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Latin Reaction

A FACTOR which undoubtedly cooled Kennedy administration ardor for crushing Castro immediately with American troops if necessary has been the reaction of Latin America to the Las Villas disaster.

On one hand many Latins were delighted to see Uncle Sam get a comeuppance. On the other hand, American newspapermen in South America now detect a feeling by many Latins that the U. S. won't win the cold war and that they had better play it cozy.

Since then Castro has openly proclaimed his to be a Communist state. Reports of revulsion among Latin governments are filtering from Washington. But the Minneapolis Tribune warns us to be skeptical at this point and to ask Washington: "How do you know that your intelligence about this Latin American feeling is any better than your intelligence estimate that the Cubans would rise up in a revolt against Castro?"

BUT the emphasis now is on spurring social progress and needed reforms in Latin America to forestall Communism and isolate Castro. That is the reasoning behind the new half-billion dollar aid bill to fund President Kennedy's "alliance for progress" in that region.

Is it the answer? The Wall Street Journal, long a critic of foreign aid, for one doesn't think so.

But perhaps a direction, if not an answer, comes in another post-Cuba comment by Max Lerner: "No system can triumph or even survive unless it has a fire at the center. For world democracy, the fire at the center must be not only a passion for freedom but a sense of ease and familiarity with ideas. The trouble with the Cuban landings was not that the CIA was involved in them but that the CIA lacked any notion of the importance of ideology, especially to a Latin people."