

VETERANS OF THE BAY OF PIGS 8/15/72

Gentlemen:;

Speaking in the name of the Veterans of the Bay of Pigs, I appear before this Committee to try to persuade you to include the liberation of Cuba in the platform of your Party.

The reasons for it are three-fold: Historical, legal and humanitarian. Historically, Cuba has always been, prior to Castro, one of the closest and most loyal friends the United States has ever had anywhere.

Historian Stephen Bonsal in his book "When the French Were Here" speaks of the Cuban participation in the Battle of Yorktown referring to a donation in the amount of a million ducats (about 30 million dollars in today's currency) to General Washington by ladies of the Havana aristocracy. In this respect he says, and I quote: The mentioned amount must be considered the foundation upon which American independence was erected " affirming later, and again I quote:" these ducats arrived when the zero hour the revolution came. " At that time the rebel army was about to disband since Washington lacked the means with which to pay his soldiers and had to confiscate from owners the very few provisions left in the country, during which time monetary chaos was such that barbers papered their shops with revolutionary currency.

The spontaneity with which the Cuban ladies contributed to the American revolutionary cause was such, that one of Admiral De Grasse's diaries relates, and I quote:" It must be said to the honor of the colonists that all were eager to contribute, the ladies even offering their diamonds."

Regarding our own independence, it is widely known the participation the United States had in it. Cuba obtained its freedom as a result of the Spanish-American War. The rough riders went as volunteers risking - and in many cases offering - their lives in the name of freedom. They were not seeking any personal gain, they were struggling just for the ideal of liberty and justice.

When Cuba became an independent country its friendship with the United States became even closer. It was a loyal, sincere friendship without reserve or second thoughts. The thousands of

Americans who used to live in Cuba can testify to the friendly, I would dare say even familiar way in which they were treated. And I believe that it is important to emphasize this here because I think the American people must be by now sick and tired of generously helping out most of the countries in the world only to receive as payment ingratitude or even outright hatred.

When the United States went to war with Germany during the first World War, Cuba immediately followed suit. The same thing happened in World War II. In the actual conflict in Viet Nam thousands of Cubans have participated. Many have lost their lives in the jungles and rice paddies of that remote region and we the Veterans of the Bay of Pigs have several companions to mourn. Not a single Cuban so far has deserted or evaded the draft and no American officer in Viet-Nam has ever fraggging by a Cuban. And I want you to realize that those Cubans are not fighting ninety miles away in their own homeland, where they would really like to, but ten thousand miles away in a remote country.

Historically and geographically the Island of Cuba has always been of an enormous importance to the U. S. The American interest in Cuba began as far back as 1805 with President Jefferson and ever since the United States has realized that for its own security it needed to have a friendly government in the Island. Cuba, because of its geographical situation represents a huge aircraft carrier anchored 90 miles away from the U.S. coast from which a vast part of this continent can be defended, or attacked. And I am telling you this because it is in the interest and security of your own country.

When by mid 1960 it became evident that Fidel Castro's regime was a communist one, the U. S. decided to entrust to the C. I. A. the task of overthrowing the tyrant. In doing so they were acting in accordance with the Monroe Doctrine and the Treaties of Rio and Bogota.

The plan as designed by the CIA was a masterful one. If carried out as it was conceived it would had been without any doubt

successful. Unfortunately, it was thwarted by the nefarious advisers of late President Kennedy.

With a general election in store, General Eisenhower decided that it should be the next President that was elected the one who would have the final word about carrying out or not the plans that were prepared under his administration to overthrow Castro.

It was the misfortune of the Cuban people, of this hemisphere and of the whole world that Richard Nixon was not elected in 1960 and that instead John F. Kennedy became President of the U. S. This sealed the fate of Cuba.

Many times it has been said that the cause of the failure of the Bay of Pigs invasion was the lack of air support. That is really not so. The lack of air support was not the cause but a consequence. The basic cause of the failure was the sickly, almost pathological terror of the advisers of late President Kennedy that the participation of the U. S. in the operation might be discovered. Because of this irrational fear an operation basically dependent on the control of the air was thwarted. Three air strikes were scheduled to take place: The first one on April the 15th, 1961, with 16 B-26 bombers participating. The second one the next day, April the 16th, with also 16 B-26 and the third the same day of our landing, April the 17th with again 16 bombers participating.

Out of this three air strikes the first was cut in half on direct orders from the White House. The reason given was that a strike with 16 B-26 would be too conspicuous and could give away the American participation. Consequently, the striking force was reduced to only eight airplanes. The second strike was completely canceled while our invasion was in process and without any previous warning. The reason was that Adlai Stevenson who was at the time the U.S. representative to the United Nations requested from the President the cancellation of this indispensable air strike. The third one was also cut in half. The outcome was that a brilliantly conceived operation was doomed to failure.

We the members of the 2506 Assault Brigade were abandoned to our

fate. We were only 1,500 fighting against 62,000. Nevertheless, we inflicted them almost 5,000 casualties while we only suffered about a hundred in battle. If we retreated from the various fronts it was only because we ran out of ammunition.

Our defeat on the Bay of Pigs and our being forsaken in that memorable occasion represents one of the most shameful pages in the history of the United States.

But there is more to come. I am going to reveal here for the first time what was the real plan for the Bay of Pigs invasion. If any of you would doubt what I am ~~just~~ going to say, just wait until the classified papers about said action are made public this coming Fall.

The task of our Brigade really consisted in holding the positions we were to take over in Cuba for a period between 72 and 96 hours. During this interval of time the Cuban Revolutionary Council in the exile, would be taken to the beachheads held by us and once there, it would apply for recognition by the Organization of American States. Several countries (The U.S., Nicaragua, Guatemala, Venezuela, among others) were committed in advance to recognize immediately said Council as the lawful government of Cuba. A naval task force of the U. S. standing 30 miles south of Playa Giron on board of whose vessels there would be 30,000 marines, would land and join the Brigade as soon as the Council was recognized. On Vieques Island (close to Puerto Rico) which was declared off limits at that time, there were additional American troops in the ready to participate in the operation. The Guantanamo Naval Base, that had been reinforced, was also ready to co collaborate in the action.

All these wonderful plans went down the drain when President Kennedy decided to follow the counsel of his advisors and withdrew our indispensable air support.

In regards to the consequences of the Bay of Pigs failure I prefer to let Mr. James Reston, editorial writer of The New York Times, whom no one can accuse of conservative tendencies, to expound them in his own words. In an article published in the New York Times in 1965, Reston claims he spoke to Kennedy at the American Embassy in Vienna shortly after his meeting with Krushchev in the Vienna Summit Conference.

He found the President "shaken and angry." Kennedy confided to Reston that, and I quote: "Krushchev had studied the events of the Bay of Pigs; he would have understood if Kennedy had left Castro alone or destroyed him; but when Kennedy was rash enough to strike at Cuba but not bold enough to finish the job, Krushchev decided he was dealing with an inexperienced young leader who could be intimidated and blackmailed. The Communist decision to put offensive ~~missiles~~ missiles into Cuba was the final gamble of this assumption. "

Same newspaperman Reston, in an article published again in The New York Times on January 18th, 1966, narrated that President Kennedy had told him that he thought that Krushchev had reached the conclusion that, and I quote: "Anyone who was stupid enough to get involved in that situation (Bay of Pigs) was immature, and anyone who didn't see it all the way through was timid and therefore could be bluffed. " Then Reston adds that Kennedy told him that because of Krushchev's attitude it was necessary for him to take measures to make American power credible to the Russians. One of these measures was the sending of 16,000 combat troops to Vietnam. Reston concludes asserting that therefore, and I quote: "The Vietnam war was intensified; not because the situation ~~on the ground~~ on the ground demanded it in Vietnam but because Kennedy wanted to prove a diplomatic point, not a military point. "

Columnist Margaritte Higgins has also told how President Kennedy confided to her how because he didn't act when he should, ninety miles away (meaning the Bay of Pigs) he found himself forced to do it ten thousand miles away (meaning Vietnam).

During the Missile Crisis in 1962, once more the U.S. missed the opportunity, the golden opportunity, of overthrowing the communist regime that is oppressing Cuba. In that occasion this Nation had full legal rights, the moral and the unconditional backing of all the free nations in the world to act. Nevertheless, President Kennedy heeding once again the calamitous counsel of his ill-starred advisors decided to give leave to the continuation of Castro's communist regime in Cuba. The outcome of it all was, in the apt words of Pre-

sident Nixon : " To pull defeat out of the jaws of victory."

But even worse, as a result of the Missile Crisis the respected and centennial Monroe Doctrine prohibiting the interference by any extracontinental power in this hemisphere, was substituted by what might be styled the new Kennedy Doctrine according to which, " The interference of any country of this continent in the control and dominion of Cuba by the Soviet Union is absolutely prohibited by the United States. "

Unfortunately, I don't have the time to discuss it here, but we Cubans are completely and absolutely sure that there are still offensive missiles in Cuba. Furthermore, we have seen their photographs

From the legal standpoint I want to cite the following dispositions in favor of the liberation of our homeland? First of all, the Monroe Doctrine dating as back as 1823. In this century and not so long ago, the treaties of Rio and Bogota. All of them forbid the interference of any extracontinental power - as the Soviet Union is exercising in Cuba - in this continent.

The Joint Resolution of the Congress of the United States of America dated October the third, 1962, states that the United States has made the decision to prevent, using every necessary mean including the use of weapons, that the Marxist-leninist regime of Cuba extend, by force or by threat of force, its aggressive or subversive activities to any part of this hemisphere.

I believe it is really interesting to pay attention to what is stipulated in this clause, because the truth is that this very country, the United States, has been subverted during the last 14 years by Castro's regime. In this respect I want to quote a statement made by an official of the Department of State that is as follows: " Name any disturbance in the U. S. - on campus, on the streets, anywhere - and I'll name you the leaders of it who have been to Cuba." And I guess that most of you know that what he was saying is true.

The aforementioned Joint Resolution also establishes that

the United States has decided to prevent the instalation in Cuba of any weapons or artifacts that could endanger the security of the U. S. The stationing of military forces in the island that could threaten the security of this country would also be avoided. Well, you have already heard Dr. Manolo Reyes' allegations and I think that by now you are perfectly able to form your own opinion as to how this disposition has been inforced.

The last clause of the Joint Resolution establishes the colaboration with the OAS and with all the freedom loving Cubans and back the legitimate aspirations of the Cuban people to its self determination.

Well, gentlemen, that is what the last clause has to say. In order to find out the way it has been implmented, I think the best thing you can do is to start visiting jails where the Cuban freedom fighters with which supposedly the U. S. was going to colaborate are now being sentenced for no other reason than thyy were trying to restore freedom and self determination to our beloved country. You could also visit the headquarters of the various Cuban freedom fighters organizations and ask them how this supposed colaboration has been working. Incidentally, I suggest you to ask them two questions, namely How much help have you received so far and secondly has much harass-ment and confiscations of weapons have you suffered. When you get your answers you will realize how well this third and final clause has worked.

The humanitarian reasons for which Cuba should be liberated I think all of you know by now. Cuba has become a huge concentration camp where its inhabitants are dying a slow and painful death, There is practically no food, clothes, medicines or any of the things that make civilized life possible. But worse of all, there is no freedom. The one item you can find today in Cuba galore, is terror. Tens of thousands are finding a slow and undescribable painful death in the many prisons and concentration camps. We, the memebers of the 2506 Assault Brigade know what we are saying. We spent two years incarcerated there.

Life in slavery is not worthwhile living. When at the climax of the Missile Crisis the then Attorney General Robert Kennedy vetoed an invasion of the island by U. S. forces, he thought that with his action he was protecting the innocent lives of thousands of Cubans. Later on, he bragged that the Cuban people should be very grateful to his brother and himself for sparing perhaps as many as 50,000 innocent lives with his action.

Regarding that statement, I want to point out that in the first place, we are quite sure that never as many as 50,000 "innocent" I repeat innocent - lives would have been spared in that operation. But furthermore, even if if as many lives would be lost, the Cuban people were prepared to pay the price. I don't know if you are aware that during our wars of liberation we lost almost 200,000 people. And I want to remind you that the population of Cuba at that time was less than 2 million.

I am quite sure that you have never heard any Cuban complaining of our gigantic lost of lives at that time. And believe me, it is not because we don't mourn and cry our deads. The pain lays deep inside, but we have learned very well what our Jose Marti had to say about freedom, and I quote: "Liberty is a very expensive commodity. If you want to enjoy it you have to be prepared to pay its price or otherwise you will have to resign to the fate of living without it."

In closing, we the freedom fighters, have only one request from you, our traditional friends, the people of the United States: Help us fight the good battle, ninety miles away, at your own doorsteps, the same good battle against communism that this great country has fought in Korea and is now fighting ten thousand miles away in Vietnam on the other side of the planet. Or as the Russians do with their Castroites accomplices, give us the tanks, the airplabes, the rifles. But if the worse comes to the worse, please, simply do not binder our efforts to free Cuba. Grant us the right, the simple elementary right of dying for our country. That is the least we can ask for.