raw sugar production. American capital dominated the islands economy.¹²

In 1902 Tomás Estrada Palma became the first president of the new republic. Huberman and Sweezy described the years that followed:

There came a succession of Presidents whose terms were characterized by venality, nepotism, incompetence, graft, and despotism. Some were elected to office by ballots, others seized or held power by bullets. Two of the better of a thoroughly bad lot were Dr. Ramón Grau San Martín and Dr. Carlos Prío Socarrás; two of the worst, General Gerardo Machado and Sergeant Fulgencio Batista, . . . were bloody dictators whose regimes were nightmares of repression, assassination, gangsterism, bribery, and corruption.¹³

As a result of violent political agitation and charges of corruption against Carlos Prío Socarrás, Batista overthrew the government and sent Prío into exile. He closed Congress and called for elections in 1954, and was elected

¹²Huberman and Sweezy, Cuba: Anatomy of a Revolution, pp. 11-19; Dexter Perkins, The United States and the Caribbean (Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1966), pp. 31-35.

¹³Huberman and Sweezy, Cuba: Anatomy of a Revolution, p. 17.

without opposition for a four-year term. Batista ruled by the grace of the army but was also a shrewd politician. Aware of the middle-class Cubans desire for public office, he used patronage to gain their support. He won the support of organized labor by improving wages and working conditions. When opposition developed among the intellectuals, Batista was so well-entrenched behind the backing of the military, the middle-class officeholders, and organized labor, he could face it without fear. The last years of Batista's regime, particularly from 1954 to 1959, were marked by growing repression, terrorism, and violent reprisals against growing strength of anti-Batista forces who organized a campaign of harassment in the provinces.

Ray Brennan, reporter for the Chicago Sun-Times, presented some disturbing facts about the Batista regime. "For five years or more the six million people of Cuba were to know the whiplash of cruel oppression. About nineteen thousand of them were murdered. . . . The tortures and mutilations were almost beyond belief." Strict censorship kept a closed lid on the news. Reporters heard of atrocities but could not prove them. However, Arthur Gardner and his successor, Earl T. Smith, United States ambassadors to Cuba, who were frequent guests of the dictator and had consular officials reporting to them from the interior of Cuba," . . . could not have avoided hearing of the hellish conditions, . . . It was certainly the ambassadors' duty to report fully

to the State Department if they knew about it."¹⁴

Batista's dictatorship was illegal, yet, the United States sold warplanes, bombs, guns, and ammunition, that, were being used by a tyrant to kill his subjects. On August 26, 1958, Miro Cardona wrote a letter to Eisenhower asking him to withdraw help to Batista, particularly to stop sending arms and ammunition. The reply when it came stated:

The United States believes in the democratic election process and the choice by the people, through free and fair election or democratic government responsive to them. . . . At the same time United States does follow a strict policy of nonintervention in domestic affairs of sister republics. . . . The military equipment supplied by the United States to Cuba was in the interest of hemispheric defense.¹⁵

The attack on Batista's dictatorship began among university students. On July 26, 1953, a rebel army of some 200 men, mostly young students, stormed the Moncada army barracks in Santiago. About half of them were killed by machine gun fire, others were captured, horribly tortured, then put in jail to wait trial--among them, their leader Fidel Castro and his brother Raul. It was a continuation of the revolution that began in 1868.

Fidel Castro was sentenced to fifteen years in prison, but eleven months later, under the pressure of public

¹⁴Ray Brennan, Castro, Cuba and Justice (New York: Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1959), p. 26. The story is based on first hand information, including data obtained by the author when he was with Castro and his rebels in Sierra Maestra mountains and in the underground.

¹⁵Huberman and Sweezy, Cuba: Anatomy of a Revolution. p. 17.

opinion, amnesty was granted. In July, 1955, Fidel went to Mexico to gather arms and men for an invasion of Cuba, and on December 2, 1956, he landed with 82 men on the south-eastern coast. Most of the men were shot by a Batista army troop, but about a dozen, including Fidel, his brother Raul, and Ernesto "Che" Guevara, an Argentine-born physician who had spent a good part of his life fighting against dictatorship in Argentina and later in Guatemala, escaped into the Sierra Maestra.¹⁶

The next two years saw the development of the resistance movement that was to topple Batista. In Brennan's words: "The word spread through Oriente Province. The Rebels were good, kind men. If they obtained food from a farmer they paid for it. If they had no money they went hungry. . . . The fidelistas became heroes, almost gods, to the countryfolk."¹⁷ Theodore Draper gives this account:

. . . as the months passed the relations between the Rebels and the peasants took a new dimension. The crying poverty, illiteracy, disease, and primitivism of the outcast peasants appalled the young city-bred ex-students. Out of this came a determination to revolutionize Cuban society, raising the lowest and most

¹⁶Herbert L. Matthews, The Cuban Story (New York: George Braziller, Inc., 1961), pp. 15-44 passim. This book is the result of a secret interview in the Sierra Maestra, in spite of the vigilance of Batista's troops, between Matthews, a New York Times reporter, and Fidel Castro.

¹⁷Brennan, Castro, Cuba and Justice, pp. 127-28.

neglected sector to a civilized level of well-being and human dignity.¹⁸

In the months to follow these guajiros, or farmfolk, were to have a mighty part in turning back Batista's army and in winning the victory that came on New Year's day, 1959, as the overthrown dictator, Batista and his family, sought asylum in Santo Domingo.

The victory of the Left in Cuba was the natural outcome of years of social and economic discontent. Was it from the beginning a communist movement? Did it become communist when the United States used "economic" pressure against it, and forced it to turn elsewhere for help? Is it now communist, or simply a people's social and economic revolution based on Marxist principles? These were the questions that brought about the aberration called the "Bay of Pigs."

¹⁸Theodore Draper, Castro's Revolution (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1962), p. 11.

CHAPTER II

Chronicle of Disaster

The story begins on March 17, 1960, when it appeared to the Eisenhower administration that Fidel Castro had sold out to the communists, bringing in the Soviet Union and Red China as full partners in the Cuban Revolution. It had also become apparent that Latin America was reluctant to act against Castro.¹

Cuban exiles arriving in Miami in ever greater numbers were seeking support for means of overthrowing Castro. The administration, influenced by the course of events in Cuba and the growing pressure of the refugees for action, agreed to help organize a force of Cuban exiles.² No one knew what was about to take place in Cuba, but a well-trained cadre of guerrillas would be useful if conditions warranted their use.³

¹"Hell of a Beating in Cuba," Life, April 28, 1961, p. 17.

²Theodore Draper, "Cuba and United States Policy," The New Leader, June 5, 1961, p. 11.

³Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr., A Thousand Days: John F. Kennedy in the White House (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1965), p. 226.

The implementation of the decision to organize a Cuban brigade, which required the greatest secrecy, was entrusted to the Central Intelligence Agency. It was divided into two parts: On the political side it directed the CIA to bring together a broad range of Cuban exiles, with batistianos (followers of Fulgencio Batista) and exiles professing communist ideology specifically excluded, into unified political opposition to the Castro regime. On the military side it authorized the CIA to train and equip a Cuban guerrilla force that might be used against Castro.⁴

Overall command was given to Allen W. Dulles, director of CIA. Mr. Dulles began his service during the First World War under Woodrow Wilson. During the Eisenhower administration, his brother was Secretary of State and his agency had become increasingly involved in handling political operations without supervision. He was to have general supervision but the day-to-day responsibility was given to one of the deputies in the CIA, Richard Bissell, Jr. Both men were experienced in intelligence work, mostly in Europe, but never in Latin America. Neither had ever commanded troops.⁵

⁴Ibid.

⁵Karl E. Meyer and Tad Szulc, The Cuban Invasion (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1962), p. 77. The authors followed the Cuban Revolution from its first days and knew most of the leaders whose decisions played a part in the story, so they had much first-hand information to draw upon.

The first migration of Cubans coming to this country, numbering only a few thousand, had all been batistianos. These were completely without support in Cuba. Then came the frightened rich, persons who had served neither Batista or Castro.⁶ According to Schlesinger, these "were characteristically identified with the old Cuba of the traditional parties, of progressive intent and ineffectual performance. Some were decent men; others were racketeers who had found politics a lucrative way of life."⁷ Following these came, also representing the political right, businessmen, teachers, professionals, and intellectuals. They stood for the Cuba of the past.

It was to such men that the CIA turned when it began to organize the political front in the early months of 1960. There were almost as many groups and factions as there were Cuban refugees. In June, five of the leading groups were asked to form the Frente Revolucionario Democrático, which became known as the Frente.⁸ Out of this group was chosen a directorate of five members. Three of these represented pre-Batista Cuba: Manuel Antonio Varona, a former premier who had served in the government of President Carlos Prío Socarrás (the man Batista overthrew in

⁶Draper, "Cuba and United States Policy," The New Leader, June 5, 1961, p. 6.

⁷Schlesinger, A Thousand Days, p. 277.

⁸Ibid.

1952); Dr. Justo Carillo, a man of liberal views, who had been president of the Bank for Industrial and Agricultural Development under both Prío and Castro and had been foreign minister in one of Prío's cabinets, and Aureliano Sánchez Arango, who had been Minister of Education. The other two were José Ignacio Rasco, a courageous young man who had led the small Christian Democratic party in Cuba, and a young lieutenant named Manuel Artime Buesa, who had joined Castro at the end of 1958 and later worked for Castro's National Institute of Agrarian Reform.⁹

This man Artime, who was to play such an important role in the counterrevolution, was in many respects an unlikely candidate for a political role. He was twenty-eight, had a degree as a medical doctor, and was trained as a psychiatrist.¹⁰ He was chief of the exile section of the Movement of Revolutionary Recovery (MRR), a secret organization composed of former rebel army officers. He was the only one of the five men on the directorate who could claim any important connections with the Cuban underground. Soon after he broke with the regime in November 1959, the CIA brought him out of Cuba.¹¹ Meyer and Szulc in The

⁹Haynes Johnson, The Bay of Pigs (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, Inc., 1964), p. 30. This is the story as told by four of the brigade leaders after they were freed from Cuban prisons.

¹⁰Ibid.

¹¹"Bitter Week: The Cuban Invasion," Time, April 28 1961, p. 11.

Cuban Invasion said: "His youth, his military experience, his political inexperience and his personal tractability all recommended him to the CIA field operatives."¹² He became their man in the Frente and was soon the only link between the CIA's political and military operations.

The Frente was well named; it was a front and nothing else. No sooner had the pact been signed than it was followed by dissension among its members. Meyer and Szulc felt from the outset "an unhealthy dependence on the CIA characterized the organization." It was provided with a headquarters building on Miami's Biscayne Boulevard and an office at Coral Gables. In addition, "The CIA paid the salary of many of the officials and invested money in its newspapers and propaganda activities."¹³

While the members of the Frente sat quibbling, the CIA was busy recruiting refugees in Florida and Central America, and persuaded President Ydígoras of Guatemala to allow the use of land near the mountains of his country for an air base and a secret training camp. By late July workers began preparing an air strip in Guatemala to serve the rebel air force that was needed for supply missions flown to the Cuban underground. The first CIA plan was to form small groups that would slip into Cuba where there were already active centers of resistance, and arms and supplies

¹²Meyer and Szulc, The Cuban Invasion, p. 26.

¹³Ibid., p. 27.

would be flown in. These groups would enlarge themselves until they had enough popular support for an uprising. The long-range planning called for use of the same planes to land commando groups in Cuba when the uprising began.

By midsummer other Cubans began to arrive in Guatemala. It was the rainy season and they had to build their own camp in sticky, volcanic mud five thousand feet above the sea. In their spare time, they received training from a Filipino colonel who had been in charge of guerrilla fighting against the Japanese in World War II. In August 1960 Eisenhower approved a budget of \$13 million for the Cuban project. According to Schlesinger, it was stipulated that "no United States military personnel were to take part in combat operations."¹⁴

Meyer and Szulc call attention to a powerful new underground movement that had come into being in Cuba. Several hundred guerrillas were hiding out in the Escambray Mountains, and an American-trained young Cuban engineer Manuel Ray, who had been a member of Castro's cabinet but resigned when the moderates were being purged by the radicals, was now activating his underground in the cities. This underground movement which was given the name People's Revolutionary Movement (MRP) was a model of its kind. The network spanned the entire island, with an executive council in each province and lesser commands reaching down to the smallest village. The combination of the Escambray

¹⁴Schlesinger, A Thousand Days, p. 228.

guerrillas and the MRP underground in the cities became the most important anti-regime operations in Cuba. These men had in mind "restoring the revolution to its original goals," said Andrew Tully, "and to continue the social reforms Castro had initiated."¹⁵

The CIA strategists had little patience with the underground, but because of its stubbornness and persistence it could not be ignored. Plans were belatedly made to give assistance. The rebel aircraft began flying occasional supply missions over the Escambray Mountains, dropping supplies, but it was already too little and too late. Under Castro's pressure the resistance in the mountains eventually collapsed, leaving the MRP as the principal anti-Castro movement in Cuba. It was also having trouble, and Manuel Ray realized that if he were going to keep his resistance group going he would have to have more United States help. He arranged to have himself smuggled into Miami in November 1960 to plead his case in person.¹⁶

While the neglected groups within Cuba suffered from lack of supplies and direction a deep division became apparent in the forces being trained by the CIA. Artime, the favorite leader, was edging farther over to the right-wing groups, while Ray, who according to Szulc, favored "a

¹⁵ Andrew Tully, CIA: The Inside Story (New York: William Morrow and Company, 1962), p. 245.

¹⁶ Tad Szulc, "Cuba: Anatomy of a Failure," Look, July 18, 1961, p. 76.

democratic anti-communist Cuba, as Castro had promised . . . was being subjected to a smear campaign, labeling him a 'dangerous leftist.'"¹⁷ CIA men were aware of these attacks; they knew the high command was opposed to giving support to anyone too far to the left, consequently, Ray received no help.¹⁸

New waves of refugees continued coming out of Cuba. This was now the third migration, led by men who had conspired against Batista and fought with Castro in the revolutionary army, and who, like Ray and the MRPs, left when Castro allegedly turned his social revolution into communism. These men were politically radical and nationalist, personally proud and defiant. Their thesis was that Castro had to be overthrown from within and that the Cuban people must be the means.¹⁹

These groups were serious rivals of the people on the right who had arrived earlier and who condemned anyone who had ever belonged to the movement, and especially anyone who had occupied a post of some responsibility in the Castro government. These controversies were of great importance: whether the underground in Cuba or the exiles in the United States should lead in the struggle against Castro.²⁰

¹⁷Ibid.

¹⁸Tully, CIA: The Inside Story, p. 245.

¹⁹Schlesinger, A Thousand Days, p. 231.

²⁰Draper, "Cuba and United States Policy," New Leader, June 5, 1961.

In the early stages of planning the project, the CIA had chosen as their Miami manager and main contact with exile leaders a man by the name of Frank Bender, whose real name was Droller, a German refugee who had come to this country before the war and moved up into army intelligence. He knew little about Cuba or Latin America and spoke no Spanish, but, as Meyer and Szulc stated, he had money and authority, and fell naturally into the role of command. The new power went to his head--he regarded himself the most important leader in the counterrevolution. The older exiles disliked and feared him, but they felt they had no choice but to obey him.²¹

When Bender ordered Ray and his underground movement to join the Frente, he met with refusal. This group posed a threat to the more conservative exiles who did everything to discredit them. They denounced Ray as fidelisimo sin Fidel--Castroism without Castro. During the opening months of 1961 CIA was beginning to have trouble with all groups.

Senior Sánchez Arango, one of the five members of the directorate, stated: "The CIA wanted to control everything The members who were willing to accept their commands, their orders, their provisions, were the ones in best relationship with them."²² Manuel Artime

²¹Meyer and Szulc, The Cuban Invasion, p. 19.

²²Clifton Daniels, "Full Story of Bay of Pigs," New York Times, June 2, 1966, p. 11.

Buesa was chosen to lead because he was willing to accept all their demands. He was a one-time Castro soldier who had served Fidel briefly as an official in an Agrarian Reform Zone in Oriente. He had very little military experience but was an accomplished orator and his political philosophy was basically conservative, which appealed to the CIA.²³ Sánchez Arango argued that the Frente should take in people with a revolutionary background. Refusing to do this and favoring "reliable" exiles, who would take orders, the CIA endangered the whole project, because the men most capable of rallying support within Cuba against Castro were being left out.²⁴

Months had passed since November 1960 when President Eisenhower had approved the forming of a Cuban exile brigade. The manner in which it was to function had not yet been definitely decided. By the closing days of the presidential campaign of 1960 Cuba had become not only the dominant issue in the United States but also internationally. Castro had announced recognition of Red China, torn up a 1952 military pact with the United States, and was seeking support from Russia and China. Castro called the United States a "vulture feeding on humanity." He dared the United States to attack and be destroyed, repeatedly charging that the "Yankee Imperialists" were training for invasion. The

²³Tully, CIA: The Inside Story, p. 246.

²⁴Daniels, "Full Story of Bay of Pigs," New York Times, June 2, 1966, p. 11.

Cuban Minister to United Nations, Raul Roa, demanded an immediate meeting of the Security Council to prevent armed groups of the United States and mercenaries at their service from invading Cuba.²⁵

President Kennedy, who had not yet been briefed on the Guatemala activity, said in a campaign speech: "We must attempt to strengthen the non-Batista democratic forces in exile, and in Cuba itself, who offer eventual hope of overthrowing Castro. Thus far these fighters for freedom have had virtually no support from our government." Richard Nixon, who was aware of the existence of the Guatemalan camp and the United States plans for it, replied: "I think that Senator Kennedy's policies and recommendations for handling the Castro regime are probably the most dangerously irresponsible recommendations that he has made during the course of the campaign." He believed that Kennedy's call for a support of a revolution in Cuba was "the most shockingly reckless proposal ever made. . . by a presidential candidate."²⁶

While the CIA was working with the counterrevolutionary forces, the overall planning was debated in Washington by a special group. These were high level officials from the Pentagon, the State Department, the CIA, and the White House. According to Haynes Johnson, the original plan for

²⁵The Minneapolis Tribune, January 1, 1961, p. 4.

²⁶Haynes Johnson, Bay of Pigs, p. 50.

a guerrilla operation was scrapped for three reasons:

First, it became apparent that supplying the guerrillas by air drops, as was planned, would be extremely difficult; second, as Castro became more openly allied with the Communist bloc, heavy shipments of arms and ammunition began arriving in Cuba; third, Castro's control over the civilians and militia was tighter than had been anticipated, making it difficult for even a long guerrilla campaign to succeed.²⁷

From the original concept of isolated guerrilla landings, the plan now moved toward the idea of a larger operation that really amounted to an invasion.²⁸ President Eisenhower was apparently unaware of what was going on. He later stated that guerrilla training was all that he had authorized.²⁹

The CIA sent a long cable to Guatemala, informing the anti-Castro forces there of the change of plans. The guerrilla force was cut to sixty men, and a new training program was instituted for the others. The change of plans met with good response from the Cubans, who turned with enthusiasm to the idea of an amphibious landing, and the new type of training and equipment gave them renewed hope. They were certain that those left behind in Cuba hated Castro as much as they did, so they genuinely believed that a mass

²⁷Ibid., p. 53.

²⁸Thomas B. Ross and David Wise, The Invisible Government (New York: Random House, 1964), p. 29.

²⁹F. J. Cook, "The Case Builds Up," Nation, June 22, 1964, p. 616.

landing in Cuba might set off a general revolt.³⁰ The American officers assured them that they would have all the support they needed. Pepé San Ramón, a regular army officer who had served under a democratic regime, a dictatorship, and most recently and briefly under Fidel Castro said: "The American officers always referred to our part in the armed forces, or our part in the combat, . . . that this thing was much bigger and we were just a piece there--one of the most important pieces--but said there were many, many groups like ours, and they were all going to be under us. We were only one tenth of the force."³¹ (Italics mine.) As later events proved, the American officers had created a false impression.

On November 29, 1960, Allen Dulles gave President-elect Kennedy a detailed briefing on CIA's "new military conception." He listened with attention and decided to allow the preparation to go on for the time being. He said: "There will be ample opportunity after the inauguration for review and reconsideration."³²

During the next few weeks neither the outgoing nor the incoming administration wanted to make commitments to any major decisions. Equipment and men continued to pour into Guatemala. An air base was established in Nicaragua

³⁰Schlesinger, A Thousand Days, p. 232.

³¹Meyer and Szulc, The Cuban Invasion, p. 56.

³²Schlesinger, A Thousand Days, p. 233.

from which bomb strikes, in advance of the attack, would knock out Castro's Air Force. 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. Many other clandestine groups, some with bases in the swamps of Florida and Louisiana, others from Key West in the Florida Keys were organizing for action against Castro.

By this time the plans were no longer secret. The Fair Play for Cuba Committee, a pro-Castro group, asked Congress to investigate reports that the CIA was planning an invasion. The Nation reported on a trip made to Guatemala by Dr. Ronald Hilton, a Stanford University professor, who claimed the country was swarming with anti-Castro exiles planning an invasion. It said the CIA was offering \$25,000 for pilots to fly on this mission scheduled for sometime early in 1961. The Nation went on to say: "If Washington is ignorant of the existence of the base, or is innocent of any involvement in it, they should scotch all insidious rumors and issue a full statement of the facts or if it is true, then public pressure should be brought to bear upon the administration to abandon this dangerous and hair-brained [sic] project."³³

The United States could not become involved in action against Cuba without violating the spirit and the letter of

³³ Editorial, Nation, November 19, 1960, p. 50.

the OAS charter, hemispheric treaties, United Nations pledge and United States federal legislation. So the change in military plans brought new problems. Schlesinger explained the dilemma:

If the United States kept its role small enough to conceal its responsibility, the operation might not have a fair chance of success; while if it made its role large enough to give the operation a fair chance of success, the responsibility could not be plausibly disclaimed in case of failure. Washington might then face the choice between the political humiliation of defeat and the commitment of United States troops to insure victory.³⁴

The new plan also brought the need for stepped up recruitment, and in this rush the liberal elements among the Cuban exiles were swept from positions of influence. Without consulting the President or the State Department the CIA chose to back right-wing groups. Tad Szulc, reporting in Look, stated: "When batistianos streamed into Guatemala, two hundred of the anti-Castro group rebelled and were jailed by the right-wing command."³⁵ The CIA did not realize that men who had taken part in the revolution had a natural hatred for officers who had served Batista--this was the group they had fought to overthrow. When members of the Frente complained about the recruitment of batistianos, the reply was: "They're anti-communists, aren't they?"³⁶

³⁴Schlesinger, A Thousand Days, p. 235.

³⁵Tad Szulc, "Cuba: Anatomy of a Failure, Look, July 18, 1961, p. 76.

³⁶"Cuban Drama," New York Times, April 23, 1961, p. 11.

When the right-wing group took over, it used its power to eliminate from command all those who held progressive or liberal views. The foremost target was Manuel Ray's MRP, and during the months preceding the invasion this organization was deprived of any assistance, even though it operated the most successful underground network in Cuba. While explosives, weapons, and military supplies flowed to other groups that were not objectional to the CIA's field operators, the MRP had to plead, bargain, and fight for every pound of explosives and supplies it needed. So in the critical weeks preceding the invasion, the principal underground organization in Cuba was ignored by the very people planning the assault.³⁷

Washington kept getting reports about the splendid morale in the training camps, even though discontent was increasing--a discontent that broke out in insurrection in the Guatemalan camps. The CIA operatives were forced to arrest a number of the ringleaders and threaten to scuttle the whole program before it was able to regain control.³⁸

In the meantime CIA planners had chosen Trinidad, a city of twenty thousand on the southeast coast of Cuba as the point of invasion. It was chosen because it was far from Castro's main army, it had a good harbor and beach-head, but--most important--it was close to the Escambray

³⁷Meyer and Szulc, The Cuban Invasion, pp. 92-96, passim.

³⁸Ibid.

Mountains. If the venture failed, the invaders had a place to which they could escape. The plan now was for an amphibious assault supported by paratroopers, while the rebel air squadron bombed Cuban airfields to destroy Castro's Air Force.³⁹

The plan, as related by Stewart J. Alsop, also called for a revolutionary council of civilian Cubans, to be flown in to set up a provisional government at the town of Giron, who would, if the invaders could sustain themselves for a period of "ten days to two weeks, call for recognition and military assistance."⁴⁰ Legitimacy would have the value of making it possible for the United States to send supplies to the government which it recognized. This rebel government was to be headed by José Miró Cardona.

On January 22, 1961, two days after the inauguration of John F. Kennedy, Allen Dulles, speaking for the CIA, and General Lyman L. Lemnitzer, for the Joint Chiefs of Staff, exposed the project to the leading members of the new administration. After listening to this briefing, Kennedy instructed the Defense Department to make a complete study of the military plan, and instructed the State Department to work through the OAS on a program to isolate and contain Cuba. On February 3, General Lemnitzer and Admiral Arleigh

³⁹Szulc, "Cuba: Anatomy of a Failure," Look, July 18, 1961, pp. 76-78.

⁴⁰Stewart J. Alsop, "Lessons of the Cuban Disaster," Readers Digest, September 1961, pp. 430-431.

Burke, Chief of Naval Operations, endorsed the Trinidad plan and on the basis of information available to them, predicted success.⁴¹

Meetings, conferences, and briefings on the Cuban situation continued. Perhaps the most important was the one held on the fourth of April in the State Department with the following present: Secretary of State Dean Rusk, Secretary of the Treasury Douglas Dillon, Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara, Senator William J. Fulbright of Arkansas, (chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee), General Lemnitzer, Admiral Arleigh Burke, and presidential advisors and specialists.⁴²

After a great deal of discussion, Kennedy voiced opposition to the Trinidad plan as being "too spectacular." He wanted a "quiet landing in a more obscure place, preferably at night." He insisted also that no American forces were to be used, stressing the probability of anti-American reactions in Latin America and the United Nations. Kennedy was "especially concerned that the air strikes would seem plausibly to come from Cuban soil."⁴³ After a reevaluation of landing sites, the Bay of Pigs was chosen. The change had some advantage in that there would be less likelihood of harming civilians at the Bay of Pigs

⁴¹Ross and Wise, The Invisible Government, p. 41.

⁴²Schlesinger, A Thousand Days, p. 238.

⁴³Ibid.

because hardly anyone lived there. It was also thought that the landing would have the appearance of an effort to resupply guerrillas.⁴⁴

Karl Meyer reported that "the one dissenting voice at this pivotal meeting was that of Senator Fulbright, who 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."⁴⁵ Schlesinger, who was present, insisted that "although the Senator may have had reservations he did not, as has been written, oppose the invasion at this time."⁴⁶

On Wednesday afternoon, April 12, at the President's weekly news conference the first question asked was about the invasion plans for Cuba. The President in his reply ruled out "under any condition an intervention in Cuba by the United States Armed Forces."⁴⁷ "The basic issue in Cuba," the President said, "is not one between the United States and Cuba, it is between the Cubans themselves. I intend to see that we adhere to that principle, and as I understand it, this administration's attitude is so

⁴⁴Ross and Wise, The Invisible Government, p. 46.

⁴⁵Karl Meyer, Fulbright of Arkansas (Washington D.C.: Robert B. Luce, Inc., 1963), p. 198. See also Helen Fuller, Year of Trial: Kennedy's Crucial Decisions (New York: Harcourt, Brace and World, Inc., 1962), p. 57

⁴⁶Schlesinger, A Thousand Days, p. 240.

⁴⁷"How Kennedy Upset Invasion," United States News & World Report, February 4, 1963, p. 29.

understood and shared by anti-Castro exiles from Cuba in this country."⁴⁸ In so saying the President had tied his hands--if the invasion failed there would be no help coming from the United States. Ironically, members of the American armed forces did participate, and as will be later revealed, the plans called for a full scale invasion by American forces if the exiles could hold a beachhead until a temporary government could be established.

The Cuban brigade in Guatemala now numbered 1400 men, of these only about 135 were former soldiers. Of the rest 240 students made up the largest single group. Also included were, businessmen, lawyers, doctors, landowners and their sons, fishermen and peasants. The average age was twenty nine. Many of them were new recruits and had been at the base only a few days--some had not even fired a gun. Meyer and Szulc reported "their spirits were high, and all were waiting impatiently for the target date which had been set at April 17, 1961."⁴⁹ Many factors, enumerated later, determined the choice of invasion date.

The brigade was moved to the point of embarkation and on April 13, they began loading on boats. The CIA had leased three old and worn-out commercial vessels from the Garcia Lines for two months, and had also purchased two

⁴⁸"In Cuban Invasion: The Fatal Mistakes," United States News & World Report, May 29, 1961, p. 76; Fuller, Year of Trial, p. 59.

⁴⁹Meyer and Szulc, "The Cuban Invasion," New Republic, May 21, 1962, p. 230.

LCIs. On April 14 the invasion plan was revealed to the troops. The brigades mission was to take and hold two beaches, Playa Giron and Playa Larga, for three days, after which, they were told, "they could put their hands out, turn left and go straight into Havana."⁵⁰

Neutralization of Castro's air force was to take place before the invasion by air strikes from Nicaraguan bases.⁵¹ These were now under debate--the State Department was afraid that pre-invasion strikes would show the American hand, but the Pentagon insisted that they were essential in order to protect the disembarkation. A compromise provided that a strike would be made against Cuban airfields two days before the invasion by Cuban pilots pretending to be defectors from Castro's air force. U-2 flights would then assess the damages, and a second strike would be made the morning of the invasion.⁵²

Havana was awakened early Saturday morning April 15, by the roar of aircraft and bomb explosions. Looking up it saw two B-26 bombers with the insignia of Castro's Revolutionary Air Force making dive passes at the Camp Libertad airfield on the outskirts of the city. A little earlier the bombers had strafed the big air force base at

⁵⁰Haynes Johnson, Bay of Pigs, p. 83.

⁵¹M. Stanton Evans, The Politics of Surrender (New York: Devan-Adair Company, 1966). p. 383.

⁵²Schlesinger, A Thousand Days, p. 270.

San Antonio de Los Baños, and a third group did the same a little later at the Santiago air field in the province of Oriente.⁵⁴

The pilots returned to Nicaragua and the United States with optimistic reports of widespread damage, but the overflights the next day showed only five aircraft definitely destroyed. Not all attacking planes made it back --one made an emergency landing at Key West.⁵⁴ In the meantime, according to Time, "one B-26 had flown straight from Nicaragua to Miami to put the cover plan into operation. The pilot on landing announced himself as a Castro defector who had just bombed the airfields. The unscheduled arrival of the second plane at Key West complicated things somewhat."⁵⁵ The Revolutionary Council sitting in New York issued a communique announcing that "the B-26s had been flown out of Cuba by defecting Castro airmen who decided to inflict a little damage before escaping the island."⁵⁶ The deceit was rather flimsy, for although the CIA had taken pains to disguise the B-26s with Castro

⁵³"Massacre: Cuban Invasion," Time, April 28, 1961, p. 18.

⁵⁴Ross and Wise, The Invisible Government, p. 41. Nine B-26s had left Nicaragua. One was shot down, and three had landed, respectively, at Key West, Grand Cayman and Miami. Two pilots were dead. But five of the bombers returned to Happy Valley, Nicaragua.

⁵⁵Time, April 28, 1961, p. 18.

⁵⁶Meyer and Szulc, The Cuban Invasion, p. 120.

markings, they had overlooked the fact that Castro's B-26s were equipped with plexiglass noses, while the aircraft used by the rebel pilots were models with opaque noses. The rocket mounts were corroded and the guns were uncocked and had not been fired.⁵⁷

Kennedy, who had great concern for the United Nations aspect of the Cuban operation, had said to a group at a briefing in the cabinet room that he wanted Adlai Stevenson, United Nations representative, to be fully informed, and that nothing that was said at the United Nations should be anything but the truth. "The integrity and credibility of Stevenson," Kennedy had remarked, "constitute one of our great national assets. I don't want anything to be done which might jeopardize that."⁵⁸

Raul Roa, Castro's United Nations delegate, denounced the vandalistic "aggression carried out at dawn," and placed responsibility for the attack on the government of the United States.⁵⁹ When Roa finished, Adlai Stevenson began his reply. Haynes Johnson said: "It was to be the most humiliating moment in his distinguished career. Twice a candidate for the presidency, urbane and eloquent, a man whose reputation for statesmanship and integrity was

⁵⁷"Bitter Week: The Cuban Invasion," Time, April 28, 1961, p. 18. Planes used by rebels were old relics secured by CIA redeemed from United States Air Force graveyards.

⁵⁸Schlesinger, A Thousand Days, p. 271.

⁵⁹"Toward D-Day," Time, April 21, 1961, p. 32.

unquestioned, was now trapped by a tangle of lies."⁶⁰ There appears to be some controversy over how much Stevenson had been told. Victor Lasky, in J.F.K., The Man and the Myth, says that President Kennedy never discussed the proposed Cuban invasion with either Stevenson or Chester Bowles, who had been his chief advisors on foreign affairs during his campaign. This was especially strange in the case of Stevenson because he was the man in the administration most informed on Latin American affairs.⁶¹ Ross and Wise disagree, saying that a couple of days before the April 15 raid, Tracy Barnes, the CIA man assigned as liaison with the State Department, came to see Stevenson in New York and briefed him on the Bay of Pigs operation. He indicated vaguely that the United States would not be involved. But as he told about the Cuban exiles, his story was so ambiguous, Stevenson became convinced that the United States was involved.⁶²

The last "no-go" point had been reached and the President had given his consent for the expedition to proceed. In the meantime the CIA cover story was beginning to crack--it was evident that Stevenson had misinformed the United Nations. Readers Digest reported: "Rusk,

⁶⁰Haynes Johnson, Bay of Pigs, p. 92.

⁶¹Victor Lasky, J.F.K., The Man and the Myth (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1963), p. 520.

⁶²Ross and Wise, The Invisible Government, p. 16. See also Fuller, Year of Trial, p. 57.

remorseful at the position into which the State Department had thrust its United Nations ambassador, now resolved that the Cuban adventure should not be permitted further to jeopardize the larger interest of the United States foreign policy."⁶³

A description of the scene aboard the invasion fleet is told by men who participated. Haynes Johnson interviewed these men as they returned from Cuban prison camps. "The men lounged, listening to the radio, talking, trying not to appear nervous. Everyone was afraid of acting afraid." At sunset, as the ships neared the southern coast of Cuba, the men were called together on deck. They saluted as the Cuban flag was raised. By 7:45 o'clock the five principal ships and their two United States Navy escort vessels had reached the rendezvous point, where they were joined by landing craft carrying the tanks and heavy equipment. "The men began singing the Cuban National hymn as the convoy began moving up the coast toward the Bay of Pigs."⁶⁴

With the coming of the night a clandestine radio transmitter operated by the CIA on Swan Island began sending this message into the Caribbean sky: "Alert! Alert! Look well at the rainbow. The first will rise very soon. Chico is in the house. Visit him. The sky is blue. Place

⁶³Readers Digest, September 1964, p. 256.

⁶⁴Haynes Johnson, Bay of Pigs, pp. 94-95.

notice in the tree. The tree is green and brown. The letters are white. The fish will not take much time to rise. The fish is red. Look well at the rainbow. . . ." It was the message for the Cuban underground to rise.⁶⁵

Schlesinger gives the following account of the battle:

At 2 a.m., frogmen slid into the water from speedboats, and swam to the two beaches to install position lights and destroy any obstacles to the landing. Two battalions from the brigade went ashore at Playa Giron and one battalion at Playa Larga, while another was sent to the north to secure the air strip. Difficulty was encountered on the coral reefs that had been ignored or forgotten in the briefing, but the invaders encountered little initial resistance as they waded ashore. At daybreak paratroops had been dropped inland to secure interior points.⁶⁶

Castro's air force, alerted by the first clash, roared into the sky at daybreak with orders to concentrate on rebel shipping. At nine-thirty in the morning a Sea Fury sank the ship carrying all the ammunition reserve for the next ten days and most of the communications equipment. Newsweek described the loss "as an inexplicable concentration of treasure in a single hull."⁶⁷

⁶⁵Meyer and Szulc, The Cuban Invasion, p. 125; Ross and Wise, in The Invisible Government, p. 43, said that the radio message was taken from a code used by persecuted Christians in the Roman era in which they would draw a fish to indicate a clandestine meeting was to be held. The CIA had selected this as a symbol for the invasion. (Hence the business about fish rising, which Radio Swan had broadcast Sunday night.)

⁶⁶Schlesinger, A Thousand Days, p. 273.

⁶⁷"Cuba: The Consequences," Newsweek, May 1, 1961, p. 24.

In the lull following the first attack, C-46 transports carrying the brigade paratroopers flew over the beach on their way inland. One of the fliers later told Haynes Johnson that, "one of the planes dipped low to salute the invaders, and as it did, the men on the ground opened fire." Bullets passed through the fuselage. "What the hell's going on?" one paratrooper yelled. "They've gone crazy."⁶⁸

On the Houston the greenest battalion was left. They were reluctant to get off. The American commander shouted in anger: "It's your war you bastards. Get off!" As they got off and headed for the beach, they heard behind them the motors of an airplane. They thought it was one of theirs. The plane attacked them and as it came around for the second pass the commander shouted, "everybody fire at the God damn thing." This time they hit, and when it made a third pass it went down in flames.⁶⁹

The fighting went on through a hot, clear day, the invaders digging in behind their tanks, bazookas and mortars, but by early Tuesday it was clear that the invasion was in trouble. Trouble was brewing in other spots of the world also.⁷⁰

Kruschev sent an angry note to Washington denouncing the invasion, saying: "As to the Soviet Union there should

⁶⁸Haynes Johnson, Bay of Pigs, p. 112.

⁶⁹Ibid.

⁷⁰Schlesinger, A Thousand Days, p. 275.

be no misunderstanding our position. We shall render the Cuban people and their government all necessary assistance in beating back the armed attack on Cuba." In the afternoon Kennedy sent his reply: "I have previously stated, and I repeat now, that the United States intends no military intervention in Cuba. In the event of any military intervention by outside forces we will immediately honour our obligations under the inter-American system to protect this hemisphere against external aggression."⁷¹

That evening the President called another meeting of his staff to discuss what could be done to relieve the situation on the beaches of Cuba. The navy wanted to use an air strike against Castro from the carrier Essex lying off Cuba, supposedly on navy maneuvers. Admiral Burke said: "We are involved sir. We trained and armed these Cubans. We helped land them on the beaches, God dammit, Mr. President, we can't let those boys be slaughtered there." The President finally consented to allow six unmarked jets from the Essex to fly the mission over the Bay of Pigs for the hour before dawn Wednesday morning. Their mission would be to cover a B-26 attack from Nicaragua, but they were not to seek air combat.⁷² The groups started out that night but through one more mixup in this doomed affair the B-26s

⁷¹D. Lawrence, "Let's Invade Cuba," United States News & World Report, November 6, 1961, p. 116.

⁷²Readers Digest, September 1964, p. 263. A later account said this was the carrier Boxer--not the Essex.

arrived over the beachhead an hour ahead of jet support. The result was disastrous.

By Wednesday fighting on the beaches was over. A reporter for Readers Digest wrote: "For three days men had fought without rest and little food and water. Almost to a man they were captured or killed. A few put out to sea on rafts but few of these survived." Shortly after 5 p.m. Wednesday the Free Cuban beach commander sent a final message: "I am destroying all my equipment. I have nothing left to fight with. The enemy tanks are already in my position. Farewell, friends."⁷³

Meyer and Szulc summarized: "At the moment of defeat there were no answers--only questions." At noon on Thursday President Kennedy appeared before the American Society of Newspaper Editors to discuss the recent events in Cuba. The President was composed and impressive, but the strain had taken its toll. The belligerent tone was that of a thwarted leader searching for release from a sense of defeat, as he said:

. . . let the record show that our restraint is not inexhaustible. 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 our nation. Should that time ever come, we do not intend to be lectured on intervention by those whose character was stamped for all time on the bloody streets of Budapest.⁷⁴

⁷³Ibid., p. 267.

⁷⁴Meyer and Szulc, The Cuban Invasion, p. 142.

CHAPTER III

Reaction and Response

When the extent of the debacle became clear, the American reaction came quickly. President Kennedy was fully prepared to shoulder the blame, but was not prepared for "I-told-him-so" reports that began to appear in print.¹ The New York Times reported that Secretary Dean Rusk and under-Secretary Bowles had advised against the invasion.² Kennedy called Rusk and "blisteringly" reminded him that he had not offered such advice at the time. Bowles was confronted by Robert F. Kennedy in a personal confrontation, who jabbed his finger at him and said, "I understand you advised against this operation. Well let me tell you something as of right now, you did not, you were for it." This was not true, however, for Bowles had filed a report stating his opposition and presented it to Rusk, but it never came to the attention of the President.³

When reports reached the President indicating that the Joint Chiefs of Staff had stated they were bypassed,

¹"Cuba: The Consequences," Newsweek, May 1, 1961.

²Tad Szulc, "From Robin Hood to Revolutionary Oracle," New York Times Magazine, July 16, 1961, p. 14.

³Newsweek, May 1, 1961, p. 28.

Kennedy called McNamara and told him to "crack the whip." Some members of the CIA were also trying to save face, saying they had opposed the operation. Dulles was called and told to "get the agents in line."⁴ Newsweek sympathized, stating: "The President took the rap himself, but the haunting, significant fact remained; somewhere along the line, trusted men failed him."⁵

The press did not deal too unkindly with the President. In the opinion of the Nation, what amounted to a fait accompli confronted Kennedy when he took office. The invasion plans had already been made, and he was given to understand that they had been designed by his predecessor -- a man of awesome military reputation.⁶ According to the New Republic the situation inherited by the Kennedy administration "had its own dynamics, and like a boulder rolling downhill the process gathered its own momentum and became constantly harder to stop."⁷ So it was not a matter of inaugurating a new process, but whether to stop an existing one. The new administration would encounter much more domestic criticism for stopping an anti-Castro movement already underway than for simply launching one.

⁴Theodore C. Sorenson, Kennedy (New York: Harper & Row, 1965), p. 294.

⁵Newsweek, May 1, 1961, p. 28.

⁶F. J. Cook, "CIA--The Case Builds Up," Nation, June 22, 1964, p. 616.

⁷Louis J. Halle, "Lessons of the Cuban Blunder," New Republic, June 5, 1961, p. 13.

Victor Lasky, author of J. F. K., The Man and the Myth, takes issue with the argument that Kennedy had no alternative but to approve the Cuban plans inaugurated by his predecessor. During the later stages of the 1960 campaign, Kennedy had taunted the Eisenhower administration for allowing a communist regime to exist less than ninety miles from the coast of the United States. In his campaign promises he had called for what amounted to a direct intervention in Cuba. He said: "We must attempt to strengthen the non-Batista democratic anti-Castro forces in exile, and in Cuba itself, who offer eventual hope of overthrowing Castro."⁸

After our country's humiliation in the Bay of Pigs, Eisenhower, in keeping with a lifelong practice of supporting the nation's commander in chief in times of crises, called upon the American people to stand by President Kennedy. He said vehemently that the last thing they should want was an immediate public airing of the Cuban fiasco, likening such demands to "witch-hunting."⁹

When Arthur Schlesinger, Jr., and Theodore C. Sorenson, ranking members of Kennedy's staff, wrote their intimate histories of the Kennedy administration they attempted

⁸Victor Lasky, J. F. K., The Man and the Myth (New York: Devan-Adair, 1965), p. 516. See also Hugh Sidey, John F. Kennedy, President (New York: Atheneum, 1963), p. 143.

⁹U.S., Congressional Record, extension of remarks of Hon. John W. Wydler, 89th Cong., 1st Sess., A5435.

to link the Eisenhower administration with the Cuban invasion and sought also to discredit Eisenhower's appointed military and intelligence experts. The disputed material is summed up for both in the following paragraph from the Sorenson version: "On January 20, 1961, John Kennedy inherited the plan, the planners, and most troubling of all, the Cuban's exile brigade. . . . Unlike an inherited policy statement of Executive order, this inheritance would not be simply disposed of by Presidential decision or withdrawal."¹⁰ The purpose of the statement was to exonerate, but in reality it constituted a disservice to, the late President Kennedy, who at no time sought to shift the responsibility for any of his executive decisions.

It was at this point that Eisenhower in the interest of historical accuracy decided to set the record straight by giving the public the facts about these earlier events. In an interview with Earl Mazo, he gave his account of the situation as it existed when he left the White House. During the transition period between administrations he briefed Kennedy on all pending matters including the secret program inaugurated the year before to train and equip Cuban refugees. He stressed that no commitments had been made that might bind the new President. If Kennedy had wished

¹⁰Sorenson, Kennedy, p. 295.

the Cuban exile brigade was still so small and relatively unprepared it could easily have been disbanded.¹¹

In his book, The Wine is Bitter, Milton Eisenhower, brother of the ex-President, maintains that Eisenhower did not have any plan to sponsor an invasion of Cuba. However, recognizing that there might come a day when the pressure from refugees would increase and the situation dictate some action, approval was given the CIA to organize and give military training to Cuban exile groups.¹² In Ordeal of Power, Emmet John Hughes states: "It is hardly conceivable that an Eisenhower could have presided over so abortive a military action as the half-invasion of Cuba in April of 1961."¹³

Of the nonpolitical experts retained by Kennedy, notably Allen Dulles, Director of CIA, and the military Joint Chiefs of Staff, Eisenhower said: "These men over decades of devoted service have shown their capabilities, their sense of logic, their understanding of the problems involved in this kind of venture. There is no more expert group in their profession than these men. . . . Nothing that has been said by Kennedy and others after the Bay of

¹¹U.S., Congressional Record, extension of remarks of Hon. John W. Wydler, 89th Cong., 1st Sess., A5435.

¹²Milton Eisenhower, The Wine is Bitter (New York: Doubleday, 1963), p. 269.

¹³Emmet John Hughes, The Ordeal of Power (New York: Atheneum, 1963), p. 356. See also U.S., Congressional Record, Joseph Clark, 87th Cong., 1st Sess., 10337.

Pigs debacle has shaken my faith in these men." He believed: "The very disparagement of these seasoned professionals showed how unqualified the presidential advisors were to deal with the sort of problem involved in a critical international venture like the Bay of Pigs."¹⁴ Hugh Sidey described them as brave men from a brave era when the United States had no peer as a military power--the ribbons on their chests marked their years of success.¹⁵

When Kennedy directed the joint chiefs to review the plans and combat readiness of the proposed venture to determine its chance of success, they reported that the operation was "marginal" but did have a good chance of toppling Castro.¹⁶ Tully maintains that they made the endorsement on two conditions--that CIA was correct in its appraisal of the political situation and that the rebels would control the air over the beachhead.¹⁷ United States News & World Report pointed out that military men are accustomed to make careful detailed studies, but these could not be made because the plans for invading Cuba were so

¹⁴U.S., Congressional Record, 89th Cong., 1st Sess., A5435.

¹⁵Hugh Sidey, John F. Kennedy (New York: Atheneum, 1963), p. 125.

¹⁶Newsweek, May 1, 1961, p. 24.

¹⁷Andrew Tully, CIA: The Inside Story (New York: Morrow, 1962), p. 25.

secret that even the joint chiefs were not given adequate information.¹⁸ The judgments made were not based on observation but upon information given by the CIA. It was also made clear that the plans as approved by the joint chiefs went through many changes before the invasion occurred.

All who participated will have to share the responsibility for the failure, but the agency most directly implicated was the CIA. Not only did it procure the arms and train the invaders, it was CIA's intelligence estimates upon which the other agencies made their plans and decisions. Time quoted the Raleigh (North Carolina) News and Observer saying: "Americans would be safer if the CIA Chief Allen Dulles were allowed to depart, taking his frayed cloak and blunt dagger with him into private life." The Time added that even Eleanor Roosevelt suggested mildly that the CIA was not very well informed.¹⁹ Life reporters wrote: "The invasion had been prematurely timed, inadequately mounted, strategically doomed, and based on woefully inept intelligence or wildly wishful thinking or both. The responsibility lay upon the agencies of the United States--the CIA and Joint Chiefs of Staff."²⁰

¹⁸"In Cuban Invasion: The Fatal Mistakes," United States News & World Report, February 4, 1963.

¹⁹"Inquest: Cuban Invasion Fiasco," Time, May 5, 1961, pp. 58-9. For a detailed discussion see Norman Cousins, "The Cuba Incident and the Rule of Law," Saturday Review, May 13, 1961, p. 27.

²⁰"Bitter Fruits of Defeat: Worldwide Jeers and Tears," Life, April 28, 1961, p. 22.

Much of the criticism involved the failure to use the forces inside Cuba. There was already available in the Escambray mountains an effective guerrilla band. This "ready to fight" anti-Castro force needed only food and weapons to be effective. But adequate help never came.²¹ The group was further weakened by a Castro "round-up" early in 1961, in which many were taken into custody along with tons of American-made munitions. Javier Felipe Pasoz Vea, a Cuban who had been with Castro in Sierra Maestra, had tried to convince the planners that military intervention would be a disaster. He said: "The overthrow of communism by internal revolutionary forces is a far better solution for the West and for the Cubans."²² The New Republic was certain the vital missing part was the lack of participation by the Cuban people in whose name the invasion was being fought.²³

When Eisenhower first directed the CIA to organize the exiles, batistianos were specifically excluded. These were the adherents of the ousted dictator Batista, dedicated to restoring the order that had existed under him with all of its inequities of absentee landlords and impoverished peasantry. Tully relates that President Kennedy

²¹"Cuba: Anatomy of a Failure," Look, July 18, 1961, p. 78.

²²"Cuba: Long Live the Revolution," New Republic, November 3, 1962, pp. 15-16.

²³"Cuban Invasion," New Republic, May 21, 1962, p. 23.

also issued an order excluding them from the Liberation Army, but the CIA refused to put the ban into effect. Important Batista officers, including the San Roman brothers, were given important commands because, as CIA explained, they were proven anti-communists.²⁴ Castro himself had said in an interview with Henri-Brasson, French journalist who was commissioned by Life to do an on-the-spot story in March 1963, that the invasion was doomed from the start because the brigade was composed of batistianos.²⁵

Meyer and Szulc wrote that many agents measured reliability by the loudness with which they denounced Castro and communism. To the CIA, former Batista officers were simply anti-communists who were zealous in opposing the rascal who humiliated their army. To many Cubans there was no distinction between "good" and "bad" Batista officers-- they were all bad.²⁶ The New Leader pointed out that there were available many former members of the rebel army among the exiles but most of them would not fight alongside former members of Batista's army or police, and certainly would not serve under them.²⁷

It was not only the batistianos that were favored.

²⁴Tully, CIA: The Inside Story, p. 249.

²⁵Henri Cartier-Brasson, "Castro's Cuba Seen Face to Face," Life, March 15, 1963, p. 30.

²⁶Meyer and Szulc, The Cuban Invasion, p. 106.

²⁷Draper, "Cuba and United States Policy," New Leader, June 5, 1961, p. 6.

The New Republic reported that the United States was backing, as the invasion boss and successor to Castro, the relatively unknown Manuel Artime Buesa, a one-time Castro soldier who had served briefly as an official in an agrarian reform zone in Oriente. His military experience was inconsequential, but he was an accomplished orator. His support lay with the more conservative sections of the Revolutionary Council, but commanded little influence in Cuba. The CIA, while promoting the more conservative group, pushed aside the better-established opposition of Manuel Ray who had the best-established underground organization in Cuba.²⁸ Tully asserts that:

Ray had built up this organization of saboteurs during a precarious eight-month stay in Cuba after he broke with Castro, and it was a model of its kind. The network spanned the entire island with a seven-man executive council in each province and lesser commands reaching down to the smallest village.

Ray became the target of reactionary exile Cuban businessmen and politicians. The word was passed that Ray was a dangerous leftist who would continue a communist economy in Cuba, eliminating only Castro.²⁹

The CIA fieldmen failed to see or chose to ignore the fact that the left-of-center groups were attracting most of the dissident support in Cuba itself. These more liberal groups were representative of Castro's 26th of July

²⁸"What Went Wrong," New Republic, May 1, 1961, P. 14.

²⁹Tully, CIA: The Inside Story, p. 245.

movement who had taken his program of democratic social reform seriously, and defected only when they came to believe that he was heading toward a form of communist totalitarianism.³⁰ Among these were a group of top guerilla fighters, defecting captains from Castro's rebel army, several of whom had previously attended United States jungle warfare school in Panama. They were now idle and desired to enlist in the Cuban Brigade but were ignored by CIA.³¹ Castro said these people were disillusioned because they were not appointed to the high positions they thought they deserved or they did not receive an expected portion of the property taken from foreign investors. Dissent was certain these were the people that should have been used in Castro's overthrow. It said: "It was criminally stupid to work once again with discredited right wing forces, with men whose committment to social reform (or to democratic government) was dubious to say the least."³²

When the deep divisions among the troops that were being trained became apparent, the Frente was disbanded and the Cuban Revolutionary Council was formed. This included such men as Miro Cardona, Castro's first premier

³⁰"The Invasion that Could not Succeed," Reporter, May 11, 1961, p. 20; Draper, "Cuba and United States Policy," New Leader, June 5, 1961, p. 7.

³¹Richard Rovere, "Letter from Washington," New Yorker, May 6, 1961, p. 139.

³²Michael Walzer, "Cuba: The Invasion and the Consequences," Dissent, June 1961, p. 4.

and Manuel Ray, both of whom were far to the left of the Frente politicians. This did not stop the feuding. When Arttime arbitrarily changed a number of commanders, there was open rebellion. Two hundred men refused to fight under their new commander, Captain Robert San Román, because he had served as an officer under Batista.³³ This group was placed under arrest and isolated, under guard, from the rest of the troops. A few escaped and others eventually rejoined their command but a hard core refused to give in. These dissidents received rough treatment from the CIA. They were flown to a remote jungle airstrip at Sayaxche, in Petén province, and then taken upriver in canoes to what was called a "reindoctrination camp." It was actually a prison from which they were not released until after the Bay of Pigs invasion failure.³⁴

This unhappy condition reflected the entire invasion plan. If the CIA had availed itself early of a more liberal organization that had wider appeal among Cubans and also controlled an effective anti-Castro underground, the adventure would have had a better chance. There is sound military reason to believe that with full use of this underground the venture may have been successful.³⁵

The original plan was to build up the underground

³³Haynes Johnson, The Bay of Pigs, p. 62.

³⁴Tully, CIA: The Inside Story, p. 247.

³⁵Ibid., p. 249

within Cuba through a long, slow period of guerrilla infiltration by exiles trained in Guatemala. Castro's opponents, many of them ex-comrades from his guerrilla days, urgently advised that only guerrilla warfare could succeed in overthrowing Castro. The efforts to help the anti-Castro guerrillas, to supply them with needed equipment, and to assist them to establish firm bases failed. The Escambray commanders were intensely suspicious of the ultimate aims of the divergent exile groups and were reluctant to swear allegiance to them.³⁶ Charles W. Thayer, in his book Guerrilla, suggests that American military advisors opposed guerrilla type operations because to them, "the guerrilla's foraging and grubbing for food seemed primitive compared to the intricate system of logistics they had learned." The primitive weapons of guerrilla fighting, such as knives, spears, shotguns, and hand-made bombs, "have none of the allure of the expensive hardware of the modern arsenal." They regarded guerrilla warfare as something second rate and degrading for professional officers. Even though the American military was not to have an active part in the Castro overthrow, their influence was felt by the sponsors of the Cuban operation. Thayer goes on to say that it was doubtful whether a movement based on democratic organization and dedicated to legality can ever be "ruthless and cruel enough to impose

³⁶Editorial, New York Times, April 22, 1961, p. 24.

the brutal discipline a modern guerrilla force demands.³⁷

By far the most effective and co-ordinated underground network in the country, particularly in Havana and other urban areas, was the MRPs led by Manuel Ray, the man the CIA had pushed aside. The Reporter was certain he was the one man whose efforts could have been most effective in setting off internal rebellion. The entire operation was based on the assumption of a popular uprising against Castro as soon as the landing materialized. The Cuban exile force was to be the catalyst, a core of trained fighters, around which discontented Cubans would rally.

Fortune's description of what was to take place included

a barrage of radio broadcasts from a nearby island and showers of pamphlets from airplanes intended to galvanize the anti-Castro Cubans in the cities and villages. Once the beachhead was consolidated and fighting went forward, to link up with the guerrillas inside Cuba, a mass revolt would be stimulated.³⁹

Manuel Ray's underground was prepared to hit pre-selected targets and also had available fourteen transmitters scattered across the country to appeal to the people. But they never went into action--they received no word in advance.

³⁷Charles W. Thayer, Guerrilla (New York: Harper & Row, 1963), p. 19.

³⁸"The Invasion That Could Not Succeed", Reporter, May 11, 1961, p. 22. Thayer (see footnote above) said: "The expectation of an uprising was so great, that along with the first wave of invaders, 4000 extra rifles were sent ashore to arm the newcomers."

³⁹Charles V. Murphy, "Cuba: The Record Set Straight," Fortune, September 1961, p. 97.

The leaders of the Cuban Revolutionary Council were given no opportunity to co-ordinate with the Cuban underground. They were held incommunicado by the CIA at an abandoned airfield somewhere in Florida while the invasion was underway. Reporter William Shannon said: "The co-ordinator of the Cuban underground had a few days earlier journeyed from the island to Miami in order to make plans; the invasion caught him 'flatfooted', and as a result, there was no sabotage or uprising."⁴⁰ Look reported the underground co-ordinator was fast asleep in Miami when news of the invasion came.⁴¹

The CIA strategists knew of the Escambray mountain fighters and other effective underground groups but had little patience with them, saying that they were not sufficiently conscious of security. A more likely reason for their mistrust, however, may have been their lack of control over them. Right-wing conservatives also influenced the elimination of the use of these more radical anti-Castro organizations inside Cuba, destroying the very machinery that may have brought about Castro's downfall.⁴²

The invasion force was given first priority at the expense of the anti-Castro forces inside Cuba. It was a

⁴⁰U.S., Congressional Record, extension of remarks of Hon. William Fitts Ryan, quoting Mr. William Shannon on Cuba, 87th Cong., 1st Sess., A2932.

⁴¹Tad Szulc, "Cuba: Anatomy of a Failure," Look, July 18, 1961, p. 91.

⁴²Meyer and Szulc, The Cuban Invasion, p. 87.

crucial mistake to proceed, not knowing the strength of the possible internal rebellion against Castro and what it was capable of doing. Not alerting these forces as to the precise time of invasion discouraged them from taking action until they knew the nature and extent of what was taking place. They would not risk their lives until they had some assurance the invasion could succeed.⁴³ Monahan and Gilmore quoted a Cuban guerrilla fighter as saying:

Despite setbacks, the underground was still in fair shape. I am positive that, given the word, we could have carried out the major plan of co-ordinated uprisings and sabotage. But we were told nothing. We were left completely in the dark.⁴⁴

Kennedy came in for his share of the blame for the lack of response from the Cuban people. Critics maintained that by repeatedly proclaiming that America would not under any circumstances become involved in the action against Cuba, he demoralized the population supposedly being relied on to revolt against the "oppressors." On the advice of Rusk, Stevenson, and Bowles, even the arrangements for arousing the Cuban populace with leaflets, cards, and radio broadcasts was deleted from the plan. The fear being that this was too obvious a showing of United States

⁴³Draper, "Cuba and United States Policy," New Leader, June 5, 1961, p. 27.

⁴⁴James Monahan and Kenneth Gilmore, The Great Deception (New York: Farrar Strauss, 1963), p. 11.

hand.⁴⁵ Lasky states: "It was all good propaganda for world consumption . . . but the effect was to serve notice on Cubans in Cuba, who were waiting for an encouraging signal from the United States, that if they rose up against Castro tyranny, it would be at their own risk."⁴⁶

After the invasion failed and the CIA was accused of making a faulty prediction that there would be an uprising, Dulles responded that he knew of no estimate that a spontaneous uprising would be touched off by the landing.⁴⁷ Drew Pearson said the invader's strategy was "to hold out in the swamp and on the beach." There would be enough uprisings across the country so the beachhead could be held and consolidated until the rebels could establish a government on Cuban soil.⁴⁸ The Cuban Revolutionary Council was to be flown in, from the Opa-Locka, Florida airfield where they were held in readiness, to proclaim itself the new government of Cuba. Meyer and Szulc state: "The assumption was that the invaders could hold the Bay of Pigs long enough to establish a provisional government--and . . . it could appeal to the outside world for help and the United States

⁴⁵Murphy, "Cuba: The Record Set Straight," Fortune, September 1961, p. 227.

⁴⁶Lasky, J. F. K., The Man and the Myth, p. 519

⁴⁷Allen W. Dulles, The Craft of Intelligence (New York: Harper & Row, 1963), p. 31.

⁴⁸Robert E. Light and Carl Marzani, Cuba versus CIA (New York: Marzani Munsell, Inc., 1961), p. 51.

would be in a position to respond."⁴⁹ Joe Alex Morris, Jr. reported in the Miami Herald Tribune:

The United States Navy was reported to have two task forces, each with a carrier operating in the Caribbean area, instead of the usual one. Both were said to be engaged in routine exercises, as were 1,700 marines in Puerto Rico. . . . American Naval and Air Force units in the area were on a constant alert.⁵⁰

The exercises were cancelled after the invasion failure. Only naivete could misread United States aspirations and intentions. Walter Lippman in a critical analysis, wrote: "No plans seem to have been made, no thought seems to have been given, to what we would do then, what the rest of Latin America would do then, what the Soviet Union would do while the civil war was being fought."⁵¹

Shortly after the Revolutionary Council was formed on March 22, 1961, it released its "minimum program." Ironically it had to be cautioned against placing too much stress on the restoration of American property taken by Castro. In the opinion of Meyer and Szulc, their pledges seemed to be addressed more to an American than a Cuban audience. The Council declaration was: "We emphatically assure those who have been unjustly dispossessed that all their assets shall be returned." Manuel Varona, president

⁴⁹Meyer and Szulc, The Cuban Invasion, p. 140; Haynes Johnson, Bay of Pigs, p. 121; Schlesinger, A Thousand Days, p. 274.

⁵⁰Light and Marzani, Cuba versus CIA, p. 50.

⁵¹Walter Lippman, Washington Post, May 2, 1961, p. 4.

of the Council, went so far as to say: "The need for agrarian reform in Cuba is a myth."⁵²

The New Yorker questioned whether the Cuban masses, would have revolted even if properly alerted. They may have been "so pleased with their lot under Castro that they would not have welcomed a successor government of any sort."⁵³ Interestingly, Senator-elect Claiborne Pell, Democrat of Rhode Island, after a visit to Castro's Cuba in December, 1960 said: "The people of Cuba that I saw and spoke to were not sullen or unhappy or dissatisfied."⁵⁴

About the same time, two other expert observers offered similar findings. They were General Hugh B. Hester, a veteran of the Southwest Pacific campaign in World War II, and Jesse Gordon, a public relations consultant. They found that 86 per cent of the people supported Castro and that if elections were held, Castro would be overwhelmingly returned to power. They concluded that if the United States military high command proceeded with its plan to invade Cuba, the result would be disastrous.⁵⁵ Dissent declared: "It was criminally stupid to attempt to plunge Cuba into a civil

⁵²Meyer and Szulc, The Cuban Invasion, p. 107.

⁵³Rovere, "Letters from Washington," New Yorker, May 6, 1961, p. 145.

⁵⁴New York Herald Tribune, April 20, 1961, p. 11.

⁵⁵Hugh B. Hester and Jesse Gordon, "A New Look at Cuba--the Challenge of Kennedy," New York Review, April 12, 1961, p. 63.

war in the absence of clear signs of internal revolt."⁵⁶

Animosity toward Americans had deep historical roots on the island. This anti-American feeling was especially strong among many liberal and propertyless Cubans. An invasion, no matter how it was disguised by Americans, looked to many Cubans--and to the rest of the world--as a revival of past landings of United States marines. The New Yorker summarized: "There was practically no one who believed that any undertaking of this sort would have been either morally defensible or politically wise or 'paramilitarily' feasible if it failed to obtain the support of the people whose country was to be assaulted."⁵⁷

On April 3, 1961, Kennedy ordered the State Department to publish a White Paper on Cuba. It was a document written largely by Arthur Schlesinger, Jr., which appealed to the Castro regime to "return to the original purposes which brought so many gallant men together in the Sierra Maestra and to restore the integrity of the Cuban Revolution."⁵⁸ It was designed to prepare public opinion at home

⁵⁶Walzer, "Cuba: The Invasion and the Consequences," Dissent, June 1961, p. 4.

⁵⁷Rovere, "Letters from Washington," New Yorker May 6, 1961, p. 139.

⁵⁸Ibid., p. 141; Draper, "Cuba and United States Policy," New Leader, June 5, 1961, p. 92; Ross and Wise, The Invisible Government, p. 41; M. Stanton Evans, The Politics of Surrender (New York: Devan-Adair, 1966), p. 381.

and abroad for the imminent clandestine invasion. The Monthly Review was very outspoken in its criticism, declaring it to be an attempt to justify its determination to destroy the Cuban Revolution. It raised this question: "Is it perhaps that the government never wanted Cuba to do more than rest on the Constitution of 1940, which contained no threat to the profits and privileges of United States investors in Cuba? What colossal effrontery."⁵⁹

On April 8, Federal immigration agents in Miami arrested Roland Masferrer, a notorious Batista henchman, who had fled Cuba the same day as Batista. He had been picked up at the request of Dean Rusk who reported to Attorney General Robert F. Kennedy that his presence in this country was prejudicial to our national interest from the point of view of our foreign relations. Two days later Masferrer was indicted on charges of conspiring to outfit and send a military expedition against Cuba--a violation of our neutrality laws. Louis J. Halle suggests that: "One possible reason for Masferrer's arrest was that the administration believed that charging him with invading Cuba would divert suspicion from the government's own invasion plans, then in final stages of preparation."⁶⁰

The question of the morality and legality of the invasion resulted in much perturbation. The New Republic

⁵⁹Monthly Review, May 1961, p. 5.

⁶⁰Halle, "Lessons of the Cuban Blunder," New Republic, June 5, 1961, p. 75.

said the action was a violation of our obligations under American treaties not to interfere in the affairs of our neighbors. It was a violation of international law, the United Nations charter, and the OAS charter, which states:

"No state has the right to intervene directly or indirectly for any reason whatever in the internal affairs of any other state."⁶¹ Arthur Larson, writing for the Saturday Review, puzzled over what had gone wrong in a country that took pride in being the guardian of the law. He said this country can learn a useful lesson from the experience if it realizes that it can not get rid of violence by emulating violence or build a better world of law by flouting law.⁶²

The Monthly Review took a most extreme position, declaring:

The criminal nature and aims of the United States must be exposed . . . the American ruling class must be taught that the world will no longer tolerate the re-imposition of imperial rule on a small country that has heroically won its independence and resolutely set its feet on the road to a better, happier future.⁶³

Robert Kennedy, the Attorney General, debated inwardly the morality of the act, the world response, the national response, and the Latin-American reaction. His conclusion was both unsound and misleading as he said: "Support of the invasion, could be distinguished from uninvited

⁶¹Halle, "Lessons of the Cuban Blunder," New Republic, June 5, 1961, p. 75.

⁶²"The Cuba Incident and the Rule of Law," Saturday Review, May 13, 1961, p. 27.

⁶³Monthly Review, May 1961, p. 5.

intervention" in the legal sense, because, "it was intended to test the will of the Cuban people, not to topple their government." Walter Lippmann, ironically, said: "It is feasible, and in the practice of States it is not prohibited to give clandestine help to Castro's opponents . . . so long as it remains clandestine."⁶⁴

The question is often asked how President Kennedy and his advisors had come to a decision to approve a venture so greatly misconceived. It goes back in part to the 1960 presidential election. Democratic candidate John Kennedy was calling loud attention to the danger at our doorstep. Clare Booth Luce quotes Kennedy as saying that Cuba was evidence that United States security and leadership were slipping away, and to "let Mr. Krushchev know that we are permitting no expansion of his foothold in our hemisphere."⁶⁵ The New Republic said that the Kennedy administration thought of itself as an administration of dynamic action. This kind of action against Cuba fitted the New Frontier--the men in the inner ring dared not be anything but men of action. So at the last dramatic meeting when the final decision was being made and each man was asked in turn to voice his opinion, it was difficult for any of them to disrupt the consensus that was being formed. This is the weakness

⁶⁴Helen Fuller, Year of Trial: Kennedy's Crucial Decisions (New York: Harcourt, Brace and World, Inc., 1962), p. 58.

⁶⁵Clare Booth Luce, "Our Global Double Bind," Life, October 5, 1962, p. 53.

of bureaucracy--it is safer to be wrong with everyone else than to be right alone.⁶⁶

One man who participated in the deliberations pleaded with the President not to approve the plan. That was Senator Fulbright of Arkansas. He spoke with firm conviction when he stated: "This sort of oblique attack on another Government is inherently immoral. . . . The wise course is not to try to overthrow Castro, but to work constructively elsewhere in Latin America." In his opinion, if we were to use armed force, we would have undone the work of thirty years in trying to live down earlier interventions. He repeated a phrase Kennedy used during the campaign: "The road to freedom runs through Rio and Buenos Aires and Mexico City." He then added this statement: "The Castro regime is a thorn in the flesh, but it is not a dagger in the heart."⁶⁷ In spite of his persuasion, Kennedy made the most unfortunate decision of his career--a decision for invasion.

There was another issue that was being questioned: Was the plan as originally approved by the Joint Chiefs of Staff and the administration militarily feasible? Many of

⁶⁶Halle, "Lessons of the Cuban Blunder," New Republic, June 4, 1961, p. 14.

⁶⁷Stewart Alsop, "Lessons of the Cuban Disaster," Saturday Evening Post, June 24, 1961, p. 26; Fuller, Year of Trial: Kennedy's Crucial Decisions, p. 57; Karl E. Meyer, Fulbright of Arkansas (Washington D. C.: Robert B. Luce, Inc., 1963), p. 198.

the invaders insisted the plan was a masterful one. If it had been carried out as designed, it would have succeeded.⁶⁸ Fortune maintained that as a "tactical exercise, it was well advised, daringly and successfully led, but the strategists at the White House plucked it apart."⁶⁹ The plan that was put into operation was different from the plan as visualized by Eisenhower in many requisite ways. Stewart Alsop wrote: "A peculiar, progressive watering down process had occurred."⁷⁰

The original idea was to feed the recruits back into Cuba to reinforce the several thousand anti-Castro guerrillas already established in the mountains. Toward the fall, however, a more ambitious and riskier project came under consideration. It was to be a "one-shot" invasion to establish a beachhead for the expedition, to proclaim a provisional government, and to provide a rallying point for the discontented.

The first site selected for the landing was Trinidad. If the beachhead could not be held, anti-Castro forces had a "fall-back" position in the Escambray Mountains where the anti-Castro guerrillas were already operating. As President Kennedy began subtracting from the elements necessary

⁶⁸Mario Lazo, "Decision for Disaster," Readers Digest, September 1964, p. 263.

⁶⁹Murphy, "Cuba: The Record Set Straight," Fortune, September 1961, p. 92.

⁷⁰Stewart Alsop, "Lessons of the Cuban Disaster" Saturday Evening Post, June 24, 1961, p. 26.

to victory, the invasion site was switched from Trinidad to the Bay of Pigs.

Colonel Ramón Barquin, Ray's military leader, and others protested in vain against this choice of landing place. Barquin was one of the most highly regarded military men among the exiles, and he knew Cuba as he knew his right hand. He pointed out that there were three narrow roads and a railroad bed leading out of the swamp, all converging as they entered the central Cuban plain. Castro could concentrate his forces at this point and completely annihilate the rebel forces. Should any escape they could never make their way to the Escambray's a hundred miles away.⁷¹

The change may have had some advantage in that there would be little danger of shooting civilians--hardly any lived there. It was also thought that the landing there would be virtually unopposed and would appear to be an attempt to resupply guerrillas.⁷² This thought was apparently based on wishful thinking--it is doubtful that there were guerrillas operating in this area. A more important reason, however, was a political and foreign-policy concern over possible world reaction. Trinidad was too large a city for such an undertaking to evade widespread notice

⁷¹Ibid.

⁷²Ross and Wise, The Invisible Government, p. 46.

and avert the censure of world opinion.⁷³ This fear of world opinion led to even more disastrous decisions.

Perhaps the most widely publicized criticism of the Cuban operation was the manner in which the White House handled the matter of air-strikes and air-cover. One of the essential elements of the plan was the use of air power. Castro's air force--consisting of four jet trainers, six to eight B-26's and several British Sea Furies--was to be destroyed on the ground in three air strikes by the Free Cuban Squadrons based in Nicaragua.⁷⁴ Two of these were to take place before the invasion and the third was to coincide with the invasion. Actually, the thought was that not until after Castro's planes were shot down would the landing forces hit the beaches. Air strike number one was to use all sixteen B-26 bombers in the rebel air squadron, but the State Department argued that this was too many planes to fit the pretense that the air strike was conducted by defecting Castro pilots, so the number was therefore cut to eight.⁷⁵

The first strike went off as planned, early Saturday morning, April 15. Its effectiveness was limited because it had to appear as if it was done by Castro's own pilots. No

⁷³Evans, The Politics of Surrender, p. 384.

⁷⁴Ross and Wise, The Invisible Government, p. 20.

⁷⁵Lazo, "Decision for Disaster," Readers Digest, September 1964, p. 246; Evans, The Politics of Surrender, p. 384.

napalm was used, and the planes had to fly from Nicaragua and return, leaving limited time for bomb runs. It did succeed, however, in giving rise to a great flurry in the United Nations and elsewhere and as a result the United States participation in the entire enterprise was coming to the surface.⁷⁶ As protests poured in, our image-conscious planners began to get panicky. Stevenson, Rusk, and Bowles advised the cancellation of the second air strike. They argued that additional attacks would make it impossible to preserve the noninvolvement image of the United States.⁷⁷ In the opinion of many, the lack of this air strike contributed most to the failure of the invasion. Castro's planes were free to wreak havoc among the invaders. Everything now depended upon the success of the third air strike, planned for the morning of the invasion.⁷⁸

Ross and Wise asked the question: "Could the President permit another B-26 air strike on Monday and still convince the world that somehow a new covey of Castro pilots had defected from the Cuban Air Force?"⁷⁹ The President decided he could not. He therefore called off the

⁷⁶Sorenson, Kennedy, p. 301.

⁷⁷Light and Marzani, Cuba versus CIA, p. 33; Evans, The Politics of Surrender, p. 384; Sidey, John F. Kennedy, p. 129.

⁷⁸"How President Kennedy Upset the Cuban Invasion," United States News & World Report, February 4, 1963, p. 29.

⁷⁹Ross and Wise, The Invisible Government, p. 20.

third air strike on which all hopes for the invasion depended.

This was a staggering blow to the CIA. Bissell-- accompanied by Deputy Director Charles Cabell, an experienced airman--went immediately to urge Rusk to reconsider a decision that, in its judgment, would put the enterprise in irretrievable peril. Rusk conferred with the President and the answer was "no."⁸⁰ Bissell returned to his office and flashed the word to Happy Valley, Nicaragua, where a small force of B-26s was sitting in readiness to take off for the Bay of Pigs. These were the planes of the invasion force, flown by Cuban pilots. They did not take off--their use had been forbidden.⁸¹

In the planning of the invasion an air strip was to be set up on the invasion beach where rebel planes could land and be refueled, so they could fly cover for the invasion. Castro's air attacks prevented fuel from getting ashore so the air strip could not be used. This meant the anti-Castro planes had to fly back 700 miles to Nicaragua to refuel, which gave them only a few minutes over the beach. The result was no air cover.⁸²

⁸⁰Murphy, "Cuba: The Record Set Straight," Fortune, p. 93; Lasky, J. F. K., The Man and the Myth, p. 521.

⁸¹U.S., Congressional Record, extension of remarks of Hon. Charles B. Hoeven, 87th Cong. 2nd Sess., A5435.

⁸²"The Air Will Be Ours," United States News & World Report, February 4, 1963, p. 29.

When the invasion began and Castro's jets not only decimated the Free Cuban Air Squadron but also sank two freighters, Kennedy became alarmed. In the face of impending, dismal failure, Bissell was told that the exile B-26s could attack Castro's airfields at will. A mission was then planned to take place on Monday night--the pilots were warned to avoid any risk to lives or civilian property. The planes took off at 7:30 from Nicaragua and arrived over the target four hours later on a moonless night, with both the base and the nearby town blacked out and hidden by a low cloud ceiling. Not being able to distinguish their target, the pilots obeyed orders, and the mission returned without firing a shot or dropping a bomb.⁸³ United States News & World Report said that removing the restrictions on the invader's air force at this point "was like a surgical operation to save a man who had already died."⁸⁴

Tuesday night, April 18, after a tortuous midnight meeting at which Bissell made it plain that unless United States air power was brought forward, the men on the beach were doomed, the President authorized air cover from the USS Boxer, for precisely one hour over the beaches. This would allow for the landing of supplies and for a strong strike by the exile air force. The plan collapsed when the

⁸³"Lessons of the Cuban Disaster," Readers Digest, September 1961, pp. 43-48.

⁸⁴"The Air Will Be Ours," United States News & World Report, February 5, 1963, p. 20.

exile B-26s arrived over the beaches ahead of schedule-- before the Boxer's jets had taken off.⁸⁵ The confusion over time was not surprising, considering the frequency of changes in the basic plan. "When the Navy planes finally got off their carrier," wrote Drew Pearson, "their only contribution to freedom was to help Castro--they shot down a rebel B-26."⁸⁶ Rebel planes had the same markings as Castro's, except for some distinctive markings underneath, and the Navy pilots not being able to see under the wing, destroyed the rebel B-26.

The disputes following the invasion failure centering on the decisions made during these tragic hours rankled Robert F. Kennedy. He said that he was certain that "President Kennedy never withdrew United States air cover--there never were any plans made for United States air cover, so there was nothing to withdraw."⁸⁷ This statement stands in contradiction to what the invasion forces had been led to believe. Verona said he went to the "Freedom Fighters" training base in Guatemala and spoke to the American commander who stated: "Don't worry, we will have complete control of the air, and Castro won't be able to move a single car or truck any place in Cuba." When asked if he was

⁸⁵Milton Eisenhower, The Wine is Bitter, p. 270.

⁸⁶Drew Pearson, Grand Forks Herald, May 6, 1961, p. 4.

⁸⁷"The Air Will Be Ours," United States News & World Report, February 4, 1963, p. 29.

certain this was an American promise, he stated: "The promise came from an American placed there by the American government. He had to have authority. I believed in him." Dagoberto Darías, commander of a transport vessel in the Cuban invasion, said he received an American promise of air support. "It came," he said, "in a radiogram from the American flagship directing our operations."⁸⁸

On January 11, 1962, José Pérez San Román, commander of the defeated brigade, made a trip to Washington to issue a statement from Attorney General Robert Kennedy's office. In the statement he flatly denied that the invasion forces had ever been promised air support from the United States Government.⁸⁹ San Román, nicknamed Pepé, was probably the most important person participating in the invasion, and was certainly in a position to make known the truth. The following excerpts are from a transcription of radio messages from the Bay of Pigs to the home base, where Americans were in charge. These messages signed by Pepé San Román contradict the statements made in the Attorney General's office. "2AW to Air Command: Where is our jet cover? Pepé. To Base: Do you people realize how desperate the situation is? Pepé. To Air Commander: Where is promised air cover? Pepé. (Italics mine.) Ken Thompson

⁸⁸Ibid.

⁸⁹Ibid., p. 33.

of the Dallas Morning News said: "San Román's statement [to the Attorney General] has become extremely useful in what appears to be an obvious campaign to rewrite history and to absolve the administration of its share of the blame for the fiasco."⁹⁰

In retrospect, the debate over the issue of air strikes and air cover was wasted activity. Even with air superiority, it is a question whether the 1500 men landed at the Bay of Pigs could have withstood Castro's assault. He had available a 30,000-man army, besides his militia--a force totalling a quarter of a million men. They were equipped with the newest weapons from Russia and Czechoslovakia, which included tanks, cannon, and howitzers.⁹¹

When news of the invasion reached Castro he was in Havana. It came as no surprise--his agents in Miami had been reporting to him for months that an expeditionary force was being readied and equipped. At least a hundred known Castro intelligence agents circulated freely in the buildup area. Their photographs were on file in the Dade County, Florida, sheriff's office, but no effort was made by Federal authorities to remove them from the scene.⁹²

⁹⁰Ken Thompson, "Contradictions on Air Cover," Dallas (Texas) Morning News, February 5, 1963.

⁹¹Thayer, Guerrilla, p. 12.

⁹²"The Invasion That Could Not Succeed," Reporter, May 11, 1961, p. 22; James Reston, stated in the New York Times, May 2, 1961: "The only people who knew very little about what was happening. . . were the American people who were unknowingly picking up the tab."

On March 4, Castro's newspaper Revolución, devoted almost the entire issue to news stories and photographs of the preparations being made in the rebel camps and airfields in Florida and in Central America.⁹³ Castro, in speaking about the first air strike, said:

We knew that the air raid was not just a harassment but a military operation designed to destroy our air force. Therefore we figured the aggression would come soon. . . . Tactically speaking, the air raid was an error because it gave us a chance to take measures. We mobilized all combat units.⁹⁴

Some tactical errors came under close scrutiny and criticism. For example, to have loaded all the signal equipment, the greater part of the ammunition, and the high command (Manuel Artime) in a single vessel was a military error. Castro had ordered his half dozen planes to ignore the landing force and concentrate on the invasion fleet. Early in the action the Houston was hit by a rocket and grounded; a little later a Sea Fury, diving out of the sun, made a direct hit on the Rio Escondido which carried the supplies for the first ten days of fighting--ammunition, food, hospital equipment, and gasoline. Haynes Johnson was of the opinion that even had the Houston and the Rio Escondido gotten ashore, it is again a question whether it would have made a crucial difference in the one-sided struggle. Pepé San Román, the brigade commander, said they might

⁹³Revolución, March 4, 1961.

⁹⁴Monahan and Gilmore, The Great Deception, p. 111.

have succeeded with 15,000 men instead of 1,500.⁹⁵

When the White Paper on Cuba was published, it clearly indicated that the American Government was well aware of the magnitude of Cuba's military build up. It seems incredible that the overthrow, with such a small force, was even attempted. The question is often asked: Why did the United States choose this particular time for the invasion? Ross and Wise expressed the opinion that President Kennedy and his administration "were tasting the wine of victory and of power. The young energetic administration suffered from a bad case of overconfidence."⁹⁶ Most studies of the period reveal the following reasons for the invasion at this time: Allegedly, Castro was to receive, early in 1961, substantial deliveries of Soviet jet fighters and that Cuban pilots to man them were being trained in Czechoslovakia; the Guatemala government was threatening to throw the "Freedom Fighters" out of its country--President Ydígoras was under considerable pressure at home because of the camps; and the rebel army was growing restive--it would be impossible to sustain the morale of the exiles if they did not get into action. Thayer pointed out another, and probably more likely factor: "The customary impatience of the American public, particularly those who owned property in Cuba, must have put heavy

⁹⁵Haynes Johnson, The Bay of Pigs, p. 113.

⁹⁶Ross and Wise, The Invisible Government, p. 35.

pressure on the Americans who were dealing with the situation."⁹⁷

The Kennedy administration had strained hard to convince the world that it did not plan to commit United States military forces. The story in Washington was that the attempt to overthrow Castro was entirely a Cuban affair. Many Americans, nevertheless, took part. American frogmen scouted Cuban beaches in advance of attack--one American frogman was with the Cuban underwater teams that went ashore with the brigade. On the third day of the invasion four American pilots were killed in B-26 bombers over Cuba. Navy jets with insignias obliterated were all lined up and ready to go on air strips at Key West, Florida.⁹⁸

Why did United States involvement in the invasion come as a surprise to Americans when the whole world, including Cuba, seemed to have full knowledge of it? The Cuban radio was broadcasting all about the rebel camps, and the United States government's part in them, weeks before they were discussed in the American newspapers. According to Light and Marzani: "Few stories have been more grossly

⁹⁷Sorenson, Kennedy, p. 295; Tully, The Inside Story, p. 251; Schlesinger, A Thousand Days, p. 239; Wallace Carrol New York Times, April 21, 1961, p. 23; Theodore Draper, Castro's Revolution (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1962), p. 90; Fuller, Year of Trial, p. 52.

⁹⁸"Bay of Pigs: The Curtain is Lifting," United States News & World Report, March 11, 1963, p. 34.

mishandled--the story was there for all to see but the editors chose to wear blinders."⁹⁹ The Nation, in an editorial on November 19, 1960, presented the story by Doctor Ronald Hilton of Stanford University, in which he described the CIA's activities in Guatemala as it was reported on the front page of La Hora, Guatemala's leading newspaper. The issue containing the editorial, together with a copy of a news release based on the editorial, were distributed to all major news media. The dispatch of the releases was followed by telephone calls to various news desks.¹⁰⁰

The reactions were puzzling. Jesse Gordon said the Associated Press was called three times: Each time a different man answered, professed interest in the story, but said he hadn't seen either the release or a proof of the editorial. Could duplicates be sent immediately?" Three duplicates in as many hours were sent, but nothing happened --someone in the AP hierarchy squelched the story. It was not used by either the AP or the United Press International.¹⁰¹

A few days later Francis L. McCarty, head of the UPI Latin America service's desk, when asked, stated that there

⁹⁹Light and Marzani, Cuba versus CIA, p. 38.

¹⁰⁰Victor Bernstein and Jesse Gordon, "The Press and the Bay of Pigs," The Columbia University Forum, Fall 1967. (not page numbered).

¹⁰¹Ibid.

was a big base in operation in Guatemala, but the Pentagon denied any knowledge of it and the State Department said, "no comment." He went on to say, one story had it, that this was to be a replacement for Guantanamo.¹⁰²

The November 20th New York Times reported an interview with Guatemala's President Miguel Ydígoras in which he was asked about a "base" established with United States assistance as a training ground for military action against Cuba. He branded any such report a lie--the base was to be used by the Guatemalan Army for training in guerrilla warfare to guard against invasions.¹⁰³ The AP also interviewed Ydígoras and received the same story. Both correspondents chose to interview the one man who would be certain to deny the story. Fundamental rules of reporting should have dictated that they at least check with the La Hora reporter who wrote the original story, or if it was common knowledge as Dr. Hilton reported, they could have talked with any man on the street.

The St. Louis Post-Dispatch, not satisfied with the AP report, sent its own man, Richard Dudman, into Guatemala. He stayed clear of the Presidential Palace and got his answers from the public. He was told of a secret air-strip, and that many of the soldiers there spoke with a "Cuban accent." Mr. Dudman had censorship difficulties and had to

¹⁰²Ibid.

¹⁰³New York Times, November 20, 1960, p. 32.

post his story in neighboring El Salvador. The following editorial from the Post-Dispatch should have awakened the nations' press:

What is going on in Guatemala? Who is trying to conceal what, and for what purpose? Why should Richard Dudman . . . have to go to neighboring El Salvador to send a dispatch to this newspaper about what he found in Guatemala?¹⁰⁴

About the middle of December the Los Angeles Mirror sent its aviation editor, Don Dwiggin, to Guatemala to find out what was taking place. He told of air base construction and airstrips in which American funds were involved. He questioned why Guatemala's air-force consisting of a few war weary and corroding surplus fighters would need a jet airstrip for military use. An anti-Castro pilot told him of an air-raid operation scheduled for early 1961, and that people high up in the American government were offering \$25,000 for pilots to fly the mission. The sum of all these stories should have convinced the nation's press that United States was involved in a clandestine operation against Cuba.¹⁰⁵

On January 3, when the United States broke relations with Castro, the New York Times said, the action was taken because we had finally lost patience with the propaganda offensive from Havana, charging the United States with plans for invasion, but ignored Castro's charge that the embassy

¹⁰⁴Bernstein and Gordon, "The Press and the Bay of Pigs," The Columbia University Forum, Fall 1967.

¹⁰⁵Ibid.

was being used as an espionage center. The Times inferred that the purpose of the anti-American propaganda was to divert minds that would be preoccupied with dissatisfaction at home.¹⁰⁶

Paul Kennedy, Latin American correspondent for the New York Times, sent a dispatch that was printed on January 10 in which he described the build-up in Guatemala, using American facilities, material, and personnel. He did not identify the guerrillas under training or clarify the purpose. The article was very circumspect, yet, this was the story that at a later date was pointed to by President Kennedy as an example of "premature disclosures of security information."¹⁰⁷

The country as a whole now became aware of something peculiar going on in Guatemala. Still unmentioned was the CIA involvement that Dr. Hilton had earlier suggested. Beginning on January 8, the New York Daily News began a series of articles on these activities. Quoted was Manuel Varona, saying: "Our invasion force will land in Cuba. . . . A provisional government will be set up . . . which will restore all property to the rightful owners." The Daily News suggested that financing was coming from Cuban and American industrial interests who hoped to get their

¹⁰⁶New York Times, January 8, 1961, p. 15.

¹⁰⁷Ibid., January 10, 1961, p. 12.

property back.¹⁰⁸

The Miami editors, who were not unaware of what was going on but had suppressed the story, now decided there was no longer any point in withholding it. The day after the Times broke with their story on Guatemala the Miami Herald published full information on invasion activities.¹⁰⁹ The story continued to expand, and Washington, now aware that they could not stop speculation, began to leak stories to the press tending to justify the pending invasion. On April 4, Tad Szulc, Latin American correspondent for Time, told the whole story, linking the CIA with the invasion that was now imminent.

President Kennedy, at a press meeting, shortly after the Bay of Pigs had turned to dismal history, criticized what he considered premature disclosures. He was particularly critical of the New York Times, but at the same time said that he wished they had, "printed more about the operation, you would have saved us from a colossal mistake." James Reston was certain that any amount of disclosure at this time would not have helped. By the time the American people were fully aware of what was taking place the plans were beyond aborting. The time for arousing public opposition was back in October, 1960. The persistency with which

¹⁰⁸New York Daily News, January 8, 1961, p. 12.

¹⁰⁹Bernstein and Gordon, "The Press and the Bay of Pigs," The Columbia University Forum, Fall 1967.

the American press ignored the story still seems incredible. Actually there was no security to breach--Castro had complete information on all details. Bernstein and Gordon wrote:

The early apathy of the press makes sense only when viewed as motivated not so much by patriotic reticence as by eager jingoistic collaboration. The fact is that most powerful American publishers wanted Castro out. . . . So they kept silent until a few independent souls precipitated the news competition. . . . But the damage had already been done: public opinion had been eliminated as a factor in a major foreign policy decision.¹¹⁰ (Italics mine.)

Apparently there were no press reporters accompanying the invasion forces. All information was put out in the name of the Cuban Revolutionary Council by press releases dictated by CIA to the firm of Lem Jones Associates, Inc., of New York, hired for the purpose. The result was a farce. On the basis of these news releases, headlines throughout the nation recounted mass uprisings against Castro, Soviet MIGs and Soviet submarines blasting the invaders, Cuban Navy in revolt, while all this time the invading force was being destroyed by Castro forces. The American press was deliberately fed untruths.¹¹¹ The New

¹¹⁰Ibid.

¹¹¹Ibid. On April 19, a dispatch was forwarded by a Times correspondent at Guantanamo Bay, which states: "The sensitive radar on Navy ships picked up no trace of high-speed Cuban or communist aircraft, nor have any foreign submarines been sighted by the Navy." Officials were confident that there were no MIG fighters in the area of Cuba.

York Times said that the press had been debased for the government's purpose. In an editorial on May 10, it was firmly stated:

A democracy, . . . our democracy, . . . cannot be lied to. This is one of the factors that make it more precious, more difficult, and yet essentially stronger than any other form of government in the world. . . . A dictatorship can get along without an informed public opinion, a democracy cannot.¹¹²

There was tragedy in the invasion failure, but after the smoke of battle had cleared and after sober thought there were many who felt that the failure was not as tragic as it seemed. The Hon. Thomas Pelley stated: "That the present effort has apparently failed in no way diminished the gallantry of the attempt."¹¹³ An editorial in the Washington Post, in attempting to justify the invasion, reasoned that giving physical and moral support on this occasion was not an evasion of American principles, or of international commitments. It was no different from the English and French situation in Suez.¹¹⁴

There were many, however, who felt that the prestige of the United States had been seriously damaged. "We Americans," wrote C. L. Sulzberger in the New York Times,

¹¹²James Reston, "The President and Press, the Old Dilemma," New York Times, May 10, 1961, p. 48.

¹¹³U. S., Congressional Record, Hon. Thomas Pelley, 87th Cong., 1st Sess., 1961, 6529.

¹¹⁴Washington Post, April 25, 1961, p. 4.

"look like fools to our friends, rascals to our enemies, and incompetent to the rest."¹¹⁵ Readers Digest said:

"The invasion shocked the American people and damaged our leadership and prestige throughout the world."¹¹⁶ The Nation emphasized that it was a serious breach of national and international law.¹¹⁷ Newsweek reported: "At best, the United States appears before the world as a meddler, at worst as a nation which pretends to virtue yet seems to have committed open aggression against a tiny nation."¹¹⁸

Time described the rejoicing in Cuba: "On Havana street corners groups of prancing militiamen fired their Czech burp guns into the air, and jeeps draped with hot-eyed youths careened along the avenues, communist country correspondents were hustled to the beachhead to view the wreckage of invasion--United States-made mortars, trucks, recoilless rifles, machine guns, etc."¹¹⁹ Castro's April 21, Revolución, devoted the entire issue to showing captured American equipment, and the April 22 issue featured

¹¹⁵New York Times, May 5, 1961, p. 58.

¹¹⁶Lazo, "Decision for Disaster," Readers Digest, September 1964, p. 241.

¹¹⁷J. E. Smith, "Bay of Pigs: Unanswered Questions," Nation, April 13, 1964, p. 360.

¹¹⁸"Cuba: The Consequences," Newsweek, May 1, 1961, p. 23.

¹¹⁹"Bitter Week: Cuban Invasion," Time, April 28, 1961, pp. 11-13.

several pages of messages, letters, and date-line reports from all over the world indicating support and sympathy for Cuba. Pravda said that the United States was trying to pursue Theodore Roosevelt's "big stick" policy. "Today obviously it is not the biggest and longest . . . the other side has just as long and not less weighty sticks." India deplored United States intervention. Rio de Janeiro reported: "Whatever may be the result of the battle, we should make clear our support for Cuba's legitimate democratic objectives." In Caracas, the Venezuelan legislature unanimously condemned "any armed intervention in Cuba or in any other country."¹²⁰

American news media also told of world reaction. Newsweek reported: "Within twenty-four hours of the anti-Castro invasion the news had swept around the world . . . touching off a global surge of anti-Americanism communist protest meetings staged in Moscow, Peking, and satellite countries,"¹²¹ There was a good deal of undisguised pleasure in England, as told by Esquire, at the discomfiture of the CIA.¹²² Life found that among neutrals and even among friends the reaction was adverse. NATO nations exhibited

¹²⁰Revolución, April 21 and 22, 1961.

¹²¹"Cuba: The Consequences" Newsweek, May 1, 1961, p. 25.

¹²²M. Muggeridge, "Bay of Pigs," Esquire, September 1964, p. 71.

both scorn and dismay at the bungling.¹²³ Wallace Carrol, writing for the New York Times, reported that the "old feeling of 'yankee' intervention was stirred in the hemisphere, and a division occurred among delegations of the American Republics at the United Nations," yet, "there was a great deal of support in Latin America and a great deal more that did not come to the surface." Many leaders did not publicly back the invasion for fear of rousing leftist sentiment, but actually hoped that the Castro regime soon would fall.¹²⁴

The Cuban invasion was a horribly costly lesson; but it was well learned. In later months the President's father would tell him that "in its perverse way, the Bay of Pigs was not a misfortune but a benefit." This was small consolation, but no one can doubt that failure in Cuba in 1961 contributed to a firmer policy that brought about the removal of missile bases in 1962.¹²⁵ But if the United States policy in Latin America is represented only in the word "firmness" then it has not learned the lesson well.

¹²³"Bitter Fruits of Defeat," Life, April 28, 1961, pp. 22-23.

¹²⁴Carrol, New York Times, April 21, 1961, p. 4.

¹²⁵Schlesinger, A Thousand Days, p. 297.

CHAPTER IV

Midwest Response

The press in the Midwest appeared to be quite unaware of any unusual activity leading to intervention in Cuba until after the failure. This was no doubt a reflection of the lack of coverage of the story by the national news reporting services and the big city dailies. However, the Jamestown Sun and the Grand Forks Herald did report, early in April, on secret military camps in the Canal zone whose purpose it was to train Cubans in guerrilla and anti-guerrilla tactics, and the accusation by Raul Roa, Cuba's minister to the United Nations that the United States was directing an invasion plot against Cuba. There was also a report of the announcement made by Dr. Jose Miro Cardona, President of the Cuban Revolutionary Council of a "second war of liberation," to overthrow Castro.¹ The Minneapolis Tribune expressed its unhappiness over a situation in which the people who knew least about what was happening in the early stages of the exercise were the American people who were paying the bill. It was in hopes, however, that the attempt to overthrow Castro would succeed, but suggested that should it succeed, the varying and conflicting

¹Jamestown Sun, April 10, 1961, p. 2; Grand Forks Herald, April 10, 1961, p. 4.

political views held by the participating groups in the anti-Castro front might be a problem for any post-revolutionary government that took over.²

The "post-mortems" in the Midwest were similar to the national response, but milder and in most cases more constructive. The Mandan Pioneer was opposed to any temptation to find a scapegoat but wondered how it came about that the CIA so grossly miscalculated the Cuban situation. The nation, it believed, must guard against giving too much responsibility to any federal intelligence agency, and while the CIA has its place it should not be in a position to formulate top-level policy. The Pioneer was happy to know that President Kennedy had ordered an investigation of the CIA and hoped that the United States would not again be caught off base because of poor intelligence.³ The Devils Lake Daily Journal called attention to an aspect of the CIA which few people realize: that it is the only governmental agency which does not have to submit its expenses to any accounting except the chief executive's. "Through the years the CIA has been able to cloak its inefficiency from all eyes but those of the President. Its failures," it commented, "put serious dents in American prestige."⁴ The Jamestown Sun made the suggestion that the CIA should be

²Minneapolis Tribune, April 18, 1961, p. 4.

³Mandan Pioneer, April 28, 1961, p. 4, and May 5, 1961, p. 4.

⁴Devils Lake Daily Journal, May 9, 1961, p. 4.

overhauled both in method and personnel. In its opinion the organization had too many "political philosophers" who do their own evaluation and too few ordinary spies who provide data without evaluation. Nothing would appease the American people more than the reorganization of the CIA and the State Department and the elimination of those who had caused the confusion.⁵ The Albert Lea (Minnesota) Evening Tribune said that the agency should forget its "cloak and dagger" business and depend more on scientific techniques, favoring the idea as in Britain that intelligence and special operations should be handled by separate agencies.⁶ The guerrilla-training operation was criticized by the Minot Daily News because the United States had never been equipped for that kind of warfare, and certainly the CIA had no capabilities in this area. It should confine itself to information gathering and be relieved of all such responsibility, for guerrilla warfare was largely a military problem.⁷

When Senator McCarthy of Minnesota introduced a resolution in the Senate suggesting that the CIA should come under the scrutiny of the elected branch of the government, under a "watchdog" committee, the Waterloo (Iowa) Courier took issue with him, contending, that of all the things

⁵Jamestown Sun, April 28, 1961, and May 8, 1961, p. 4.

⁶Albert Lea (Minnesota) Evening Tribune, May 4, 1961, p. 4.

⁷Minot Daily News, April 28, 1961, p. 4.

wrong with CIA it could not conceive of a single one being corrected by a "watchdog" committee. Every other intelligence service in the world operated in complete secrecy, which was necessary also for the American agency if it were to fulfill its functions. The Courier further pointed out that an intelligence agency was expected to carry out missions which the government could repudiate. How could the government repudiate something an official Congressional committee had been supervising?⁸

There were political overtones in the comments made by the Albert Lea Evening Tribune. In its April 26 issue it called attention to Kennedy's scornful dismissal of the Eisenhower-Nixon effort to contain Cuba's "mad-man," but it was happy that Kennedy had swallowed his fierce pride and it called on Eisenhower to give him aid in rallying the citizens of the nation behind his administration. The editorial in the May 15 issue stated:

There is a vast reservoir of resentment against the cockiness of the New Frontiersmen exhibited during the campaign. They had a fine contempt for Eisenhower's policies at containment of communism and the more these conceited young men flounder, the wiser Eisenhower, Nixon and company appear.⁹

The Dickinson Press registered disapproval of the administration not seriously considering the consequences of failure. It wanted "to keep its cake and eat it too."

⁸Waterloo (Iowa) Courier, May 15, 1961, p. 4.

⁹Albert Lea Evening Tribune, May 15, 1961, p. 4.

In pursuit of a "tight-rope" course which sought to assist the assault, but manage it in a manner to keep its part secret, it doomed the enterprise from the start.¹⁰ The Press had been more conciliatory in an earlier statement that we should rid ourselves of the idea that "we as proud Americans must be best in everything we undertake, the idea that when we do fail, the blame must inevitably fall upon some sharply visible villain--a man or an agency."¹¹ The Minot Daily News registered disappointment that the President had not been protected by the "new hands" Walt Rostow, McGeorge Bundy, Arthur Schlesinger, Jr., and Dean Rusk against the bad advice of the "old hands" Richard Bissell and Allen Dulles of CIA, General Lyman Lemnitzer and Admiral Arleigh Burke of Joint Chiefs of Staff, and Adolfe Berle in the State Department.¹² The Mankato (Minnesota) Free Press commented on this, saying that any attempt to blame a single group--including the liberal-minded intellectuals--was allowing "prejudice to overcome sound judgement."¹³ The facts indicated that the older men had erred just as disastrously as had the younger men. The Press made no verbal attacks on Kennedy personally, and the criticism directed at the administration was not very

¹⁰Dickinson Press, May 18, 1961, p. 4.

¹¹Ibid., May 2, 1961, p. 4.

¹²Minot Daily News, May 4, 1961, p. 2.

¹³Mankato (Minnesota) Free Press, May 6, 1961, p. 10.

severe. When Secretary of Interior Stewart Udall in a television interview charged President Eisenhower with responsibility for the Cuban Invasion, saying it had been planned under him, the Bismarck Tribune was severe in its challenge. In its opinion, Udall was a "so-so" congressman until he joined the cabinet, and now "came a cropper" when he attempted to place responsibility for the fiasco on the shoulders of Dwight D. Eisenhower. If such contention were correct, Kennedy would not appear as a very "strong" president, for he would be conceding that "Ike and Dick" continued to be in charge.¹⁴

On the question of the value and use of the Cuban underground, the Grand Forks Herald predicted that once the invasion was underway and leadership thereby given to resistance groups, there would be greatly increased defections from the Castro government. The report from an underground leader insisted that his organization had more than 15,000 dues-paying members in Havana province alone. Later, when this defection did not occur, the Herald said Castro had time to arrest and scatter those who might have served as leaders, and an uprising around the provinces and cities would be extremely difficult.¹⁵ In a later issue the conclusion had been reached that a large segment of

¹⁴Bismarck Tribune, May 3, 1961, p. 4.

¹⁵Grand Forks Herald, April 16, 1961, p. 4, and April 20, 1961, p. 4.

the Cuban people were sold on Castro's propaganda and land reform, particularly the landless peasant who could have been the biggest asset to a revolutionary force who, when he was given or promised land, became a firm Castro supporter.¹⁶ The Jamestown Sun submitted that the peasant who helped feed Castro's guerrilla fighters when he was waging war against Batista would not be likely to help overthrow him. Other segments of the Cuban society would also be watching the progress of the drive against Castro to see if the big foreign estates were to be returned to their owners, and if the bathing beaches would once again be reserved for the elite of Havana and rich American tourists. If this were proposed, the uprising would not get much support inside Cuba.¹⁷ Considering the limited strength of the anti-Castro forces which landed in Cuba, the Saint Paul Pioneer Press expressed the opinion that the success of the invasion attempt had to rely on support from the Cuban population. It placed the blame on CIA for giving incomplete reports and convincing the administration that popular support would be forthcoming.¹⁸ "How could it be," wrote the Minneapolis Tribune, "that this organization with all its access to Cuba and to the friendly nations in this

¹⁶Ibid., April 22, 1961, p. 4.

¹⁷Jamestown Sun, April 14, 1961, p. 4.

¹⁸Saint Paul Pioneer Press, April 23, 1961, p. 6.

hemisphere, could be so sure the Cubans would revolt, and be so wrong on this critical point. . . ."19 The Dickinson Press registered disappointment in the CIA which, because of a lack of trust, did not inform the Cuban underground when the invasion was to take place and also held members of the top revolutionary council incommunicado while issuing statements in their name.²⁰ The Valley City Times declared that the United States intelligence was faulty in its reports on how much armament Fidel Castro had and also on the likelihood of a hoped-for uprising. "It is easy for Americans," it said, "with their distaste for dictatorship to think that because they despise Castro, all Cubans do."²¹

Opinions on the issues of the morality and legality, the right and wrong, of the involvement, were quite equally divided. The Waterloo Daily Courier took rather a militant stand, premised on the belief that the neutrality act and certain aspects of the Pan-American treaty did not adequately cover the existing situation. If we were prohibited from any action to help our friends, then we were in a desperate state indeed. It stated: "What the communists take by force of arms may rightly be taken from them by force of arms, any other doctrine

¹⁹Minneapolis Tribune, April 22, 1961, p. 4.

²⁰Dickinson Press, May 18, 1961, p. 4.

²¹Valley City Times, April 24, 1961, p. 2 and April 26, 1961, p. 2.

perpetuates the communists in power and guarantees our defeat."²² The Fairmont (Minnesota) Sentinel declared that if we are to survive in the world of today we may have to revise a doctrine which says "we will never start a war or fire that first shot. We must dare to take a stand for what we know to be right, as our forefathers did before us."²³ The Red Wing (Minnesota) Republican Eagle expressed the philosophy that as long as Uncle Sam was being blamed for everything that happened to Castro anyway, this nation would lose nothing by offering something besides mere sympathy to the Cuban people.²⁴ The only course left open to us, declared the Albert Lea Evening Tribune, was to "risk war if we want peace. The thickening crust of communism can no longer be laughed away. What this all means, of course, is that we must now drop our 'holier-than-thou' diplomatic pose and admit to the world that we are prepared to destroy those who seek to destroy us."²⁵ The Bismarck Tribune thought it was perhaps time for the United States to show that it would not hesitate to shoot if it had to. The United States being the seat and strength of freedom, it

²²Waterloo Daily Courier, April 14, 1961, p. 4.

²³Fairmont (Minnesota) Sentinel, April 21, 1961.

²⁴Red Wing (Minnesota) Republican Eagle, April 21, 1961.

²⁵Albert Lea Evening Tribune, April 24, 1961, p. 4.

declared, "it is responsible for the failures, and has the obligation to restore the successes."²⁶

Serious misgivings were voiced with any plan which might result in overt action. The Laramie (Wyoming) Daily Boomerang asked: "Is this country operating on a double standard? How can it preach non-intervention in the United Nations and then aid in an uprising against Cuba?" It went on to say that no matter how repugnant the Castro regime might be, direct force must not be used against it. As a nation we "must practice what we preach."²⁷ The same theme was stressed by the Saint Paul Pioneer Press, saying that since this nation, along with other members of the OAS, had signed a resolution against intervention, it now had a responsibility to maintain a "hands off" policy.²⁸ The Minot Daily News said: "Thoughtful Americans fear United States involvement and the consequences that might spring from it." Such involvement would damage relationships with other Latin-American governments and provide tremendous new impetus for the cries of "Yankee Imperialism." The long range aims of democracy would not be well served in this manner.²⁹ The Fargo Forum expressed sympathy for both anti-Batista and anti-Castro forces, but said

²⁶Bismarck Tribune, April 22, 1961, p. 4.

²⁷Laramie (Wyoming) Daily Boomerang, April 23, p. 4.

²⁸Saint Paul Pioneer Press, April 15, 1961, p. 4.

²⁹Minot Daily News, April 19, 1961, p. 4.

that the United States forces must not take part in an island invasion.³⁰ The Brainerd (Minnesota) Dispatch and the Winona (Minnesota) Daily News strongly urged that the United States not interfere in an affair that, for all its international implications, was essentially the business of the Cuban people.³¹ The United States government does not want Castro to win, stated the Des Moines (Iowa) Register, yet, direct intervention would violate pledges made by two presidents and would place premier Khrushchev in a position in which he would have to "welfare" on his promises to Cuba or take counter action by force of arms.³² The Sioux Falls (South Dakota) Argus Leader said substantially the same thing. It was certain that Russia would not just sit still while the United States was invading Cuba, and aside from that, how could the United States say to the mid-American and the South American nations that it was its right to determine the rulerships of Cuba.³³ The Mankato Free Press took a like position but wanted the world to know that when the President took a firm stand against interference in Cuba he was reflecting American opinion, and stressed that though we did not want trouble, "we didn't intend to be

³⁰Fargo Forum, April 19, 1961, p. 4.

³¹Brainerd (Minnesota) Dispatch, April 21, 1961; Winona (Minnesota) Daily News, April 21, 1961.

³²Des Moines (Iowa) Register, April 19, 1961, p. 18.

³³Sioux Falls (South Dakota) Argus Leader, April 26, p. 4.

pushed around."³⁴

It seemed to the Minneapolis Tribune that anything the United States did would be judged wrong. The failure to unseat the Castro regime was being judged as a "blow to our prestige," but so would the continued existence of a pro-communist government at our very doorstep. It would not have enhanced our prestige if we had rejected the pleas of anti-Castro forces for help, and if Castro had toppled at first blow, we still would be under attack in many parts of the world.³⁵ The Mandan Pioneer had a different slant to its observation. The Washington leadership of the free world, it declared, had not been undermined, and the decline in its prestige, if any, would come from misinterpretations of what happened. If the invaders had been directly aided by United States forces and then suffered defeat, it continued, one could properly conclude that the event was a blow to this nation's prestige, but this was not the case.³⁶ In like manner, the Williston Herald said that it was ridiculous to suggest, as Castro had charged, that any United States land, sea, or air forces were involved. Had they been, the outcome would have been different, "as any informed person would know."³⁷

³⁴Mankato Free Press, April 21, 1961, p. 4.

³⁵Minneapolis Tribune, April 23, 1961, p. 2.

³⁶Mandan Pioneer, April 27, 1961, p. 4.

³⁷Williston Herald, April 23, 1961, p. 4.

After the invasion failure, anti-United States comments were heard from friend and foe alike. The Waterloo Sunday Courier in an apparently angry protest said: "The United States would not have endured any more criticism for sending marines into Cuba than it had already received for not preventing the invasion." It believed that: "it was probably time now to apply the fundamental rule of self-preservation and accept whatever loss in good will would be involved to protect this hemisphere against communism."³⁸ The Jamestown Sun, however, pointed out that we ourselves had sharply criticized our handling of the abortive Cuban affair, we could hardly be surprised that our allies had voiced their own complaints about it. It went on to say that possibly the Cuban fiasco, for all its mismanagement, may have done more to alert Latin America to communist peril than anything else that might have happened.³⁹ The Bismarck Tribune attacked outside criticism by saying that, had the Cuban Freedom Fighters succeeded, President Kennedy would have been written off in the biased history of the neutralist and leftists as an "American imperialist." The inference being that, "a weak United States is 'progressive'; a strong United States is 'imperialist'."

³⁸Waterloo Sunday Courier, May 30, 1961, p. 8.

³⁹Jamestown Sun, May 11, 1961, p. 4.

It continued by saying that perhaps American prestige would be better served by a little more "muscle" and a little less talk, during the months ahead.⁴⁰

Ed Doherty, editor of the New Rockford Transcript, commented on the coincidence that Eleanor Roosevelt and Walter Reuther were outspoken against former Dictator Batista simply because he was a despot, but now favored Castro--another dictator. Why oppose a dictator who was at least a pro-American and now support one who was pro-communist?⁴¹ The editor of the Casselton Reporter expressed his unhappiness over the thought that the United States had for years subsidized Cuban sugar and given her millions in foreign aid; this money was now being used to finance Cuban embassies throughout Latin America from which the Kremlin "directs a deadly stream of communist propaganda and intrigue."⁴²

In a letter to the editor, George H. Perry of Sioux Falls, South Dakota, said that President Kennedy should send the marines into Cuba to restore democratic government. "It seems to me that we have to make a start somewhere," he said, "and where could be better than 90 miles from our shores." The Argus Leader did not agree; in its opinion: "To say that we must go to war is to say that

⁴⁰Bismarck Tribune, May 11, 1961, p. 4.

⁴¹New Rockford Transcript, June 8, 1961, p. 2.

⁴²Casselton Reporter, April 28, 1961.

virtual suicide is the only answer. Certainly there is a better fate than that in store for mankind, and I like to believe we can achieve it through the exercise of our best intelligence."⁴³ "The idea that it is all right for the United States to impose its will upon smaller nations," said the Mandan Pioneer, "is untenable. America must be true to herself, being committed to a concept that people must work out their own destinies." A later issue commented: "We must certainly shun, except in the most extreme emergency, any action that would damage our world position as a champion of freedom, dedicated to the attainment of an orderly, peaceful world."⁴⁴ In reviewing the invasion, General Douglas MacArthur stated that Cuba was no mortal threat to the United States, and that we must now wait until the people of Cuba worked out their own salvation.⁴⁵

The Mankato Free Press offered good advice: "The policy of staying out of other people's affairs should be basic to our policy." Commenting also on the value of an informed public, the Press stated that it was the American people who finally determined national policy, by knowing fully what their government representatives wanted to do.

⁴³Sioux Falls Argus Leader, May 1, 1961, p. 4.

⁴⁴Mandan Pioneer, May 4, 1961, p. 4, and May 25, 1961, p. 4.

⁴⁵Grand Forks Herald, May 2, 1961, p. 4.

The public can not fulfill its role without being adequately informed.⁴⁶

In summary it seems clear, in spite of some voices to the contrary, that there was little concern over the alleged Cuban communist threat that had become such an obsession with the national news media. Public opinion as expressed by the press in the Upper-Midwest, influenced perhaps by traditional isolationism, suggested a sane and sensible "hands-off" policy. It understood that this was a search on the part of the Cuban people for a better life and they had the right to carry on the struggle free from foreign interference.

⁴⁶Mankato Free Press, April 29, 1961, p. 8.

CHAPTER V

Observations and Conclusions

The Bay of Pigs remains an ominous page in our history. The United States must postulate its acts on sounder grounds than it used to justify giving aid to this abortive invasion, and weigh more surely the consequences of such attempts and failures. Too much planning was centered on the military take over in Cuba with too little of it aimed toward the future. There has been too much concern with a negative anti-communism, not realizing that there may be other forms of government that may accomplish as much for the happiness and welfare of its people as a democracy. The tragedy of the Bay of Pigs was not in the failure, except for the lives lost, but in the attempt. The real question is not whether the Cubans could have won had all things gone well, but whether they could have fashioned a workable government had they succeeded. It is well nevertheless, to reflect on and learn the lessons taught by the failure.

Foreign policy in a large measure must be based on intelligence about other countries, including the friendly ones. The world has become so complicated that the President has neither the time nor the resources to do his own evaluating of this intelligence. Confronted with this

problem, President Truman created the CIA when he established the National Security Act of 1947. He asserted that he conceived of the CIA primarily as "a co-ordinating and intelligence-gathering aid to a modern President who needed concise, centralized information on which to base national policy." By 1961 the intelligence apparatus had gone far beyond what Truman had anticipated. In criticism of this development he stated:

I . . . would like to see the CIA restored to its original assignment as the intelligence arm of the President. . . . There is something ominous about the way the CIA has been functioning that is casting a shadow over our historical position and I feel that we need to correct it.¹

No agency should be permitted to operate without some form of independent, critical outside examination--an agency should not sit in judgment of itself. The CIA should be solely a body to gather intelligence, weigh it and interpret it if required, but not to make policy decisions. In spite of the need to operate in secrecy, the organization must be placed under some surveillance; the administration, the Congress, as well as the public have a vested interest in what takes place. After the Cuban debacle suggestions were that the CIA be placed under the supervision of a Committee on Intelligence, or a bi-partisan commission from both House and Senate. There is no reason why secrets should leak in any greater degree from one formal committee

¹Ross and Wise, The Invisible Government, p. 350.

than from the present group of informal sub-committees. Ross and Wise pointed out that there has not been any leak of classified data from the Joint Committee on Atomic Energy, or other such committees under surveillance.²

There are inherent weaknesses in our system of government. They can be strong only when each department performs its functions completely, yet staying completely within its prescribed limits. The President must make himself the final arbiter in the decision making process. He must understand that the bureaucracy under him can supply intelligence, but may not itself be intelligent. He must remain independent from the collective thinking of his advisors, listen to their judgments but retire into himself to make the final judgment--not even allowing his own deeper feelings to influence his decisions. The President carries an awesome responsibility.

Kennedy was faced with two alternatives; to stage an invasion of Cuba with American military support if necessary, or to abandon the project completely. To avoid the risks which either course of action seemed to manifest, he chose a middle course, intervening just a little but not enough to assure success, and so reaped a harvest of criticism that either course would have produced. Commentary suggests that this is the difference between a statesman and a politician: "The statesman must commit himself to

²Ibid., p. 355.

a course of action to the exclusion of all others. He must cross the Rubicon or refrain from crossing it, he cannot have it both ways. A politician can equivocate between different courses of action and bridge the chasm between incompatible positions by embracing them both."³ Wishful thinking substituting for intelligence led to a politician's choice. The lesson to be emphasized, overlooking the right and wrong of the operation, is that the country's prestige and power should never be committed unless it is prepared to commit every resource, if need be, with but one thought--and that is to win. "There is no alternative," said General Eisenhower. "Force is a naked, brutal thing in this world. If you are going to use it, you have got [sic] to be prepared to go all the way."⁴

The Bay of Pigs demonstrated how virtually impossible it is, without wartime conditions of censorship, to conduct a secret operation of this magnitude and keep it secret in an open society. The press insists on its right to know and print what is happening in government. "One of the great strengths of democracy is its openness," said Senator Wayne Morse. "The right of the American people in the field of foreign policy is to be informed about proposed

³Hans Morgenthau, "The Trouble with Kennedy," Commentary, January 1962, p. 51.

⁴U.S., Congressional Record, extension of remarks of Hon. John W. Wydler, quoting from an article by Earl Mazo entitled, "Ike Speaks Out: Bay of Pigs was all J. F. K's." 89th Cong., 1st Sess. A5435.

policies that may determine the difference between peace and war."⁵ In a free society attention should be given as well to the increasing tendency of the American Government to mislead the American people in its attempt to protect secret operations. In the U-2 incident, Linclon White, State Department spokesman gave assurances that "there was absolutely no deliberate attempt to violate Soviet airspace. There never has been." A few days before the Cuban Invasion, Secretary of State Dean Rusk said: "The American people are entitled to know whether we are intervening in Cuba or intend to do so in the near future. The answer to that question is no. What happens in Cuba is for the Cuban people to decide."⁶

Even had the invasion succeeded it is doubtful that it could have produced a viable political resolution to Cuba's problems. The concept of trying to put a right-wing government that would have been branded as a Yankee creation was dreadfully wrong. A government imposed from the outside is not a stable way of promoting and advancing the social and economic welfare of a people.

A larger lesson involves the total American reaction to the Cuban revolution. In a sense, the invasion plan was an extension of prevailing American attitudes to a revolutionary change. For Cuba it was a rebellion against the

⁵U.S., Congressional Record, Senator Wayne Morse, 89th Cong., 1st Sess., 6580.

⁶Schlesinger, A Thousand Days, p. 275.

past; a declaration of independence from American business interests, especially the sugar companies, so closely identified with the landlordism that was the basic complaint of the landless peasantry. The American press overlooked or failed to understand these basic causes of the revolution.

From the time of the executions in Cuba in the early months of 1959, the American press, radio and television were emotionally and overwhelmingly hostile. Americans on the scene were more realistic and sympathetic. Brennan said: "The record shows plainly that, if any criminals deserved being put to death the Cuban war criminals certainly did."⁷ David Binder, former president of the Harvard Law Record, reported:

The impression this observer received is that it is fair. The Cuban judicial system is founded upon the civil law, rather than the English common law. No jury is utilized. The war crimes trials are held before three judges in military tribunals. . . . No judge is likely to vote for conviction if he has a reasonable doubt as to the defendant's guilt.⁸

Victor Franco in The Morning After writes: "When you make a revolution, you are obliged to kill. It is inevitable, otherwise the revolution would not take place at all. . . . The French Revolution went through the same phase."⁹ Americans should reflect on the mass killing that took

⁷Brennan, Castro, Cuba and Justice, p. 279.

⁸Ibid., p. 277.

⁹Victor Franco, The Morning After (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1963), first published in France in 1962.

place under Machado and Batista governments supported by their country. Herbert Matthews stated:

No one who knew the extremes of barbarism to which the recent tortures in Cuba . . . have gone, will be able to deny in conscience that the corrective methods must be extreme. . . . If the Provisional Government does not execute the most noted criminals quickly, public passion will overflow, outraged at the impunity of the delay, and then the number of dead will be many, many thousands.¹⁰

Clement J. Zablocki of Wisconsin commented wisely that, "People striving for economic betterment, political freedom, and national independence sometimes use methods we abhor or go to extremes we deem unwise. Even in such cases we must uphold the principle of non-intervention."¹¹

Once the label of communism was pinned on Fidel and his regime early in 1959, the hysteria that accompanied the American attitude toward communism worked its poison. Matthews said this was due to a lack of understanding, and it was tragic because it contributed so much to the developing conflict between Cuba and the United States. In his opinion, it helped drive Fidel quicker and deeper into the communist embrace.¹² It seemed to the London Observer that to "a far greater extent than they would like to admit, our American friends are the prisoners of an ideology almost as

¹⁰Matthews, The Cuban Story, p. 292.

¹¹U.S., Congressional Record, extension of remarks of Hon. Clement J. Zablocki of Wisconsin, 87th Cong. 1st. Sess. 6915.

¹²Matthews, The Cuban Story, p. 285.

narrow as that of the communists and just as fervently believed. The American ideology equates capitalism not only with freedom but very nearly with virtue."¹³

Had the United States accepted Castro's reforms and provided help in carrying out his program, it is likely that nationalization would have been limited to a few key monopolies such as oil, utilities and sugar mills, and if the owners had been willing to accept payment in keeping with Cuba's means to repay they would have been compensated. In the spring of 1960 Castro came to the United States to seek loans and economic help. He was turned down and shortly thereafter the Eisenhower administration put into effect an economic blockade on Cuban trade. One retaliation led to another. When Cuba had to turn to Russia for crude oil, American refineries refused to handle it so the Cuban government took over the refineries. In July the United States cancelled the sugar quota expecting to cripple Cuban economy, but it was rescued by the purchase of sugar by communist countries. On August 6 a large part of the American investments in Cuba were nationalized. Cuba again offered to pay if the United States would permit the sugar quota--the only means it had. On October 19th the United States placed an embargo on all exports to Cuba except medicines and certain foods. On October 25th Cuba

¹³Huberman and Sweezy, Anatomy of a Revolution, p. 179; Light and Marzani, Cuba versus CIA, p. 67.

nationalized all remaining American-owned companies.¹⁴

Before the revolution two thirds of Cuba's exports and three quarters of her imports were provided for in trade with the United States, while trade with the socialist countries played only a small part. When, almost overnight this situation was reversed it created many problems. Many adjustments had to be made in the manner of handling goods, an entirely new system of handling and storage had to be devised. Most of Cuba's automobiles, machinery, etc. are American made. The need for replacement parts poses a problem; some have to be bought from a third country that uses American equipment, some can be secured from the USSR, and in many cases new parts are made by Cubans themselves. This imposes grave problems on Cuba, but once overcome it will undoubtedly work to her benefit--she will be free to plan and develop her own economy and resources.

A wave of criticism from the United States hit Castro because he did not set about establishing a permanent government under the 1940 Constitution and hold elections. If such an election had been held Castro would have won it sweepingly--there was no opposition party. It would have been as much a farce as a Batista or a Machado election. Overlooked were meaningless elections in other Latin-American countries.

Amid the frenzied cries of "communism" by sections of

¹⁴Ibid., p. 181.

the United States press, television, and radio, certain accomplishments of the revolutionary government has been ignored. Progress is infinitely slow, but if the United States will leave Cuba alone and stop its economic harassment, the revolution will succeed. With United States help it could be a sweeping success.

Cuba is a dramatic specification of the general bankruptcy of United States policies and lack of policies. It isn't only Cuba; it is all of Latin America coming out of its centuries-long isolation. A land enormously rich--in soil, timber, coal; it is rich in almost everything people need to live well. Yet, in these countries two thirds of the people live in unbelievable poverty.

Most of the Latin-American countries are run by an alliance of the military and foreign capital--largely United States capital. Foreign aid in the past has been mostly the giving of arms and other military support in the name of "hemispheric defense." Arms that have been used again and again to enslave the people of the countries that received them. In later years attempts have been made to help industrialize these nations, but this has left the masses in as bad shape as ever. Too often the aim of the United States government has been to promote trade and protect investments by maintaining political stability among the dominated, irrespective of the form of government, in order that business might continue without interruption.

Most of the riches and resources is now in foreign

hands. United States must use its wealth; and its vast wealth of know-how to make it possible for Latin-American countries to control all its own resources, help them create their own capital and develop their own "skills." There is danger in the lack of people with skill and knowledge and sensibility. Education is needed and they do not have the professional people required in higher institutions of learning. If the United States is to "export" something, accomplished teachers will be of greatest help. An expanded type of "peace corps," seems to provide the best answer. Fortunately the myth of Anglo-Saxon superiority has now been removed, but the hatred it engendered lives on. The challenge to all American greatness--North, Central and South--is to bring into being a "hemispheric friendship." The United States, largely responsible for the hatred, must now provide the impetus for its eradication. It will require the utmost humility, patience, and perseverance.

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