

## Part VI

Mr. Nixon's Role

Like so many other aspects of the Bay of Pigs story a great deal has been said about the role that Richard M. Nixon played in the operation during the course of his Vice Presidency, but woefully little solid evidence has ever appeared to verify either the *pros* or *cons* on the subject. Because of the continuing repetition of many of these stories, a careful search was undertaken of the voluminous CIA records of the operation in order to recover those items pertaining to Nixon's participation directly or indirectly -- through his aides, assistants, or correspondence -- in the Bay of Pigs operation.

During the course of his unofficial visit to the United States in the spring of 1959, Fidel Castro accepted the invitation of the Vice President of the United States to meet with Mr. Nixon in his official office in the Capitol for an informal discussion.

Nixon has stated that the meeting was arranged at the request of the Secretary of State Herter, who suggested

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that the administration might profit if one of its leaders could gain additional inside information about what made Castro tick.

Nixon has said that he had a 3 1/2 hour meeting with Castro on 19 April 1959 and that as a result of the meeting, he prepared a 4-page secret memorandum and sent copies to President Eisenhower, Secretary Herter and to Allen Dulles.\* 1/ In part at least, Mr. Nixon's version of the meeting with Castro was made public as early as November 1964 in an article he wrote for the *Reader's Digest*, and these views were repeated in somewhat more detail in his recent memoirs, *RW*. The thrust of the meeting was that Nixon was emphasizing the need for Castro to establish a democratic form of government as he (Nixon) understood it, with Castro on the other hand emphasizing that the

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\* In his *Reader's Digest* article of November 1964 Nixon indicated that copies of the memorandum went to the three individuals as noted in the text above, however, in his recent Memoirs, *RW*, Nixon states that a copy also went to John Foster Dulles. John Foster Dulles was technically Secretary of State until 22 April 1959, on which date he was succeeded by Christian Herter. At the time of the meeting between Nixon and Castro, however, Mr. Herter had been acting in Mr. Dulles' place. Dulles's death occurred 24 May 1959.

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type of government he believed in was that which was expressed most vocally by the people. Nixon's most widely known remark about Castro as a result of that meeting was his statement that: "Castro is incredibly naive about communism, or is under communist discipline."

Reportedly Castro was not particularly enchanted with the meeting either, for according to a member of his party when Castro emerged from the meeting he "was angry. He swore and added, 'This man has spent the whole time scolding me'." \* 2/

Subsequent to his meeting with Castro in April of 1959, Agency records do not reflect any particular interest on the part of the Vice President in Cuban activities until the end of January 1960. On 27 January, and again on 23 February, Col. J. C. King, Chief, Western Hemisphere Division, briefed Gen. Robert Cushman, Mr. Nixon's Aide, at the Vice President's Office. Cushman made it clear that the Vice President was

\* It was only after making a direct request to Mr. Nixon that a copy of the memorandum was obtained. No copies were found in the files of CIA, State, or the Eisenhower Library. The copy obtained was from Mr. Nixon's personal files. The memorandum was, in fact, classified CONFIDENTIAL rather than SECRET. A copy of the memorandum is attached as Appendix F.

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interested in supporting anti-Castro groups both within and outside of Cuba, including goon squads or other direct action groups to match against the pro-Castro groups in Cuba.

Among the other subjects discussed with General Cushman on 23 February 1960 were propaganda attacks on the Castro government and the possibilities of economic sanctions similar to those which had been suggested by former Assistant Secretary of State Henry Holland, whose views on the need for economic sanctions had not only been discussed with Agency representatives, but also had been forwarded to the Vice President's office.

Another facet of the Agency's anti-Castro efforts which were of some interest to the Vice-President were CIA's relations with the Department of State, which obviously was not one of the Vice President's favorite organizations; but Col. King made it quite clear that all of CIA's actions were undertaken only after policy approval. 3/ After it was pointed out to Gen. Cushman that the Department of State's knowledgeability about Agency operations was on a strict "need-to-know" basis, even for the Ambassador in Cuba,

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Cushman then showed Col. King some derogatory information that the FBI had provided the Vice President about both Ambassador Bonsal and William Wieland of the Bureau of American Republic Affairs. Col. King's memorandum provided no details about the nature of this information, but the probability is that both were accused of being too tolerant of Castro and communists. 4/

During one of these meetings in the early part of 1960, Gen. Cushman noted that the Vice President had suggested that possibly the Agency would want to consult with, or acquire the services of, Col. Edward Lansdale, a member of Gen. Erskine's Special Operations Staff in the Department of Defense. Lansdale's activities in helping to quell the Huk rebellion in the Philippines, apparently were well known to Nixon. 5/

On 2 March 1960, the Director of Central Intelligence gave Vice President Nixon a detailed briefing on "What We are Doing in Cuba." The 7-page briefing paper which had been given to the Director provided information on Castro's pro-communist proclivities, on the whole range of the anti-Castro propaganda effort which was being supported by Agency financing,

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and went into details concerning attempts to rally anti-Castro support, not only in the other Latin American nations, but in the Near and Far East and in Africa. Details were given on the preparations being made for resistance activities including the acquisition of training bases in third countries, and both Ydigoras Fuentes, President of Guatemala, and President Luis Somoza of Nicaragua were noted as having made offers of support for this country's anti-Castro activities.

Plans for economic warfare against Castro were also outlined for the Vice President. Delaying deliveries of necessary spare parts for the sugar industry, tightening credit by oil companies to restrict delivery of the essential petroleum products, and possible restriction in sugar quotas were mentioned as under study. One other item which was mentioned in this briefing for Vice President Nixon was the fact that the Agency had "a drug, which if placed in Castro's food, would make him behave in such an irrational manner that a public appearance could have very damaging results to him." 6/ It should be emphasized that at the date of this briefing (2 March 1960), the United States did not yet have an *official* anti-Castro

policy -- that would not come until 17 March of 1960.

Subsequent to that announced policy, the author has found no other references to drugs or other types of attack which were being considered upon Castro's person, or the persons of any of the other Cuban leaders, as a part of the Agency's official program.\*

There is some question as to whether it was the Director of Central Intelligence himself, or whether it was Mr. Bissell, or, perhaps, whether it was Col. King who actually briefed the Vice President on 2 March 1960. A stamp on the copy of the original Memorandum for the Director reads: "Noted by DCI 28 March 1960." This copy was sent to the DCI through the DDP and carries Mr. Bissell's initials. The carbon of the memorandum does not show this stamp and the presumption is that it was the Director who did the briefing. A third version of the memorandum is

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\* See Part VII of this Volume of the History of the Bay of Pigs Operation for clarification of the definition of the Agency's *official* policy regarding the anti-Castro program, as contrasted to the *unofficial* program. The author assumes that regardless of reader's biases regarding the former Vice President, that the fact that he heard about this drug in the course of a briefing will not be construed to make him a member of a conspiracy to assassinate Castro and other of the Cuban leaders.

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dated 8 March 1960 and was revised to read:

For the Director's use at the NSC 5412  
Representatives Meeting which will con-  
sider the Cuban covert action program  
paper. (This paper was used for Mr. Nixon's  
briefing.)

This would seem to imply that perhaps the DCI did in fact do the briefing. While the briefer may not be positively identified, there is no question however, that the Vice President did receive a detailed briefing on the Agency's plan for action against Castro prior to the time of Eisenhower's formal proclamation.\*

In addition to the meeting of 2 March when Mr. Nixon was briefed on the Agency's concerns about Cuba, the Vice President was also a participant in the 10 March 1960 meeting of the National Security Council when President Eisenhower emphasized that Cuba was a danger, that he wanted contingency plans drawn up, and that he wanted Cuba to be a subject for review at all future National Security Council Meetings. Mr. Nixon attended the 17 March 1960 conference when the President

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\* See Appendix G for copies of the first page of each of the three memorandums on the briefing of the Vice President on 2 March 1960. (For Appendix G see p. 344).

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gave a formal "go" to the Covert Action Plan of the Agency which had been agreed to by the 5412 Group.

Mr. Nixon's only reported comments during this meeting concerned the cutting off of new capital to Cuba, the pulling out of private American firms, and the possibilities of reducing tourism to stop the flow of American dollars into Cuba. 7/

Perhaps one of the reasons why Vice President Nixon has been attributed with playing a major role in the Bay of Pigs activity has to do with the relationship between Nixon's office and Mr. William D. Pawley, former US Ambassador to Peru and Brazil and a US businessman with extensive investments in Cuba and interests in various other parts of Latin America. Pawley also was a principal contributor to the Republican party, particularly to Mr. Nixon's cause. Apparently hopeful of an appointment as Assistant Secretary of State for Latin American affairs -- assuming a Republican party victory in the 1960 presidential election -- Pawley was a widely known conservative.

In the spring of 1960, shortly following President Eisenhower's decision to promote the anti-Castro Program, Pawley's contacts with the Agency (particularly

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with WHD) and with Nixon's office became increasingly frequent and apparently quite close. On 21 March 1960, four days after formal approval of the anti-Castro program, Jake Esterline met with Pawley to plan a meeting to be held in Pawley's Miami residence which would include the DCI, Col. King, Gen. Cushman, and Walter J. Donnelly, Vice President of United States Steel and former ambassador to Venezuela as well as Mr. Pawley. Of the session with Pawley, Chief, WH/4 wrote:

Details and the agenda were not discussed other than to say the principal emphasis would be on reviewing what work could be done throughout the hemisphere and public opinion on the pending operation against Castro. Mr. Pawley was told that the time had arrived for careful coordination of all activities; that permission had been granted for an all-out operation; a government in exile will be formed post haste; that the acceptable non-Batista groups will be put into contact with each other almost immediately; and that Mr. Pawley's contact, Rubio Padilla, will figure prominently in this effort ... It was carefully explained to Mr. Pawley that any action involving exiles now should be most carefully coordinated with Chief, WHD and Chief, Branch 4 to avoid any flaps.\* 8/

\* Esterline also mentioned in his memorandum that Pawley had provided some information on the Dominican Republic which he asked Esterline not to pass beyond CIA until he, Pawley, had the opportunity to give the information directly to Vice President Nixon.

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The meeting mentioned in the foregoing paragraph was convened in Pawley's Miami residence on 1 April 1960, and the Agency's representatives briefed, among other things, on the problems being faced by the Cubans in exile who were trying to form a government. There was considerable discussion as to who should be the nominal leaders of this government in exile, with Pawley pushing in particular for Dr. Rubio Padilla and the Agency's representatives suggesting Dr. Antonio Varona. For the benefit of the Vice President's representative, it was stressed that none of the Latin American countries seemed particularly anxious to provide a base of operations for the government in exile. The group was informed by the Director of Central Intelligence and by Col. King that, in addition to US Government financing, arrangements were being made to have private confidential sources help defray the costs of the Cuban government in exile. Col. King pointed out that over and above a bond issue

which will be floated in the name of the government in exile with Mr. Pawley's help, that donations are being made by private citizens and corporations. He indicated that confidential arrangements

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have already been made with the Bureau of Internal Revenue to permit individuals or corporate entities making donations to claim these donations as contributions to the US Government for tax purposes. He cautioned that this arrangement was being limited to a very small group. 9/

The question also was raised about the relationship of the anti-Castro program to the Organization of American States. Mr. Pawley suggested that rather than lean toward the OAS, better use should be made of the US Military Mission in the Latin American countries, especially having them pass the word on about the dangers of the Castro Government to one and all in the Western Hemisphere. Other items of importance that were discussed by the group were the planned propaganda program and "the present pathetic effort on the part of the Catholic Church to face up to the Communist plot in Cuba."

This meeting demonstrated that from the very outset of the formalization of a US anti-Castro policy, Mr. Nixon was being fully informed of the plans that were underway to accomplish the US objectives, and that certain private American citizens were closely involved in the planning. Within a very short time after the April meeting at Pawley's residence, however,

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senior Agency personnel -- notably C. Tracy Barnes, the ADDP/A -- began to question the Agency's relationship with Mr. William Pawley, particularly as Pawley's support for Rubio Padilla was apparently intended to establish a group of Pawley supported Cubans in exile in opposition to the FRD, the Agency's supported exile group. Barnes's concern was that if the US continued to support the extremely conservative element represented by Pawley's group, it would be charged that any anti-Castro action undertaken by the US would be "on the basis of protecting economic royalists."

What Barnes stressed to Mr. Bissell, the DDP, was the need for the US to decide whether or not it wished to be charged with supporting reactionary movements in Latin America, not only in Cuba, but in the rest of the Central American and Caribbean areas as well. Once having made up its own mind, Barnes suggested that CIA's position be worked out with State "and thereafter take it to Mr. Nixon, giving him at that time, a thorough and complete briefing so that there can be no doubt in his mind

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as to where we stand, and what we propose to do." \* 10/

When Rubio Padilla and the FRD failed to get together, Pawley informed Chief, Western Hemisphere Division that he was withdrawing from support of the Agency's anti-Castro operation; and Pawley told Col. King that he intended to make his views regarding the FRD known to Vice President Nixon. In addition, Pawley also had a meeting with President Eisenhower on 12 or 13 May 1960 at which time he stated his opinions with regard to the Dominican Republic and probably with reference to Cuba. In view of Pawley's recalcitrance to continue to work on the funding of the FRD, the DDP, ADDP/A, Chief WH/D, Chief WH/4 and others, discussed the *pros* and *cons* of cutting off the communications channel between Pawley and the Rubio groups into Cuba -- a channel which was provided by the Agency's communications facility.

Chief, WH Division got the group to agree that the communications channel should be continued because

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\* Mr. Barnes's thoughts probably were transmitted to Director Dulles for in a meeting of the Special Group on 19 May 1960, the DCI categorized the Cubans supported by Pawley as "unreconstructed reactionaries." 10a/

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it did provide a window to the activities of the Pawley group. Moreover, the Pawley group had a duplicate channel into Cuba and would not necessarily have been restricted by denial of the Agency channel. A restriction was placed on the transmittal of communications which would be prejudicial to CIA operations in Cuba; but it was agreed that Pawley should be advised of the cancellation of such messages by Chief, Western Hemisphere Division. The monitoring of such cable traffic, however, was to be the responsibility of Chief, WH/4, Jake Esterline.

Because of Pawley's close ties to the Eisenhower administration, the Deputy Director for Plans agreed that the discussion regarding Pawley should be brought to the attention of the Director of Central Intelligence and that Mr. Dulles should be urged to bring this matter before both President Eisenhower and Vice President Nixon. 11/ By the first week of June 1960, however, Jake Esterline apparently had reached the end of his tether, for in a Memorandum to the DDP, he wrote:

It is our firm conviction, based on months of discussion, that Mr. Pawley's views on the Cuban situation are highly

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personal and rigid. These views in our opinion are inimical to the best interest of the United States. Mr. Pawley has refused to budge from his position and has continued to seek official endorsement of his views at the high levels of the government. The flagrant disregard for security reflected in Havana cable 4820 dated 4 June 1960 requires Chief, JMARC to recommend that all contact with the Rubio-Pawley group be immediately and finally severed. If such action is not taken, no guarantee can be made for the security of the JMARC operation. In point of fact, the information in the foregoing message indicates that security already has been damaged severely. 12/

Among other things, the Havana cable which had aroused Chief, WH/4 stated that the following information was being circulated in anti-Castro circles in

Cuba:

US Government now backing Rubio group and no other group. Group has entire to Veep. For a time Pawley was having trouble with an Agency or Agencies who wanted [to] back another junta, but after Pawley offered [to] withdraw completely, he was talked out of doing so, and given assurance his group only would be backed, [and this] resulted resignation person backing other group. 13/

Headquarters prepared a priority cable to be sent to both Havana and to the Forward Operations Base, which had also picked up the disinformation being spread by the anti-FRD group. The text of the

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cable read in part as follows:

You have been authoritatively advised that US Government is not (repeat not) backing Rubio group and that it has no intention of ever doing so. It complete fabrication that Pawley was given US Government assurance that only his group would be backed. No resignations of any kind occurred, nor are any foreseen. Mention Veep in such context and on this particular level sheer foolhardiness and can only reflect most adversely on those Cubans who guilty misrepresentation of facts and severest indiscretions. 14/

The cable apparently was never forwarded to either Havana or to Miami, presumably because of opposition from Col. J. C. King who had noted and initiated on his copy of the Memorandum from Jake Esterline recommending that all contact with the Rubio-Pawley group be "immediately and finally severed" the following: "I do not concur with severing of all contacts." \* 15/

\* As will be noted subsequently, whether it was political expediency or conviction that Pawley could actually do some good, the relationship among Pawley, Chief, WH Division, and Chief, WH/4 continued throughout the course of the Bay of Pigs Operation. If anything in fact, the relationship between Pawley and Jake Esterline appears to have become mutually supportive, particularly as the operation drew to its unsuccessful conclusion.

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On 20 June 1960 at the request of General

Cushman, Jake Esterline joined him for lunch, the purpose being to provide the General with sufficient information on the state of the anti-Castro program so that he could bring the Vice President up to date from the time of the Miami meeting that had taken place at William Pawley's house.\* Among the points covered were the developments related to the organization of the FRD and the fact that Mr. William Pawley's candidate, Señor Rubio, had decided not to join the Frente. According to Esterline's memorandum:

Dr. Rubio's failure to join the Frente, however, has not held up progress in forming the junta, and/or the other important aspects of the operation.

General Cushman was told that the Frente's headquarters were to be established in Mexico, and it was on this occasion that Esterline introduced General Cushman to E. Howard Hunt, who was going to move to Mexico with the Frente.\*\*

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\* The meeting of 21 March 1960.

\*\* Insofar as can be determined, this probably was the first occasion on which Richard Nixon heard the name of E. Howard Hunt.

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Chief, WH/4 also touched on the programs that were being beamed out of Swan Island, on the preparation being made for training paramilitary types, base communications, planned paramilitary activities, the choice of a Third Country's staging area, and that the operation was still scheduled to begin during the month of November 1960. Gen. Cushman noted that the Vice President requested this information in order to prepare for an upcoming NSC meeting at which he would be a senior official. The Vice President's aide also asked if there were any particular problems with relation to the operation that Chief, WH/4 wished to have brought to the attention of the Vice President. Esterline reported that the only problems that had occurred concerned political differences among the exiles, but that for the moment all factions seemed to be quiescent. Chief, WH/4 also indicated to Gen. Cushman "that much had yet to be done vis-a-vis other countries in the hemisphere to ensure that JMARC would have adequate support at the eleventh hour." \* 16/

On 22 June 1960, General Cabell -- Acting DCI at the time -- briefed a special meeting of the National Security Council on the Cuban situation. The Vice

\* Except for Guatemala and Nicaragua, such support would never be forthcoming.

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