



October 2002

Recent Releases at the Public Record Office

PRO reference	Date	Description
ADM 105/104	1957-69	Records of the Admiralty, Naval Forces, Royal Marines, Coastguard, and related bodies Homosexuality in the Royal Navy: connection with security and blackmail
ADM 116/6386	1949-58	Collision of HM Ships while under construction: settlement of claims in respect of HMS ALBION and SS MAYSTOKE (19 men killed) at HMS LLANDAFF, with court's decision on liability
ADM 116/6412	1964	Maltese independence: effect on title to dockyard of proposed Agreement on Mutual Defence and Assistance, Cmnd 2410 1963
ADM 116/6414 ADM 116/6415 ADM 116/6416	1950-1	Explosion of Naval Armament Vessel BEDENHAM at Gibraltar, 27 April 1951. Torpex filled depth charges ignite other ammunition producing mass explosion
ADM 116/6433 ADM 116/6434	1955-59	Security arrangements for atomic information
AIR 2/15113	1943-72	Records created or inherited by the Air Ministry, the Royal Air Force, and related bodies General Sikorski, Prime Minister of Polish Government in Exile: court of inquiry into death in Liberator aircraft accident, Gibraltar, 4 July 1943; related papers
DEFE 49/19	1968-69	Records of the Ministry of Defence Family planning for the Women's Royal Naval Service
DEFE 49/37	1970-71	Records from the Ministry of Defence- members of the Northern Ireland community receive awards for

			gallantry during unrest in the province
FCO 68/275	1970		Records of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office and predecessors Countries declare intent to leave the Commonwealth: course of action open to the UK Government and implications
FCO 15/1703	1975-76		Internal political affairs in East Timor; including death of journalists at Balibo
FCO 15/1704			
FCO 15/1705			
FCO 15/1706			NB THESE FILES ARE EMBARGOED UNTIL 00:05 GMT 1 NOV 2002
FCO 15/1707			
FCO 15/1708			
FCO 15/1709			
FCO 15/1710			
FCO 15/1711			
FCO 15/1712			
FCO 15/1713			
FCO 15/1714			
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FCO 15/1716			
FCO 15/1717			
FCO 371/84999	1950		Political situation in Germany: activities of political parties in Western Germany; communism in Western Germany 1950 <i>This file - which was previously released - now includes a previously retained extract, which is a Security Service paper on the foreign policy of Sir Oswald Mosley</i>
FO 810/29	1975-76		Relations between Indonesia and Portugal concerning East Timor; including death of journalists at Balibo NB THESE FILES ARE EMBARGOED UNTIL 00:05 GMT 1 NOV 2002
FO 810/30	1975-76		Indonesian policy concerning East Timor; including death of journalists at Balibo NB THESE FILES ARE EMBARGOED UNTIL 00:05 GMT 1 NOV 2002
HW 5/762	1942-45		Records created and inherited by Government Communications Headquarters (GCHQ) ULTRA reactions: extracts from reports containing German perceptions of Allied plans for future operations, selected for reading by officers in the Mediterranean theatre

HW 18/444	1940-41	Reports of enemy raider attacks against allied merchant shipping
HW 25/22	1940-45	A paper on the use of Hollerith equipment in Bletchley Park by Ronald WHELAN MBE, written some 50 years after the end of the war
MAF 156/1	1942-45	Records created and inherited by the Agriculture, Fisheries and Food Departments War Cabinet: miscellaneous ministerial letters
MAF 209/3034	1964-69	Extension of UK fishery limits: discussions with Russia
MAF 209/3043 MAF 209/3044	1970-71	Icelandic fishery limits dispute, 1971
MAF 250/196	1956-57	Fuel supplies for farming and allied industries in event of closure of Suez Canal
MAF 250/201	1957	Operation "Sunshine": Assessment of the hazards to infants and sheep in wet hill areas of the UK arising from nuclear weapon testing. Sampling of milk samples for Strontium 90
MAF 328/24	1969	Claim for compensation for attack by squirrel in Kew Gardens, Surrey
MAF 250/238	1955	Home Defence Committee: papers and minutes of Strath report
MAF 250/239	1961-64	Official Committee on Civil Defence
MAF 287/535	1968	Foot and Mouth epidemic 1967/1968: skim milk as a source of spread for the infection
MAF 287/540	1968-70	Foot and Mouth Disease: arrangements for London Zoo
MAF 357/30	1968-71	Home Defence Review 1968: disbandment of Food Flying Squads
MT 97/1257	1973	Records created or inherited by the Transport Departments and of related bodies Emergency planning arrangements: industrial disputes; excursion and tour policy during the oil emergency
PREM 11/ 3688	1960-62	Records of the Prime Minister's Office Situation in Cuba; part 1
PREM 13/ 3564	1965-69	Proposals to televise parliamentary proceedings: House of Commons and House of Lords
PREM 15/539	1971	UK policy and military presence in Persian Gulf

		Discussions on Union of Arab Emirates; part 2
T 217/846	1948-54	Records created and inherited by H M Treasury Ministry of Labour and National Service: essential work orders in case of war; application to government industrial establishments
T 334/233	1966	Tate Gallery extension

PREM 11/3688
Situation in Cuba: part 1
1960-1962

This newly released Prime Minister's Office file gives a fascinating insight into the international situation regarding Cuba from 1960 to 1962.

The papers highlight the tensions of the period and records discussions between the British Prime Minister, Harold Macmillan, and the United States President, Dwight D Eisenhower and his successor John F Kennedy, over the issue of how to deal with Castro's Cuba. They also describe United States action and reaction to events in Cuba, particularly the failed Bay of Pigs invasion in April 1961.

Tension between the United States and Cuba developed in the early months of Castro's administration, when increasingly the United States' economic, ideological and political interests came under threat from the actions of Castro's government.

The British government was concerned about Castro and how his actions would affect British economic interests in Cuba and how the regime in Cuba could influence the West Indies.

The concern of Latin American countries over the actions of the Castro regime and the tensions between Cuba and the United States are also discussed within the document.

The papers on the file include:

- Comments on President Kennedy's reaction to the Bay of Pigs.
- Macmillan's correspondence with Eisenhower, giving British views on the United States' proposed plans to oust Castro from power
- Krushchev's comments to Kennedy on the Bay of Pigs.
- Comments on President Kennedy's reaction to the Bay of Pigs (see below).

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Mr. Arthur Schlesinger, one of President Kennedy's White House Assistants, came to see me yesterday. He was in London on a rather curious assignment. He had come at the President's request to make contact with leaders of the Labour Party in order to explain to them the considerations which had led up to the Cuban invasion and to try and reassure them that the United States administration was not composed of blood-thirsty imperialists. Mr. Schlesinger had already been to Paris for the same reason and had seen men like M. Mendes France. In London he had spoken to Mr. Gaitskell and Mr. Crossman and was seeing Mr. Healey later in the day. I asked him how he had got on and he said surprisingly well, at any rate in private they had not indicated any great criticism of what the United States Government had tried to do.

Mr. Schlesinger then said that he had been told to come and see me and tell me frankly just what had happened as the President wanted to be sure that we did not receive some biased accounts from particular departments and agencies in Washington. Although there was nothing particularly new in what he had to tell me, I feel I should set it out at some length in view of the source from which the information came.

The Back History.

Under the Eisenhower administration a number of rebels from Cuba had been recruited by the Central Intelligence Agency and had been sent to a base in Guatemala for thorough training. A plan had been worked out under which this army of Cuban exiles would land in Cuba with naval and air support provided by the United States. It was also contemplated that if the invasion met with some success and popular support but was unable to complete the operation unaided, United States forces could be used to reinforce them. This preparation was going forward during the period of the presidential campaign last Autumn. President Eisenhower never gave his final approval to the plan, although he was apparently urged to do so by Mr. Nixon. When President Kennedy took over the administration all these plans were put before him. He had little enthusiasm for them and quickly decided that United States forces should not take part in the operations. A further handicap to the implementation of the plan was the absence of political leadership and unity among the various groups of Cuban exiles. However this particular problem was solved and the leaders were informed of the extent to which they could expect United States help. It was made absolutely clear to them that the President had ruled that, however well or badly the operation went, American forces would definitely not be employed. After consideration the Cuban rebel leaders told the Americans that even on these terms they were determined to go ahead with the operation. A number of meetings were therefore held within the United States administration. These were attended by Mr. Schlesinger. He said that at these meetings the Department of Defence and

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the C.I.A. were firmly in favour of carrying out the operation with little delay. He says that the C.I.A. spokesman consistently presented very optimistic assessments about the amount of popular support there would be in Cuba for any attempt to overthrow Castro. He himself had thought that these reports painted much too rosy a picture, but he had no first-hand knowledge himself with which to contest them. The State Department had expressed all kinds of doubts but in the end Mr. Rusk had himself decided that the operation should take place. Reports to the contrary leaked by certain people in the State Department were quite untrue and had naturally infuriated the President. Throughout this time Mr. Schlesinger had the impression that the President was very unhappy about the whole plan and he thinks that if any of the President's principal advisers had come out in opposition to the operation Mr. Kennedy would have gladly called it off.

The Timing of the Invasion

Mr. Schlesinger said that those responsible had had four main considerations in mind:

- (1) The military forces of the Cuban exiles had been training for a considerable period and were ready to go, indeed many of them insisted that they should be used for an invasion of Cuba or they would leave the training base in Guatemala and try and find civilian jobs. It was felt that if the operation was delayed much longer the morale of these men would inevitably suffer.
- (2) The Guatemalan authorities were having increasing difficulty in maintaining secrecy about what was going on and opposition to the part they were playing was growing. It seemed likely that they would not allow the Cuban rebel forces to stay in their base much longer.
- (3) The reports which were presented by the C.I.A. encouraged those responsible to believe that there was a real chance of a popular rising against Castro.
- (4) There was a general feeling in the administration with which Mr. Schlesinger did not agree, that time was on Castro's side. As the weeks went by he was consolidating his hold over the country and in the near future he was expecting to receive large shipments of modern arms from the Soviet bloc. He was also expecting the early return of jet pilots trained in Czechoslovakia.

The Invasion

Apparently no more than 12,000 armed Cubans took part. There was no direct American help from United States territory. The invading forces were to seize a beachhead and once having

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established themselves on shore they were set two alternative objectives:

- (i) If their successful landing had touched off a general up-rising against Castro they were to advance on Havana and also attempt to cut the Island in two.
- (ii) If this major objective could not be achieved they were to link up with the guerilla forces operating in the hills to the right of the beachhead.

In practice the military plans do not seem to have been well designed. Three major errors were made:

- (i) The landing beach was ill-chosen. It was entirely surrounded by an area of swamp and there was only one exit from the beach down a hard road. The rebels were therefore only able to advance on a very narrow front and even this advance was soon stopped by tanks and guns brought up by Castro's forces to cover this single road.
- (ii) The beach was too far (apparently some 50 miles) from the mountainous country on their right where the guerilla forces were operating. This meant that the guerilla forces were unable to bring them any assistance during the battle and having clearly failed to gain their major objective it prevented the survivors of the invading force from escaping to the hills in order to link up with the guerillas.
- (iii) The landing took place in an area which more than most was likely to be inhabited by pro-Castro peasants. Castro apparently had a weekend home in the area and has made himself popular with the peasants by going out and cutting sugar cane with them etc.

In the event the invasion was a total failure. About 1,000 of the invading force were captured and there were probably about 200 casualties. Mr. Schlesinger said that some of the men may have escaped through the swamp into the mountains, but he did not think that this was very likely. When it became certain that the invading force would be defeated some United States ships had attempted to re-embark survivors but without success.

Effect on Latin America

Mr. Schlesinger said that the reaction to this failure had been better in Latin America than might have been feared. He thought the reason for this was that for some months now

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Castro's unpopularity had steadily increased even among the more left inclined governments in Latin America. There was some student rioting but nowhere had this been on a formidable scale. He even went so far as to say that the shock administered to them may goad them into taking a rather more active part in opposition to Castro's policies. Up till now they have all been content to leave it all to the United States and were not prepared to raise a finger themselves. I said I thought he was being rather optimistic on this point. Mr. Schlesinger went on to say that having done a recent tour in Latin America he was convinced that there would be a whole series of revolutions there in the comparatively near future. The only question was whether the moderate but leftish inclined democrats would gain power or whether it would be the extremists like Castro. Castro was as much of a menace, if not more of one, to the former category as he was to the remaining right-wing juntas. The United States policy must now be designed to contain Castroism and ensure that the moderate democratic forces which were demanding changes in Latin America came out on top. In answer to questions from me he indicated that he knew of no plans to try a repeat invasion of Cuba, although, no doubt, assistance to the resistance within Cuba would continue.

Effects in the United States.

The President evidently took the debacle with extraordinary calm. He immediately decided to take full responsibility and he hoped that this might prevent bickering in Washington. However, already a number of people were making attempts to escape from their share of the blame for the failure. The President has certainly lost confidence in the C.I.A. and although he had no wish to sack people hurriedly and make them appear scapegoats, Mr. Alan Dulles would have to leave his job earlier than planned; Mr. Schlesinger thought about July. He would be replaced by someone in whom the President had absolute trust and confidence.

The American public was in a mood of extreme frustration and the President had felt it necessary to make some rousing speeches, but Mr. Schlesinger thought that this experience would lead him to act in future with considerable caution.

This rather long account is pieced together from an hour's conversation in which I asked many questions and expressed some views. In particular I said that I was amazed to hear him say that all the intelligence reports presented at the meetings which he attended seemed optimistic about the chances of a widespread popular rebellion against Castro. Our own information and assessments, although I agreed it was based on far more limited intelligence than that of the United States, would have led us to quite a different conclusion. There was no doubt that there had been increasing disillusionment with Castro among the middle and professional classes, but that the peasants and workers would turn against him in large numbers at the present

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t. s had not seemed to us to be at all likely. Mr. Schlesinger said that this had been his own opinion but it was not supported by the intelligence submitted to the President and others by the C.I.A. He went on to say that he had found criticism both in London and Washington on the grounds that if the United States was prepared to commit itself so far it should have made a proper job of it and landed the marines with whatever support was necessary, thus ensuring a total military victory. In other words an alternative plan would have been a quick surgical operation. I replied that I could see that there were attractions in an argument of this kind but I thought it grossly over-simplified the problem. If, as now seemed certain, the presence of American troops had made a popular uprising even less likely, then the Americans would have found themselves embarked on a military operation with virtually the entire population of Cuba hostile to them. After their military victory they would have had to impose some puppet government on the country and they would then have the even more difficult problem of how to withdraw themselves without the immediate collapse of this puppet regime. Noone here would want to minimise the danger which Castro's activities pose to countries in the Western hemisphere, but tackled intelligently it did not seem impossible to achieve Castro's almost total isolation. As for the argument that time was on Castro's side, our information seems to suggest that his unpopularity has been steadily increasing over the past few months, nor was I very impressed by the consideration that modern Soviet bloc weapons would soon be arriving in the Island. Recent experience tended to show that the quality of the weapons was of little importance compared with the will to make use of them. The Egyptians had in most cases been better equipped than the Israelis, but had been totally defeated in a matter of days. I was afraid we were seeing a rather similar situation in Laos.

This led on to a rather general discussion about the activities of the C.I.A. and the disadvantages of having an organisation which had committed itself in favour of an operation also providing the intelligence upon which a decision as to whether or not the operation should go forward would be based. I said that one of the things that had worried us recently was the extraordinary difference in our intelligence assessments about the situation in Laos. Nor was it simply a question of a difference between British and American assessments, as there seemed to be an almost equal difference between the views of the United States Ambassadors in Vientiane and in Bangkok. The latter's appreciation of the situation seemed always to be much more sensational and pessimistic and I wondered which view prevailed in the State Department. I had had many talks on Laos with Mr. Schlesinger last autumn and winter and he was well aware of our views on how the present situation had come about through unfortunate policies pursued over the last two years. Mr. Schlesinger said that the President was critical of the advice he had been getting on matters such as this and I got the strong impression that he felt Mr. Kennedy would not sadly be persuaded to resort to precipitate action with regard to intervention in Laos.

DAVID ORMSBY GORE

(May 3, 1961)

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