

Blake's present financial problem typifies the bankrupt policies of government at all levels. For the last decade, the federal government has passed the cost of health care along to the states, which passed it along to the cities, which, in turn, passed it along to the hospitals and the communities they serve. In addition, the cost shifting has raised the expense of health care to the insured—both businesses and individuals—which now must pay for the uninsured.

As a consequence, hospital emergency rooms and outpatient clinics have become the repositories for a variety of underfunded and ill-fated government

programs. The stress on the system is exacerbated by the needs of uninsured mental health patients released from facilities and an increasing number of homeless people, all victims of poverty, poor education, and crime.

Reid is in a position to turn the tide on the buck passing and put the responsibility back on the government's shoulders. It will take courage and strong leadership to fashion a response, but maybe this time a more equitable and humane solution to the health care needs of communities like Marksville can be devised.

## Bay of Pigs

### Case 3-10

#### A THOUSAND DAYS

##### Kennedy and His Cuban Inheritance

The Eisenhower administration thus bequeathed the new President a force of Cuban exiles under American training in Guatemala, a committee of Cuban politicians under American control in Florida and a plan to employ the exiles in an invasion of their homeland and to install the committee on Cuban soil as the provisional government of a free Cuba.

On January 22, two days after the inauguration, Allen Dulles and General Lemnitzer exposed the project to leading members of the new administration, among them Dean Rusk, Robert McNamara, and Robert Kennedy. Speaking for the Joint Chiefs, Lemnitzer tried to renew discussion of alternatives ranging from minimum to maximum United States involvement. Six days later President Kennedy convened his first White House meeting on the plan. He was wary and reserved in his reaction. After listening for a long time, he instructed the Defense Department to take a hard look at CIA's military conception and the State Department to prepare a program for the isolation and containment of Cuba

through the OAS. In the meantime, CIA was to continue what it had been doing. The ground rule against overt United States participation was still to prevail.

The Joint Chiefs, after brooding over CIA's Trinidad plan for a week, pronounced favorably on the chances of initial military success. The JCS evaluation was, however, a peculiar and ambiguous document. At one point it said categorically, in what would seem an implicit rejection of the Anzio model, that ultimate success would depend on either a sizable uprising inside the island or sizable support from outside. Then later, without restating these alternative conditions for victory, the document concluded that the existing plan, if executed in time, stood a "fair" chance of ultimate success. Even if it did not immediately attain all its goals, the JCS remarked philosophically, it

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would still contribute to the eventual overthrow of the regime.

There was plainly a logical gap between the statement that the plan would work if one or another condition were fulfilled and the statement that the plan would work anyway. One cannot know whether this gap resulted from sloppiness in analysis or from a conviction, conscious or unconscious, that once the invasion were launched, either internal uprising or external support would follow, and, if not the first, then the second—that, in short, once the United States government embarked on this enterprise, it could not risk the disaster of failure. Certainly this conviction permeated the thinking of the exiles themselves as well as of the United States officers in Guatemala. Since some, at least, of the Joint Chiefs had always been skeptical of the CIA ground rule, that conviction may well have lurked in the back of their minds too.

Late in February the Chiefs sent an inspection team to the Guatemala base. In a new report in early March, they dropped the point about external support and hinged victory on the capacity of the assault to produce anti-Castro action behind the lines. From the viewpoint of the Joint Chiefs, then, the Cuban resistance was indispensable to success. They could see no other way—short of United States intervention—by which an invasion force of a thousand Cubans, no matter how well trained and equipped nor how stout their morale, could conceivably overcome the 200,000 men of Castro's army and militia.

The pace of events was quickening. Robert Alejos, the Guatemalan planter whose *finca* had been sheltering the Brigade, arrived in Washington in early March with a letter from President Ydígoras to President Kennedy. Ydígoras wrote that the presence of the Cubans was a mounting embarrassment and that he must request assurances that they depart by the end of April. For its part, the CIA reported that the Cubans themselves were clamoring to move; the spirit of the Brigade had reached its peak, and further postponement would risk demoralization. Moreover, the rainy season was about to begin, the ground would turn into

volcanic mud, and training would have to stop. And there was another potent reason for going ahead: Castro, the CIA said, was about to receive jet airplanes from the Soviet Union along with Cuban pilots trained in Czechoslovakia to fly them; once the MIGs arrived, an amphibious landing would turn into a slaughter. After June 1, it would take the United States Marines and Air Force to overthrow Castro. If a purely Cuban invasion were ever to take place, it had to take place in the next few weeks.

By mid-March the President was confronted, in effect, with a now-or-never choice.

### Cuba in the Cabinet Room

On March 11, about a week after my return from Latin America, I was summoned to a meeting with the President in the Cabinet Room. An intimidating group sat around the table—the Secretary of State, the Secretary of Defense, the director of the Central Intelligence Agency, three Joint Chiefs resplendent in uniforms and decorations, the Assistant Secretary of State for Inter-American Affairs, the chairman of the Latin American Task Force and appropriate assistants and bottle-washers. I shrank into a chair at the far end of the table and listened in silence.

I had first heard of the Cuban operation in early February; indeed, the day before leaving for Buenos Aires I had sent the President a memorandum about it. The idea sounded plausible enough, the memorandum suggested, if one excluded everything but Cuba itself; but, as soon as the focus was enlarged to include the rest of the hemisphere and the rest of the world, arguments *against* the decision gained strength. Above all, "this would be your first dramatic foreign policy initiative. At one stroke you would dissipate all the extraordinary good will which has been rising toward the new Administration through the world. It would fix a malevolent image of the new Administration in the minds of millions."

It was apparent now a month later that matters were still very much in flux. No final decision had

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yet been taken on whether the invasion should go forward at all and, if so, whether Trinidad should be the landing point. It fell to Allen Dulles and Richard M. Bissell, Jr., as the originators of the project, to make the main arguments for action.

I had known both men for more than 15 years and held them both in high respect. As an OSS intelligence officer in London and Paris during the war, I had admired the coolness and proficiency of Dulles's work in Bern; and, meeting him from time to time in the years after the war, I had come greatly to enjoy his company. Years in the intelligence business had no doubt given him a capacity for ruthlessness; but he was urbane, courtly and honorable, almost wholly devoid of the intellectual rigidity and personal self-righteousness of his brother. During the McCarthy years, when John Foster Dulles regularly threw innocent State Department officials to the wolves, Allen Dulles just as regularly protected CIA officers unjustly denounced on the Hill.

Richard Bissell, whom I had known as an economist in the Marshall Plan before he turned to intelligence work and became CIA's deputy director for operations, was a man of high character and remarkable intellectual gifts. His mind was swift and penetrating, and he had an unsurpassed talent for lucid analysis and fluent exposition. A few years before he had conceived and fought through the plan of U-2 flights over the Soviet Union; and, though this led to trouble in 1960, it still remained perhaps the greatest intelligence coup since the war. He had committed himself for the past year to the Cuban project with equal intensity. Yet he recognized the strength of his commitment and, with characteristic honesty, warned us to discount his bias. Nonetheless, we all listened transfixed—in this meeting and other meetings that followed—fascinated by the workings of this superbly clear, organized, and articulate intelligence, while Bissell, pointer in hand, would explain how the invasion would work or discourse on the relative merits of alternative landing sites.

Both Dulles and Bissell were at a disadvantage in having to persuade a skeptical new administration

about the virtues of a proposal nurtured in the hospitable bosom of a previous government—a proposal on which they had personally worked for a long time and in which their organization had a heavy vested interest. This cast them in the role less of analysts than of advocates, and it led them to accept progressive modifications so long as the expedition in some form remained; perhaps they too unconsciously supposed that, once the operation began to unfold, it would not be permitted to fail.

The determination to keep the scheme alive sprang in part, I believe, from the embarrassments of calling it off. As Dulles said at the March 11 meeting, "Don't forget that we have a disposal problem. If we have to take these men out of Guatemala, we will have to transfer them to the United States, and we can't have them wandering around the country telling everyone what they have been doing." What could one do with "this asset" if not send it on to Cuba? If transfer to the United States was out, demobilization on the spot would create even greater difficulties. The Cubans themselves were determined to go back to their homeland, and they might well forcibly resist efforts to take away their arms and equipment. Moreover, even if the Brigade were successfully disbanded, its members would disperse, disappointed and resentful, all over Latin America. They would tell where they had been and what they had been doing, thereby exposing CIA operations. And they would explain how the United States, having prepared an expedition against Castro, had then lost its nerve. This could only result, Dulles kept emphasizing, in discrediting Washington, disheartening Latin American opponents of Castro and encouraging the *Fidelistas* in their attack on democratic regimes, like that of Betancourt in Venezuela. Disbandment might thus produce pro-Castro revolutions all around the Caribbean. For all these reasons, CIA argued, instead of turning the Cubans loose, we must find some means for putting them back into Cuba "on their own."

The contingency had thus become a reality: Having created the Brigade as an option, the CIA now presented its use against Cuba as a necessity. Nor

did Dulles's arguments lack force. Confronted by them, Kennedy tentatively agreed that the simplest thing, after all, might be to let the Cubans go where they yearned to go—to Cuba. Then he tried to turn the meeting toward a consideration of how this could be done with the least political risk. The first step was to form a more liberal and representative exile organization, and this the President directed should be done as soon as possible.

Bissell then renewed the case for the Trinidad plan. Kennedy questioned it as "too spectacular." He did not want a big amphibious invasion in the manner of the Second World War; he wanted a "quiet" landing, preferably at night. And he insisted that the plans be drawn on the basis of *no United States military intervention*—a stipulation to which no one at the table made objection. Thomas Mann seconded these points, stressing the probability of anti-American reactions in Latin America and the United Nations if the American hand were not well concealed. He was especially worried that the air strikes would give the show away unless they could seem plausibly to come from bases on Cuban soil; and the Trinidad airstrip could not take B-26s. The President concluded the meeting by defining the issue with his usual crispness. The trouble with the operation, he said, was that the smaller the political risk, the greater the military risk, and vice versa. The problem was to see whether the two risks could be brought into reasonable balance.

For the next three days the CIA planners canvassed alternative landing sites, coming up with three new possibilities, of which the most likely was about 100 miles west of Trinidad in the Zapata area around Cochinos Bay—the Bay of Pigs. The Joint Chiefs, examining these recommendations on March 14, agreed that Zapata, with its airstrip and the natural defense provided by its swamps, seemed the best of the three but added softly that they still preferred Trinidad. When we met again in the Cabinet Room on March 15, Bissell outlined the Zapata plan. The President, listening somberly, suggested some changes, mostly intended to "reduce the noise level"—such as making sure that the invasion ships would be unloaded before dawn.

He then authorized CIA to continue on the assumption that the invasion would occur. But he repeated his decision against any form of United States military intervention and added carefully and categorically that he was reserving his final decision on the plan itself. The expedition, he said, must be laid on in a way that would make it possible for him to call it off as late as 24 hours before D-day.

We all in the White House considered uprisings behind the lines essential to the success of the operation; so too did the Joint Chiefs of Staff; and so, we thought, did the CIA. It was only later that I learned about the Anzio concept; it certainly did not come across clearly in the White House meetings. And it was much later that Allen Dulles wrote: "Much of the American press assumed at the time that this action was predicated on a mistaken intelligence estimate to the effect that a landing would touch off a widespread and successful popular revolt in Cuba . . . I know of no estimate that a spontaneous uprising of the unarmed population of Cuba would be touched off by the landing."\* This statement plainly reflected the CIA notion that the invasion would win by attrition rather than by rebellion. It also, strictly construed, was accurate enough in itself—if due attention is paid to such key words as "spontaneous," "unarmed" and "landing." Obviously no one expected the invasion to galvanize the unarmed and unorganized into rising against Castro at the moment of disembarkation. But the invasion plan, as understood by the President and the Joint Chiefs, did assume that the successful occupation of an enlarged beachhead area would rather soon incite organized uprisings by armed members of the Cuban resistance.

Dulles and Bissell themselves reinforced this impression. When questioned early in April about the prospects of internal resistance, instead of discounting it, which seems to have been their view, they claimed that over 2,500 persons presently

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\*Allen W. Dulles, *The Craft of Intelligence* (New York, 1963), p. 169.

belonged to resistance organizations, that 20,000 more were sympathizers, and that the Brigade, once established on the island, could expect the active support of, at the very least, a quarter of the Cuban people. They backed up such sanguine estimates by citing requests from contacts in Cuba for arms drops and assurances that a specified number of men stood ready to fight when the signal was given.

My experience in OSS during the Second World War left me with a sad skepticism about such messages. Too often the senders inflated their strength, whether out of hope or despair, or because they wanted guns, ammunition, and radios to sell on the black market. Recalling disappointment and miscalculation then, one could not find the CIA assurances satisfying. But mine was a special experience; and the estimates coming, as we all supposed, with the Agency's full authority behind them, impressed most of those around the table. Again it appeared only later that the Intelligence Branch of CIA had never been officially apprised of the Cuban expedition and that CIA's elaborate national estimates procedure was never directed to the question whether an invasion would trigger other uprisings. Robert Amory, Jr., the able deputy director for intelligence, himself a veteran of amphibious landings in the Second World War, was not informed at any point about any aspect of the operation. The same men, in short, both planned the operation and judged its chances of success. Nor was anyone at State, in intelligence jargon, "witting" below Tom Mann, which meant that the men on the Cuban desk, who received the daily flow of information from the island, were not asked to comment on the feasibility of the venture. The "need-to-know" standard—that is, that no one should be told about a project unless it becomes operationally necessary—thus had the idiotic effect of excluding much of the expertise of government at a time when every alert newspaperman knew something was afoot.

The talk with Newman strengthened misgivings about CIA's estimates. He said that, though anti-Castro sentiment had markedly increased since his last visit the year before, Castro still roused intense enthusiasm and faith, especially among the young

and among those who had benefited from the social changes of the revolution. These two groups, Newman added, constituted a considerable part of the population. Even a sizable middle group, now disillusioned about Castro, would not be likely to respond with enthusiasm to an invasion backed by the United States because we were so thoroughly identified in their minds with Batista. As much as many Cubans detested the present situation, they still preferred it to a restoration of the old order. "We must understand that from the viewpoint of many Cubans, including anti-Castro Cubans, we come into the ring with exceedingly dirty hands."

### Approach to a Decision

The meetings in the Cabinet Room were now taking place every three or four days. The President, it seemed to me, was growing steadily more skeptical as his hard questioning exposed one problem after another in the plans. Moreover, the situation in Laos was at a point of crisis. Kennedy feared that, if the Cuban invasion went forward, it might prejudice chances of agreement with the Soviet Union over Laos; Ambassador Thompson's cables from Moscow reported Khrushchev's unusual preoccupation with Cuba. On the other hand, if we did in the end have to send American troops to Laos to fight communism on the other side of the world, we could hardly ignore communism 90 miles off Florida. Laos and Cuba were tied up with each other, though it was hard to know how one would affect the other. But after the March 29 meeting I noted: "The final decision will have to be made on April 4. I have the impression that the tide is flowing against the project."

Dulles and Bissell, convinced that if the Cubans were ever to be sent against Castro they had to go now, sure that the Brigade could accomplish its mission, and nagged by the disposal problem, now redoubled their efforts at persuasion. Dulles told Kennedy that he felt much more confident about success than he had ever been in the case of Guatemala. CIA concentrated particularly in the meetings on trying to show that, even if the

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expedition failed, the cost would not be excessive. Obviously no one could believe any longer that the adventure would not be attributed to the United States—news stories described the recruitment effort in Miami every day—but somehow the idea took hold around the cabinet table that this would not much matter so long as United States soldiers did not take part in the actual fighting. If the operation were truly "Cubanized," it would hopefully appear as part of the traditional ebb and flow of revolution and counterrevolution in the Caribbean.

Moreover, if worst came to worst and the invaders were beaten on the beaches, then, Dulles and Bissell said, they could easily "melt away" into the mountains. This might have been true at Trinidad, which lay near the foothills of the Escambray, and it was more true of the Bay of Pigs than of the other two alternative sites proposed in mid-March. But the CIA exposition was less than candid both in implying that the Brigade had undergone guerrilla training (which had substantially ended five months earlier, before most of the Cubans had arrived in Guatemala) and in suggesting the existence of an easy escape hatch. I don't think we fully realized that the Escambray Mountains lay 80 miles from the Bay of Pigs, across a hopeless tangle of swamps and jungles. And no one knew (until Haynes Johnson interviewed the survivors) that the CIA agents in Guatemala were saying nothing to the Cubans about this last resort of flight to the hills, apparently fearing to lower their morale. "We were never told about this," San Román said later. "What we were told was, 'If you fail we will go in.'"<sup>\*</sup>

Our meetings were taking place in a curious atmosphere of assumed consensus. The CIA representatives dominated the discussion. The Joint Chiefs seemed to be going contentedly along. They met four times as a body after March 15 to review the Bay of Pigs project as it evolved; and, while their preference for Trinidad was on the record and

they never formally approved the new plan, they at no time opposed it. Their collaboration with CIA in refining the scheme gave the White House the impression of their wholehearted support. Robert McNamara, who was absorbed in the endless task of trying to seize control of the Pentagon, accepted the judgment of the Chiefs on the military aspects of the plan, understood the CIA to be saying that invasion would shortly produce a revolt against Castro, and supposed in any case that the new administration was following a well-established policy developed by its predecessors. Dean Rusk listened inscrutably through the discussions, confining himself to gentle warnings about possible excesses. When he went to the SEATO conference in late March and Chester Bowles as Acting Secretary sat in his place, Bowles was horrified by what he heard but reluctant to speak out in his chief's absence. On March 31 he gave Rusk a strong memorandum opposing the invasion and asked to be permitted, if Rusk disagreed, to carry the case to the President. Rusk reassured Bowles, leaving him with the impression that the project was being whitewashed down into a guerrilla infiltration, and filed the memorandum away.

In the meantime, Senator Fulbright had grown increasingly concerned over the newspaper stories forecasting an invasion. The President was planning to spend Easter weekend in Palm Beach and, learning that Fulbright also was going to Florida, invited him to travel on the plane. On March 29 Fulbright, with the assistance of Pat Holt, a member of the Foreign Relations Committee staff, wrote a memorandum that he gave Kennedy the next day.

There were two possible policies toward Cuba, Fulbright argued: overthrow, or toleration and isolation. The first would violate the spirit and probably the letter of the OAS charter, hemisphere treaties, and our own federal legislation. If successful, it "would be denounced from the Rio Grande to Patagonia as an example of imperialism." It would cause trouble in the United Nations. It would commit us to the heavy responsibility of making a success of post-Castro Cuba. If it seemed to be failing, we might be tempted to use our own armed

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<sup>\*</sup>Haynes Johnson, *The Bay of Pigs* (New York, 1964 [Dell edition]), p. 67.

force; and if we did this, "even under the paper cover of legitimacy, we would have undone the work of 30 years in trying to live down earlier interventions."

To give this activity even covert support is of a piece with the hypocrisy and cynicism for which the United States is constantly denouncing the Soviet Union in the United Nations and elsewhere. This point will not be lost on the rest of the world—nor on our own consciences.

Instead, Fulbright urged a policy of containment. The Alliance for Progress provided a solid basis for insulating the rest of the hemisphere from Castro. As for the Cuban exiles, an imaginative approach could find a more productive use of their talents than invading their homeland. Remember always, Fulbright concluded, "The Castro regime is a thorn in the flesh; but it is not a dagger in the heart."

It was a brilliant memorandum. Yet the President returned from Palm Beach more militant than when he had left. But he did ask Fulbright to attend the climactic meeting on April 4. This meeting was held at the State Department in a small conference room beside Rusk's office. After the usual routine—pervasive expositions by the CIA, mild disclaimers by Rusk and penetrating questions by the President—Kennedy started asking people around the table what they thought. Fulbright, speaking in an emphatic and incredulous way, denounced the whole idea. The operation, he said, was wildly out of proportion to the threat. It would compromise our moral position in the world and make it impossible for us to protest treaty violations by the Communists. He gave a brave, old-fashioned American speech, honorable, sensible and strong; and he left everyone in the room, except me and perhaps the President, wholly unmoved.

Kennedy continued around the table. McNamara said that he favored the operation. Mann said that he would have opposed it at the start, but, now that it had gone so far, it should be carried through. Berle wanted the men to be put into Cuba but did not insist on a major production. Kennedy once again wanted to know what could be done in the way of quiet infiltration as against the beachhead assault.

The meeting fell into discussion before the round of the table was completed. Soon it broke up.

In the months after the Bay of Pigs I bitterly reproached myself for having kept so silent during those crucial discussions in the Cabinet Room, though my feelings of guilt were tempered by the knowledge that a course of objection would have accomplished little save to gain me a name as a nuisance. I can only explain my failure to do more than raise a few timid questions by reporting that one's impulse to blow the whistle on this nonsense was simply undone by the circumstances of the discussion.

It is one thing for a Special Assistant to talk frankly in private to a President at his request and another for a college professor, fresh to the government, to interpose his unassisted judgment in open meeting against that of such august figures as the Secretaries of State and Defense and the Joint Chiefs of Staff, each speaking with the full weight of his institution behind him. Moreover, the advocates of the adventure had a rhetorical advantage. They could strike virile poses and talk of tangible things—fire power, air strikes, landing craft, and so on. To oppose the plan, one had to invoke intangibles—the moral position of the United States, the reputation of the President, the response of the United Nations, "world public opinion" and other such odious concepts. These matters were as much the institutional concern of the State Department as military hardware was of Defense. But, just as the members of the White House staff who sat in the Cabinet Room failed in their job of protecting the President, so the representatives of the State Department failed in defending the diplomatic interests of the nation. I could not help feeling that the desire to prove to the CIA and the Joint Chiefs that they were not soft-headed idealists but were really tough guys, too, influenced State's representatives at the cabinet table.

### The President's Decision

More than once I left the meetings in the Cabinet Room fearful that only two of the regulars present

were against the operation; but, since I thought the President was the other, I kept hoping that he would avail himself of his own escape clause and cancel the plan. His response to my first memorandum was oblique. He said, "You know, I've reserved the right to stop this thing up to 24 hours before the landing. In the meantime, I'm trying to make some sense out of it. We'll just have to see." But he too began to become a prisoner of events. After another meeting on April 6, I noted: "We seem now destined to go ahead on a quasi-minimum basis—a large-scale infiltration (hopefully) rather than an invasion." This change reflected the now buoyant CIA emphasis on the ease of escaping from the beaches into the hills. By this time we were offered a sort of all-purpose operation guaranteed to work, win or lose. If it failed of its maximum hope—a mass uprising leading to the overthrow of the regime—it would at least attain its minimum objective—supply and reinforcement for the guerrillas already on the island.

The next morning Dick Goodwin and I met for breakfast in the White House Mess to consider whether it would be worth making one more try to reverse the drift. Though Dick had not attended the Cuba sessions, we had talked constantly about the problem. Later that morning before departing for an economic conference in Latin America he went to see Rusk. When Goodwin expressed strong doubts about the Cuban operation, Rusk finally said, "Maybe we've been oversold on the fact that we can't say no to this." Afterward Goodwin urged me to send Rusk a copy of my memorandum to the President and follow it up by a personal visit. I arranged to see Rusk the next morning.

When I set forth my own doubts on Saturday, the Secretary listened quietly and somewhat mournfully. Finally he said he had for some time been wanting to draw a balance sheet on the project, that he planned to do it over the weekend and would try to talk with the President on Monday. He reverted to a suggestion with which he had startled the Joint Chiefs during one of the meetings. This was that the operation fan out from Guantánamo with the prospect of retreating to the base in case of failure. He re-

marked, "It is interesting to observe the Pentagon people. They are perfectly willing to put the President's head on the block, but they recoil from the idea of doing anything which might risk Guantánamo."

I don't know whether Rusk ever drew his balance sheet, but probably by that Saturday morning the President had already made up his mind. When Goodwin dropped into his office Friday afternoon to say goodbye, Kennedy, striding over to the French windows opening to the lawn, recalled Goodwin's fiery campaign statement and said ironically, "Well, Dick, we're about to put your Cuban policy into action." I saw the President myself later that same afternoon and noted afterward: "It is apparent that he has made his decision and is not likely now to reverse it."

Why had he decided to go ahead? So far as the operation itself was concerned, he felt, as he told me that afternoon, that he had successfully pared it down from a grandiose amphibious assault to a mass infiltration. Accepting the CIA assurances about the escape hatch, he supposed that the cost, both military and political, of failure was now reduced to a tolerable level. He added, "If we have to get rid of these 800 men, it is much better to dump them in Cuba than in the United States, especially if that is where they want to go"—a remark that suggested how much Dulles's insistence on the disposal problem had influenced the decision, as well as how greatly Kennedy was himself moved by the commitment of the Cuban patriots. He was particularly impressed by the fact that three members of the Cuban Revolutionary Council had sons in the Brigade; the exile leaders themselves obviously believed that the expedition would succeed. As the decision presented itself to him, he had to choose whether to disband a group of brave and idealistic Cubans, already trained and equipped, who wanted very much to return to Cuba on their own, or to permit them to go ahead. The President saw no obligation to protect the Castro regime from democratic Cubans and decided that, if the Cubans wished to make the try on the categorical understanding that there would be no direct United States military support, he would help them do so. If the

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expedition succeeded, the overthrow of Castro would greatly strengthen democratic prospects in the hemisphere; if he called it off, he would forever be haunted by the feeling that his scruples had preserved Castro in power.

More generally, the decision resulted from the fact that he had been in office only 77 days. He had not had the time or opportunity to test the inherited instrumentalities of government. He could not know which of his advisers were competent and which were not. For their part, they did not know him or each other well enough to raise hard questions with force and candor. Moreover, the massed and caparisoned authority of his senior officials in the realm of foreign policy and defense was unanimous for going ahead. The director of the Central Intelligence Agency advocated the adventure; the Joint Chiefs of Staff and the Secretary of Defense approved its military aspects, the Secretary of State its political aspects. They all spoke with the sacerdotal prerogative of men vested with a unique understanding of arcane matters. "If someone comes in to tell me this or that about the minimum wage bill," Kennedy said to me later, "I have no hesitation in overruling them. But you always assume that the military and intelligence people have some secret skill not available to ordinary mortals." The only opposition came from Fulbright and myself (he knew nothing of Bowles's memorandum to

Rusk, nor did he know that Edward R. Murrow, the new director of the United States Information Agency, who had learned about the operation from a *New York Times* reporter early in April, was also deeply opposed), and this did not bulk large against the united voice of institutional authority. Had one senior adviser opposed the adventure, I believe that Kennedy would have canceled it. Not one snoke against it.

One further factor no doubt influenced him: the enormous confidence in his own luck. Everything had broken right for him since 1956. He had won the nomination and the election against all the odds in the book. Everyone around him thought he had the Midas touch and could not lose. Despite himself, even this dispassionate and skeptical man may have been affected by the soaring euphoria of the new day.

On the following Tuesday the Robert Kennedys gave a party to celebrate Ethel's birthday. It was a large, lively, uproarious affair, overrun by guests, skits, children, and dogs. In the midst of the gaiety Robert Kennedy drew me aside. He said, "I hear you don't think much of this business." He asked why and listened without expression as I gave my reasons. Finally he said, "You may be right or you may be wrong, but the President has made his mind up. Don't push it any further. Now is the time for everyone to help him all they can."

## Cuban Missile Crisis

### Case 3-11

#### THIRTEEN DAYS

##### "Tuesday Morning, October 16, 1962 . . ."

On Tuesday morning, October 16, 1962, shortly after 9 o'clock, President Kennedy called and asked me to come to the White House. He said only that we were facing great trouble. Shortly afterward, in his office, he told me that a U-2 had just finished a photographic mission and that the

Intelligence Community had become convinced that Russia was placing missiles and atomic weapons in Cuba.

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