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Television White Paper

And Once Again--Why Cuban Invasion Failed

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faulty communications.

Washington insisted on a coalition of Cuban leadership then so little trusted it that it kept the leaders under armed guard in an Opa-locka house while the invasion was in progress.

Cubans were not consulted nor permitted to take a hand

in the military planning. The CIA ran the show. Somewhere along the line both the Cuban leaders and the

invasion brigade got the impression the invasion would have full-scale American sea and air support. As a matter of fact, a naval task force was in the area. But Washington officialdom strenuously denied it had assured support.

In addition, there was no uprising in Cuba to pace the invasion. The implication from one Cuban leader who was with the underground then was that an uprising depended on how successful the invasion was going. In any event, the uprising never got the signal to go.

The invasion was the worst kept secret in history. News of its planning leaked all over the place.

It was a painful catalogue of blunders to listen to and NBC ticked them off with unrelenting thoroughness.

Between interviews, the

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A security silence imposed by the late President Kennedy and continued by his successor created a regrettable shortcoming for NBC's White Paper re-examination Tuesday night of the Bay of Pigs fiasco.

It was an impressive marshaling of facts, figures and testimony -- at least from

the Cuban exile leaders -- but it seriously needed some explanations from U.S. officials who were involved.

This wasn't NBC's fault of course. Narrator Chet Huntley and NBC's State Department correspondent, Elie Abel, explained that these officials simply were not available for interview.

Allen Dulles, former CIA chief was heard from, but it was not clear whether he talked for the NBC special or his statements were excerpted from news films shot at the time of the 1961 crisis. In any event, he has left the government.

The program was Part I of a two-part series. The second will be aired Feb. 9 and will deal with the later Cuban missile crisis.

The network originally had

scheduled the first part for the Sunday following President Kennedy's funeral but because of that tragedy, it was postponed several times.

The Tuesday night segment was titled "The Story of a Disaster." As the program wended its way through the official and unofficial cloak-and-dagger business that surrounded the hapless invasion, that title seemed to border on the understatement.

With nary a peep permitted from the participants in Washington, we got only a second-hand version of American policy from those Cuban exile chiefs -- among them, Antonio de Varona, Raul Chibas, Manuel Rey, Manuel Artimo -- who were in contact with Washington.

Gathering from what they had to say for NBC's cameras, the whole invasion project was riddled with misunderstandings, mistrust and

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program fleshed out a historical narrative with films -- many of them shot inside Cuba during the fighting by German and other neutralist photographers -- of the key events and figures. The film footage was intelligently selected and edited.

Huntley explained that this Part I of its two programs was the story of "the failure of U.S. power." Its second part, on the missile crisis, will be the story of "the success of American power."

Tuesday night's program with the informational sources available -- or not available to it -- didn't add any significant facts to information already on record.

Rather, it was an effectively documented collection of an all too familiar national humiliation.