

Matter of Fact

By Joseph Alsop
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Editor's note: Joseph Alsop is on a brief vacation. During his absence his brother Stewart will write the Alsop column.

BY STEWART ALSOP

IF YOU STRIKE AT A KING

Washington—Sometimes it is useful to state the obvious. After the events of the last tragic week, and especially after what President Kennedy said in his speech to the editors, Fidel Castro cannot indefinitely be permitted to survive in triumph. The prestige and even the honor of the United States are now obviously and wholly committed to Castro's ultimate downfall.

There is hardly anybody in the higher reaches of the Kennedy Administration who does not agree that this commitment to Castro's destruction now in fact exists. And yet President Kennedy and his advisors certainly did not plan the commitment. On the contrary, the President's key decisions in regard to the Cuban operation were specifically designed to avoid such a commitment.

There were two key decisions made by the President after he decided to give the operation a green light. The plan for the operation which the President inherited from President Eisenhower involved the use of American armed force—for example, naval air power—if necessary to assure the success of the operation. President Kennedy's first key decision was to rule out the use of any American forces whatever, under any conditions whatever. His second key decision was to announce the first decision, just as the operation began.

THE public announcement that American forces would under no circumstances be involved was reiterated twice by the President himself and four times with even more emphasis by Secretary of State Dean Rusk. The announcement obviously greatly reduced the likelihood of a general uprising in Cuba, which was the main purpose of the Cuban operation. It also quite unnecessarily tied the President's hands in advance.

After the operation began to go bad, at an all day meeting at the White House on Wednesday, certain of the President's military and civilian advisors favored active American intervention. They argued that the operation simply could not be allowed to fail, if only because the United States would in that event become in the eyes of the world the most papery of paper tigers. The President might well have favored this course himself, if he had not publicly tied his own hands in advance. Why did he do so? This reporter has tried hard to find the answer to that question, and must confess a partial failure. The fact is that there has been something oddly uncharacteristic about the President's role in the Cuban affair. To be sure, since the operation failed, his actions have been wholly characteristic of the whole responsibility for the failure on himself and he has passed the word down the line that there will be no re-creations and no scapegoat hunt. The uncharacteristic phase came earlier.

Throughout his career—as

for example in his decision to enter the key Wisconsin and West Virginia primaries last year—Kennedy has always looked before he leaped. He had looked very hard, carefully weighing every conceivable factor likely to affect the outcome. And then he has leaped very hard, using every conceivable means to assure success.

IN THE looking phase of the Cuban operation, Kennedy was certainly the victim of bad intelligence. But intelligence is and always has been two-thirds guesswork, and it is hard to believe that the President adequately weighed the consequences of failure. This is further borne out by the fact that the leaping phase of the operation was, by past Kennedy standards, so uncharacteristically tentative. The idea that Castro could be brought down without any risk at all of using American men or arms recalls the old rhyme of dubious origin:

Mother, may I go out to swim?
Yes, my darling daughter,
Hang your clothes on a hickory limb
And don't go near the water.

At least part of the explanation for the markedly un-Kennedy-like quality of the President's role in the first phase of the Cuban operation lies with United Nations Ambassador Adlai Stevenson, whose voice is listened to with respect in the Kennedy Administration. From his own point of view it was quite natural that Stevenson should strongly favor a categorical promise that American forces would not be used in Cuba. The peculiar holler-than-thou public stance which succeeding American delegations to the U.N. have always thought it necessary to assume was difficult to sustain in any case, in view of the obvious American complicity in the Cuban operation. Without the Kennedy promise, it would have been impossible to sustain.

KENNEDY has spoken of "the lessons we have learned" from the tragic Cuban episode. One lesson, surely, is that what pleases the majority of the strangely assorted gaggle of more or less sovereign nations which now constitute the U.N. General Assembly does not necessarily serve the national interest of the United States.

Another lesson is summed up in the old adage, "If you

Strictly Personal

By Sidney J. Harris
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CHESS CAN'T BE A HOBBY—FOR HARRIS IT'S A HORROR

In the biographical sketch of myself that our promotion department sends out to the groups that have been foolish enough to invite me to lecture, the game of chess is given as one of my "hobbies."

This is an error. Chess is not, and can never be, a hobby. It is either a disease or nothing. It is an obsession, an affliction, an addiction. But it is not a hobby.

"Every chess player," an ironic friend of mine said recently, "should have a hobby." This was a neat epigram. Because those who are serious about the game soon become as single-minded as alcoholics: wife, family, job and other interests all become submerged in the chessboard.

I have largely given up playing the game because of its seductive powers. I used to urge others to take it up, but no longer. The peril is too great. Some serious drinkers ever avoid becoming chess nuts. What we need is a secret organization called "Check-mates Anonymous."

Not only ago, Cleveland Amory came to Chicago for a few days of the most strenuous activity. His book, "Who Killed Society?", is high on the best-seller list; his anthology, "Vanity Fair," is crowding the leaders.

During his brief visit here, Amory was scheduled for several literary luncheons, receptions, dinners, radio and TV interviews, and the whole depressing gamut of modern publicity. Every hour of his time was rigidly scheduled.

Yet—owing to the evil machinations of my publisher—Amory spent five hours at my house, involved in two ferocious games of chess with me. He ignored phone calls—including one piteous call strike at a king, you must strike to kill."

Some day, one way or another, the American commitment to bring Castro down will have to be honored. The commitment can only be honored if the American government is willing, if necessary, to strike to kill, even if that risks the shedding of American blood.

from his wife awaiting his return at their hotel—curses, threats, promises, and cold looks from our other guests who were waiting to go out for dinner with us.

Like the lush who can't stop with the conventional two before a meal, he would have stayed all night locked in mortal combat over the chessboard. We finally had to load him into the car and drive him down to the TV station for his appearance on a panel show. He cried like a baby.

I am doing penance in this piece, for in the past, I have urged the game of chess upon strangers to it, and I still have a nostalgic fondness for it. But I rarely play it any more; the game calls for a strong will and a steady hand. It is not for weaklings like Amory and myself.

And it is not a hobby, unless you look upon opium-smoking as a harmless diversion. I thought I had kicked the habit, until Amory pulled me back into the pit.

SETS UP CAMP

Katmandu, Nepal—(UPI)—Sir Edmund Hillary has set up a base camp for an assault on 27,790-foot Mt. Makalu, reports reaching here said today. Hillary, conqueror of Mt. Everest, plans to climb the world's fifth highest mountain without oxygen.

Drummond Reports

(Walter Lippmann is in Europe. Roscoe Drummond reports from Washington in his absence.)

CUBA: NEXT PHASE

Washington—President Kennedy is facing the hard and painful dilemma posed by Castro's Cuban Soviet Socialist Republic.

We are witnessing the steady build-up of Soviet military and political power in the Western Hemisphere which every United States official says is intolerable.

Have no doubt about it, more Soviet power is going to be put at the disposal of Castro.

But while we say that a Soviet military and political base in the Western Hemisphere is intolerable, we stand committed to a policy of "non-interference" which was made for a different world and set of circumstances than we now face.

The dilemma is: Do we continue to stand aside and watch the mounting build-up of Soviet power in Cuba? Or do we act alone, even if this action is unpopular with our Latin American neighbors who prefer to close their eyes to the problem?

BY TREATY and policy we are bound not to interfere in the internal affairs of any member of the Organization of American States. This is the long-standing U.S. and inter-American policy of non-interference.

But through these same inter-American treaties we are committed to resist the spread

of Communism to the Western Hemisphere and penetration by any non-American power.

By every objective test Castro is today creating a Soviet Socialist state in Cuba. It is tied to the Soviet Union and Red China, who have intervened in the internal affairs of every nation they can get their hands on.

The point I want to make is that non-interference in the "internal affairs" does not bind us to non-interference in the spread of Communist dictatorship to the Western Hemisphere or in building a Soviet military and political base in Cuba; they are the external affairs of every democratic Western Hemisphere country.

A FEW weeks ago I wrote the following:

"Have we got to stand impotent and immobile, paralyzed by the theory of 'non-interference' until Castro (and Khrushchev) have intervened so widely that it is too late? I suggest that the uncritical acceptance of the theory of 'non-interference' covers up the Cuban problem, keeps us from facing it clearly."

In his address to the American Society of Newspaper Editors here this past week President Kennedy seemed to have concluded that non-inter-

vention is no longer workable because it leaves the Communists free to fix their hold on Cuba while we remain immobilized. He said:

"Should it ever appear that the inter-American doctrine of non-interference merely conceals or excuses a policy of non-action—if the nations of this hemisphere should fail to meet their commitments against outside Communist penetration—then I want it clearly understood that this government will not hesitate in meeting its primary obligations, which are to the security of the United States."

I AM sure that Mr. Kennedy means exactly what he says—that the U.S. will not indefinitely tolerate a Cuban Soviet Socialist state anchored in the Communist bloc of Russia and Red China and that we will act alone if necessary.

Obviously the timing must be the President's. He will surely try to make the American republics realize that they cannot counter Soviet intervention by pretending that it isn't happening. It is the invading Cuban freedom-fighters have been set back by Soviet arms in Castro's hands, but most of them have gone to the hills, as the President said, to carry on the struggle of "Cuban patriots against Cuban tyranny."

The struggle must not be ended until the tyranny is overthrown. (c) 1961 New York Herald Tribune, Inc.

SNAKE CAUSES CRASH

Detroit—(UPI)—Donald E. Jamefield, 17, had a novel excuse Monday when police questioned him on the cause of an accident involving a parked car. Jamefield said that as he was driving to

school with a pet garter snake for biology study the reptile crawled out of a bottle. Jamefield reached for the snake to put it back, but it bit him. As a result he took his eyes off the road and hit a parked car.

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Try and Stop Me

By BENNETT CERF

A BRITISHER, married to a dashing cavalier years younger than herself, was summoned to America and forced to leave her roving-eyed husband alone for the first time since their marriage. Just before she left, she introduced the new butler to her husband.



"This is Rumbold," she said. "Not only will he look after you while I'm away but he'll do the cooking as well."

Some nights later the cavalier invited an old university chum to dinner. The food was ghastly. "What's gone wrong around here, old chap?" inquired the chum testily.

"You never used to be satisfied with food like this." "I know, I know," sighed the husband. "But what kind of cooking can you expect from Scotland Yard?"

Phyllis Fraser defines a woman driver as "a wife who drives like her husband—and gets blamed for it."

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