

*BEST COPY  
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*x* *Adlai Stevenson*  
*x* *Perkins* *McGeorge Bundy*  
*x* *Bromwell Smith*  
*x* *State Dept* *Mike Conrad*

## MIRO CHARGES DRAMATIZE PROBLEM

# White House Needs an Historian

By MARIANNE MEANS

WASHINGTON, April 27—

When Dr. Jose Miro Cardona accused President Kennedy of withdrawing a promise for a second Cuban invasion, the president went through the roof.

He did not recall naming said, or even implied, anything to the Cuban exile leader that could have been interpreted as an invasion pledge. He called for a transcript of his private meeting with Cardona after the Bay of Pigs fiasco. But there was no record of that conversation beyond the conflicting recollections of the President and Cardona.

**THIS UNHAPPY** incident dramatizes a problem which the White House has yet to solve. The President has become increasingly concerned about it and given it much thought. There is just no orderly way of preserving a complete record of the conversations, discussions, and verbal arguments of the President and his high officials in the course of their decision making.

What the White House needs is a historian. President Kennedy, a student of history, recognizes

the importance of documentation, especially in a modern age where so much of the conduct of government is done verbally, over the telephone. But there seems to be no easy solution.

Since the Adlai Stevenson incident, when the whole country was aroused by what role Stevenson may or may not have played in the former council debates over the Cuban invasion, the President has authorized a stenographic system. It does not work very well. Officially, National Security Advisor Averell Harrington, McGeorge Bundy, or whomever of his aides attends a key policy conference, is supposed to keep a full transcript of each conference debate. But Bundy has increased over the years, and as are his assistants, they simply have not had the time to write out daily reports on top of their other duties.

**THE WHITE** House keeps extensive records, of course. The decisions taken in National Security Council meetings, as well as the general positions of each member are carefully recorded by the council's secretary, Bromwell Smith. Many Cabinet members, advisers and Presidential staff

aides keep sketchy notes for their own files, and possible future memoirs. Secretaries keep notes on conferences over legislative programs and other White House responsibilities.

But such records do not tell the whole story for future generations who want to learn about the personalities, perspectives, emotions, and political forces which shaped the decisions reached by the White House during the recent years.

The President, as in the case of his talk with Cardona, likes to speak frankly and confidentially to foreign officials as well as officials of his own administration. It makes him slightly uncomfortable to sit out of the corner of his eye a third party scribbling away as he talks. It also tends to inhibit the response of the President's guests.

Thus, the White House recognizes the need for a historian in the midst of crises, but does not quite know how to go about using one. If such a historian were government paid, his records would become the property of the administration to be made public, if, when, and how the President chose. But professional, qualified historians build their reputation—and income—on work which is prized. No ambitious historian could afford to spend several years on a task for which he would get no credit.

If the historian were an independent outsider, his presence at highly volatile debates over foreign policy would undoubtedly inhibit officials' comments to the point where their usefulness might be impaired. Instead of thinking about the elements of a decision, they would be tempted to think about a place in history.

**YET IF A** historian operated on a post-mortem basis, interviewing top advisers after each crisis or policy debate, his accounts would suffer from the fallibility of human memory. Each person tends to remember events in terms of his own perspective, biases, background, and ability to understand another's viewpoint—and therefore memories of the same event often conflict.

Each President has coped with the problem of documentation differently. Some Presidents have voluminous papers and notations for historians—Franklin Delano Roosevelt, for instance, compiled extensive transcripts of the debates over the conduct of World War II. Warren Harding, on the other hand, left not a single paper—his wife, concerned about the scandals in his administration, burned them all.

Kennedy, who hopes to write the story of his administration as Truman did and Eisenhower is now doing, would also like to have a full record for posterity.