

Crosby's Column

'Expert' Decisions

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By John Crosby

We are in the days of big government, which is to say executive government, or to put it less politely, bureaucratic government. Former President Eisenhower says he doesn't like it, although there was a good deal of it under his administration, too. Big government is probably unavoidable if we are to be as American as Robert Frost says we are. But there are pitfalls.

On the bookshelves are two books, "The Cuban Invasion," by Earl Meyer and Tad Szulc, which is subtitled "The Chronicle of a Disaster," and "The U-2 Affair," by David Wise and Thomas B. Ross, which could well have had the same subtitle but didn't. Both books concern executive decisions and both were marked by appalling stupidity. Both were largely controlled and run by the quote experts unquote with whom every one is afraid to tangle, because "they have the information." But, with all this information the quote experts unquote have been most grievously and appallingly wrong.

Just how wrong is best illustrated in Meyer's and Szulc's excellent book on the Cuban invasion, which they describe as a meeting of the National Security Council. Present were an impressive roster of experts and eggheads including Allan Dulles, Richard Bissell, Gen. LeMay, Secretary of State Rusk, Secretary of Defense McNamara, Adolf Berle, Arthur Schlesinger, Assistant Secretary of State Thomas Mann, McGeorge Bundy, Assistant Secretary of Defense Paul Nitze, Secretary of the Treasury Douglas Dillon, and Senator Fulbright, chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee. And, of course, President Kennedy.

In short, the best brains of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and the White House and the State Department. Only one man—Senator Fulbright—opposed a plan that any second lieutenant that ever graduated from the Infantry School at Fort Benning would have denounced as lunacy. Schlesinger was opposed to the plan because he didn't think it would work but nobody asked his advice and he didn't see the

pitfalls his expertise advised the Joint Chiefs of Staff.

This is the very sort of amateur opinion which guides a democracy and keeps it from making whopping blunders. In an age of atomic energy, missile warfare, and the rest of the god-awful gadgetry, plain people all defer to the experts with a moribund and audible sigh of relief. "It's too complicated for me. Let the double-doubles in the Pentagon handle it," is the attitude. But we can't evade our responsibilities in a democracy that easily.

The experts aren't that experts. What's more, they frequently disagree among themselves and then the common sense of the layman is usually far wiser. (It's interesting to note that in an essentially military operation, only two non-military men, Schlesinger and Fulbright, were against it.) Something happens to otherwise sensible people when protected by secrecy and high position from the searching criticism and debate, which most of the policies of his government are not getting.

For one thing, high principle goes out the window. In both the U-2 affair and the Cuban invasion the American government was caught in big, terribly damaging blunders.

In "The Cuban Invasion," Meyer and Szulc quote Max Weber, the German sociologist and historian of bureaucracy, as a stunning pertinence to our times: "Under normal conditions, the power position of a fully developed bureaucracy is always overtopped by the political master finds himself in the position of the 'dilettante' who stands opposed to the 'expert' facing the trained official who stands within the management of administration."

Every bureaucracy seeks to increase the superiority of the professional and is formed by keeping their knowledge secret. Bureaucratic administrators tend to be an administration of secrets as far as it can, it hides its secrets from the public. In fact, the bureaucracy is out of a sense of duty every attempt of Parliament to know more by means of its committees from its

