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# Kennedy Seeks Excuse For The Cuban Fiasco

President John F. Kennedy is proving that he is, at least, "human" and not the cold, calculating robot that many of his detractors insisted he was during his campaign for the White House.

He is, for one thing, worried—visibly, admittedly worried. And with good reason. Committed to ending the Communist takeover in both Cuba and Laos, he is faced with courses of action that could only mean war. In any age, that is a sober prospect; in these times, it could be cataclysmic.

He is, for another, vexed—disappointed and vexed. The attempted counter-revolution staged by Cuban exiles, but engineered and directed by the U. S. Central Intelligence Agency, was a shameful fiasco—almost incredibly so.

As President, Jack Kennedy assumed full blame. Even had he not done so, the critics would have tagged him for censure.

It is evident, though, that Kennedy has not been able to shrug off this failure as lightly as surface appearances might suggest. Unofficial reports indicate that he and his advisors blame the CIA for a faulty estimate of the Cuban situation, an error in timing, a bad choice of landing-site.

It is clear, too, that the President blames the press. When he told American newspaper publishers the time has come for the press to exercise more self-restraint and to respect the need for "greater official secrecy," he was saying, in effect, the CIA role in training and directing the Cuban exile forces should never have been disclosed, the failure should have been publicized as a futile attempt by an untrained band of Cuban zealots, U. S. prestige should be maintained in the eyes of the world through any expediency.

And maybe he's right. We concede the pitfalls in full and open disclosure of defense techniques and strategy when

strictly-controlled press, can mask all its movements.

But in the Cuban incident, we think the President is wrong. Prior to the actual "invasion," and generally speaking, the nation's wire services and newspapers handled the story with remarkable restraint.

Since early in 1960, many reporters knew that the CIA was active in recruiting and training a force of Cuban expatriates whose only mission could be an attempt to dislodge the Castro regime. Yet, the first public mention of the plan, including the Guatemalan training site, was made in October 1960 by a Stanford University professor in an obscure professional journal.

The Nation magazine published the fact in November and, after that, the story was public property. Even so, it was not until January 10, 1961, that the New York Times hopped on the news with a Page One spread.

Maybe that and the resulting accounts helped scuttle the venture. We doubt it. We suspect, even, that the President knows the public reports were a negligible factor.

The press has a responsibility to preserve national security—a role that is often difficult when high government officials "leak" secrets to advance their own interests. It also has a responsibility to keep the public informed of grave and pertinent matters affecting the people of this country. It is not an easy assignment. Frequently it is bungled.

But the freedom to report, and the privilege of error, must be maintained so long as America continues its course as a free republic.

We sympathize with the President in his current travail. The problems he faces defy human solution. But he, himself, may have offered apt summary when he said, "Perhaps there is no answer to the dilemma faced by a free and open society in a cold and secret war."