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*Le secret*

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# **STOP LYING: WHY THE UNITED NATIONS MUST FAIL IF MEMBER STATES MISLEAD THE SECURITY COUNCIL. A CASE STUDY OF THE BAY OF PIGS INVASION AND THE CUBAN MISSILE CRISIS**

By

*Daniele Ganser\**

## *Résumé*

Cet article présente un certain nombre de situations dans lesquelles les membres des Nations Unies ont menti au Conseil de sécurité et à l'Assemblée générale. L'article affirme que les mensonges ne sont pas inoffensifs. Bien au contraire. Ils peuvent causer de graves dommages au fonctionnement des Nations Unies et détruire la confiance et la coexistence pacifique des Etats. L'article, fondé sur une analyse des archives officielles des Nations Unies, présente des éléments datant du conflit opposant les Etats-Unis à Cuba de 1959 à 1962 dans le contexte du débarquement de la Baie des Cochons et de la crise des missiles. L'article conclut, en se référant à certains mensonges qui ont précédé l'invasion de l'Irak en 2003, que le problème persiste encore aujourd'hui.

## *Summary*

This paper presents specific cases when UN members were lying in the Security Council and in the General Assembly. The paper argues that lies are not harmless. Much to the contrary. Lies can cause very serious damage to the functioning of the UN and destroy trust and peaceful coexistence among nations. The paper, based on an analysis of official UN records, presents data from the conflict between the US and Cuba between 1959 and 1962 in the context of the Bay of Pigs invasion and the missile crisis. The paper concludes, with reference to the lies which preceded the invasion of Iraq in 2003, that the problem persists to this present day.

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In 2015 the United Nations (UN) will celebrate their 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary. If human beings reach the age of 70 at all, they usually use the occasion to look back on their life, aware that it will not last much longer, and reflect upon difficult times they have lived through, as well as moments of joy, success or wisdom.

Already today observers of international politics ask themselves whether the 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the UN will be a day of great joy, in which Members look back on the important achievements of the Organization. Or whether it will be a day of profound embarrassment, on which everybody must confess that despite the noble aims declared in the Charter<sup>1</sup> the UN and its Members have not been able to promote enduring peace on a global level.

192 nations, almost all nations on this planet, have signed the Charter and are Members of the United Nations. Legally bound by its articles, these nations attempt, in their own self-interest, to work towards a better world. The UN Charter ranges without any doubt among the great achievements of mankind. In its Article 2 it bans war and violence from international politics: "[a]ll Members shall settle their international disputes by peaceful means in such a manner that international peace and security, and justice, are not endangered." Furthermore the UN Charter in the same Article makes it clear that UN Members shall not bomb, invade or otherwise attack each other: "[a]ll Members shall refrain in their international relations from the threat or use of force against the territorial integrity or political independence of any state, or in any other manner inconsistent with the purposes of the United Nations."

Today we know that UN Members have not always been able to live up to the noble principles declared in the UN Charter. Many have used violence and brutality to reach their aims, while lying about their actions in front of the UN Security Council as well as in the UN General Assembly. Every lie, if not immediately recognized as such, was covered by a secret, as other UN Members had no access to the truth. My data suggests that the combination of lies and secrets has greatly damaged the UN for the last sixty years.

When teaching international history classes at the Basel University and the Zurich University in Switzerland I was on several occasions asked by my students the simple question: Why doesn't the UN work and why do we still have so many wars? In my answer I always stress that the UN has many merits, but that it can only be as effective as its Members allow it to be. The UN, I usually argue, is very much like a mirror that reflects the behavior and consciousness of its Members at a given time.<sup>2</sup>

All public statements made in the Security Council and the General Assembly can be found in the UN records. They are public, and not secret. If one studies these records carefully one can see very clearly that lies destroy the United Nations from within. An interesting case study – among many others – which can illustrate this point is the secret war between the United States of America (US) and Cuba that took place in the context of the Bay of Pigs invasion of 1961. Though I do not claim to present this conflict in an exhaustive manner, I shall focus in this paper

<sup>1</sup> UN Charter, San Francisco, June 26, 1945, 59 Stat. 1031.

<sup>2</sup> Compare: Ganser (D.), *Reckless Gamble. The Sabotage of the United Nations in the Cuban Conflict and the Missile Crisis 1962*, New Orleans, University Press of the South, 2000.

on the role that the UN played before, during and after the Bay of Pigs invasion and the numerous lies that were told in the General Assembly and the Security Council. I shall argue that the lies and secrets which dominated the Bay of Pigs invasion damaged international relations greatly and led directly to the Missile Crisis one year later.

## I - FIDEL CASTRO COMES TO POWER

On January 1, 1959, following a violent revolution, Fidel Castro came to power in Cuba. Former Cuban President Batista had fled in the dead of night to the Dominican Republic. As Castro was moving triumphantly through cheering crowds from Santiago to Havana, a friendly relationship between Cuba and its powerful neighbor, the United States, seemed possible as the United States was the second State in the world to recognize the new Cuban government as early as January 7, 1959.

In April 1959, invited by the American Society of Newspaper Editors, Castro visited Washington D.C. and New York City, and hoped for good relationships with his most important neighbor. Wherever the Cuban leader went, crowds followed him. To his group, he said repeatedly: "[w]e have never met Americans like these. We only knew the colonialists."<sup>3</sup> Castro was genuinely impressed by the friendliness of the US public. It seemed a promising start for a relationship based on trust and honesty between the two countries.

And yet behind closed doors the US government had its doubts about the new Cuban leader. President Dwight Eisenhower, who had unsuccessfully suggested that Castro be denied a visa, deliberately snubbed the new Cuban President by leaving Washington D.C. for a week to play golf in Carolina.<sup>4</sup> Castro, instead, met with Vice-President Richard Nixon who profoundly distrusted the revolution in Cuba. Nixon, in a memorandum to Eisenhower, judged that Castro "*is either incredibly naive about communism or under communist discipline – my guess is the former.*"<sup>5</sup> Eisenhower came to follow Nixon's judgment.

Eisenhower made up his mind about the Cuban revolution in March 10, 1959, when the US National Security Council (NSC) headed by the President secretly discussed ways of bringing "*another government to power in Cuba*".<sup>6</sup> One week later Eisenhower authorized the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) to secretly organize, pay, train and equip Cuban exiles to sabotage Castro's revolution.<sup>7</sup> What on the surface looked like a promising start in the US/Cuban relations was, in fact, heading for confrontation only two months after Batista's fall.

The CIA recruited Cuban *émigrés* who detested the new Castro regime and had fled from Cuba after the revolution to Florida. Bombing and sabotage attacks on Cuba by US planes, sometimes flown by Cuban *émigrés*, began as early as October

<sup>3</sup> Quoted in SIMONS (G.), *Cuba. From Conquistador to Castro*, London, Macmillan, 1996, p.287.

<sup>4</sup> PATERSON (T.), *Contesting Castro. The United States and the Triumph of the Cuban Revolution*, New York, Oxford University Press, 1994, p.256.

<sup>5</sup> Quoted in SIMONS (G.), *op. cit.*, p.288.

<sup>6</sup> Quoted in SZULC (T.), *Fidel: A Critical Portrait*, New York, William Morrow, 1986, p.480.

<sup>7</sup> SCHLESINGER (A.J.), *A Thousand Days. John F. Kennedy in the White House*, Greenwich, Fawcett Publications, 1965, p.209.

1959.<sup>8</sup> Cane fields and sugar mills were bombed in order to sabotage the Cuban economy. Occasionally, a plane crashed. On February 18, 1960, for instance, Robert Kelly of the US Civil Air Patrol crashed east of Havana after attempting to firebomb sugar-cane fields. The State Department, while insisting that it was against the wishes of the government, admitted that the plane had taken off from Florida.<sup>9</sup> On March 21, the Cuban defense downed another plane east of Havana. Its pilot, wounded in the leg, was Howard Luis Rundquist from Miami.<sup>10</sup> These and other secret operations were contrary to the Charter of the United Nations, which stressed that "*all Members shall refrain in their international relations from the threat or use of force against the territorial integrity or political independence of any state.*"

As the year 1959 ended, Fidel Castro was still in power and President Eisenhower realized that small sabotage operations could not destabilize the new Cuban government. The CIA therefore suggested that exile Cubans be trained in secret warfare and then sent as an invasion force into Cuba. The White House agreed, but insisted that such a clandestine operation had to remain top secret. The training therefore took place in Guatemala. Unmarked American planes picked up the *émigrés* in Miami and flew them to a secret airbase in the Guatemalan mountains. The *émigrés*, who began arriving in midsummer 1960, had to build their own camp in volcanic mud five thousand feet above the sea. The money, the arms and the training came from the United States. In August 1960, President Eisenhower approved a budget of \$13 million for the secret war against Cuba.<sup>11</sup>

The distrust between the two nations increased. Castro grew convinced that the US wanted to overthrow his new government. He arrested dissidents and attempted to protect his revolution with arms. In mid-1959, José Ramon Fernandez, a member of Castro's administration, began searching for arms in Italy, Switzerland, West Germany and Israel. He was able to buy some arms from Italy, but thereafter pressure from Washington stopped the Europeans from selling any weapon to Cuba. In March 1960, the US Commerce Department refused to license US firms to export helicopters to Cuba.<sup>12</sup> As NATO countries refused to sell Cuba any arms, Castro turned to the Warsaw Pact. According to Fernandez, weapons from the Soviet Union and its allies began to arrive in Cuba in late 1960. Castro tried western sources first; pressure from Washington on European producers led to the deal with the Soviet Union.<sup>13</sup>

## II - KENNEDY WINS THE US ELECTIONS

One cannot help but wonder who was responsible for the hostility between the United States and Cuba. An American observer in October 1960 judged that the

<sup>8</sup> *NY Times*, October 23, 1959, p.1. Quoted by BLUM (W.), *Killing Hope. U.S. Military and CIA Interventions Since World War II*, Monroe, Common Courage Press, 1995, p.186.

<sup>9</sup> SOBEL (L.) ed., *Facts on File: Cuba, the U.S. & Russia 1960-1963. A Journalistic Narrative of Events in Cuba and of Cuban Relations with the U.S. and the Soviet Union*, New York, Facts on File Inc., 1964, p.7.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>11</sup> SCHLESINGER (A.J.), *op. cit.*, p.215.

<sup>12</sup> *Facts on File, op. cit.*, p.6.

<sup>13</sup> See SZULC (T.), *op. cit.*, pp.497-498.

US was mainly to blame: "[w]e refused to help Cuba meet its desperate need for economic progress [...]. We used the influence of our government to advance the interests and increase the profits of the private American companies which dominated the island's economy [...]. Administration spokesmen publicly hailed Batista, hailing him as a staunch ally and a good friend at a time when Batista was murdering thousands, destroying the last vestiges of freedom and stealing hundreds of millions of dollars from the Cuban people [...]. Thus it was our own policies, not those of Castro, that first began to turn our former neighbor against us." This observer was none other than John F. Kennedy, who was then campaigning against Nixon for the coming presidential elections.<sup>14</sup>

However, Kennedy was no friend of the new Castro government either. Cuba was a central issue of the presidential election, and the Democrat Kennedy feared to be accused by the Republican Nixon to be "weak on Cuba." Kennedy therefore stressed that his plan was to strengthen the Cuban "*fighters for freedom*"<sup>15</sup> and, trying to outdo the Republicans in their anti-Cuba propaganda, urged that the United States "*strengthen the non-Batista democratic anti-Castro forces in exile and in Cuba itself, who offer eventual hope of overthrowing Castro.*"<sup>16</sup> Kennedy argued that the Eisenhower administration had not done enough to overthrow Castro.

Kennedy was not aware that while he was speaking the CIA was recruiting *émigrés* and preparing them for an attack on Cuba in the Guatemalan mountains. Nixon who, as the Vice-President, knew of the secret preparations, could not talk about them in public and was beside himself with fury. Nixon, in *My Six Crises*, later wrote that the "*covert training of Cuban exiles*" by the CIA was due "*in substantial part at least to my efforts.*"<sup>17</sup> And yet during the presidential election Nixon decided to lie in public. He did not disclose the secret war he had initiated but instead publicly warned Kennedy that such secret wars would be illegal and contrary to the UN Charter.

During the fourth and final television debate with Kennedy, Vice-President Nixon staged a masterpiece in hypocrisy. He argued correctly in front of the national TV audience that a secret war against Cuba would be illegal, while lying about the fact that he was himself preparing for exactly such a war. Nixon said: "*I think that Senator Kennedy's policies and recommendations for the handling of the Castro regime are probably the most dangerously irresponsible recommendations that he's made during the course of this campaign. In effect, what Senator Kennedy recommends is that the United States Government should give help to the exiles and to those within Cuba who opposed the Castro regime, provided that they are anti-Batista.*" Nixon went on to stress that the US foreign policy was bound by international law, and that "*we've agreed not to intervene in the international affairs*

<sup>14</sup> *NY Times*, October 7, 1960. Quoted in SIMONS (G.), *op. cit.*, p.279. The passage stems from a campaign speech that Kennedy gave in Cincinnati in early October. Arthur M. Schlesinger, JFK's biographer, claims that the passage faithfully reflects Kennedy's views. See SCHLESINGER (A.J.), *op. cit.*, pp.211-212.

<sup>15</sup> SCHLESINGER (A.J.), *op. cit.*, p.212.

<sup>16</sup> Quoted in WALTON (R.), *Cold War and Counterrevolution. The Foreign Policy of John F. Kennedy*, New York, The Viking Press, 1972, p.38.

<sup>17</sup> Quoted in HINCKLE (W.) and TURNER (W.), *The Fish is Red. The Story of the Secret War Against Castro*, New York, Harper & Row, 1981, p.40.

of any other American country, and they as well agreed to do likewise."<sup>18</sup> Nixon therefore correctly concluded that a secret invasion of Cuba would be illegal.

Interestingly, Nixon also explicitly mentioned the UN Charter, which he secretly violated behind the scenes. "*The Charter of the United Nations, its preamble, Article I and Article II also provide that there shall be no intervention by one nation in the internal affairs of another*", Nixon declared on TV. "*Now I don't know what Senator Kennedy suggests when he says that we should help those who oppose the Castro regime both in Cuba and without. But I do know this, that if we were to follow that recommendation that we would lose all of our friends in Latin America, we would probably be condemned in the United Nations, and we would not accomplish our objective. I know something else. It would be an open invitation for Mr. Khrushchev to come in, to come into Latin America and to engage us in what would be a civil war and possibly even worse than that.*"<sup>19</sup>

Nixon was correct in pointing out that US aggression against Cuba had greatly irritated the Soviet Union and later contributed to the dreadful decision of Moscow to secretly transport nuclear missiles over the Atlantic to Cuba. However, when Nixon stated that the United States "*would probably be condemned in the United Nations*", he was wrong. The US was never condemned within the UN for its secret war against Cuba because it lied both to the Security Council and the General Assembly.

### III - CUBA TELLS THE SECURITY COUNCIL IN JANUARY 1961 THAT IT FEARS AN INVASION

Nixon lost the presidential election, and Kennedy won. On November 17, 1960, when Kennedy's victory was confirmed, Allen Dulles and Richard Bissell of the CIA informed for the first time the new President about the secret US-supported Cuban army in Guatemala. In another meeting a few days later, Kennedy, far from being outraged by the hypocrisy, "*listened with attention, then told Dulles to carry the work forward.*"<sup>20</sup> When on January 20, 1961 Kennedy entered the White House as the new President of the United States he was fully informed of the ongoing secret war with Cuba. He decided not to stop that war, but to pursue it secretly.

The Cuban exiles in Miami did not share the CIA's urge for secrecy. They gossiped excitedly about the planned invasion. Fidel Castro was therefore well aware that an attack was being prepared. Ramiro Valdés of the Cuban intelligence recalls: "*[w]e were very seriously infiltrated in the counterrevolutionary bands.*" Castro's secret service was able to track invasion preparations step by step from Miami to the training camp in Guatemala. "*It was an open secret.*"<sup>21</sup>

Cuba turned to the Security Council for help, claiming in late December 1960 that "*the Government of the United States [...] is about to perpetrate, within a few hours, direct military aggression against the Government and people of*

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<sup>18</sup> Quoted in WALTON (R.), *op. cit.*, p.38

<sup>19</sup> *Ibidem.*

<sup>20</sup> SCHLESINGER (A.J.), *op. cit.*, p.219.

<sup>21</sup> Quoted in SZULC (T.), *op. cit.*, p.543.

*Cuba.*<sup>22</sup> The Security Council promptly reacted and met during two days on January 4 and 5, 1961 to address the problem. Raul Roa, Foreign Minister of Cuba, claimed that the US was secretly training an invasion force and presented the names and photographs of the men whom the CIA supported in Guatemala. Roa also gave the names of the training camps in Florida, Guatemala, and Nicaragua. He said that a Guatemalan lieutenant, Eduard Chacon, had confirmed that the US was training Cuban *émigrés* in Guatemala; Professor Ronald Hilford of the Stanford University also acknowledged this. Roa explained that the men in the camps were paid \$25 a week and were given \$275 for their families by the CIA and presented a photocopy of a paycheck. He said that Eisenhower, on December 2, had granted a budget of one million dollars for these Cuban refugees. Roa said that Allen Dulles of the CIA had made the invasion plans and that, although it had been postponed several times, the invasion was imminent.<sup>23</sup>

The charges of Cuba were very serious, specific and backed by evidence. Therefore Ecuador and Chile sponsored a draft resolution appealing to the US and Cuba to seek a solution to their differences by peaceful means. And yet this sensible suggestion was opposed by the US, Great Britain and France.<sup>24</sup> The US ambassador in the Security Council, Mr. Wadsworth, lied and wrongly claimed that Cuba's complaints were "*empty, groundless, false and fraudulent*".<sup>25</sup> Ambassador Wadsworth refused to go through the presented data point by point, but claimed that Cuba had merely invented the story of the secret invasion. "*To try to refute them all in detail*", Wadsworth lied, "*would be like making a point by point rebuttal of Alice in Wonderland*."<sup>26</sup>

The Soviet Union (USSR) believed Cuba and was very angry that the US blocked the Security Council by threatening to veto any resolution condemning the secret preparation of an invasion. Zorin, the ambassador of the Soviet Union, urged the UN not to drop Cuba as the risk of invasion was real. Zorin made it clear that Moscow would defend Cuba if necessary: "[i]f the Security Council does not come to Cuba's defense, if it does not take steps to preclude aggression by the United States against that country and if this aggression should nevertheless take place, Cuba will, of course, not stand alone."<sup>27</sup>

Despite the fact that an invasion was imminent and the Cuban revolution had led to a dangerous confrontation between the USSR and US superpowers in the Security Council, the UN failed to act. After two days of debate the Security Council decided to do nothing. Mr. Wadsworth, who noted that Cuba had tried to "*gain support in the United Nations*", expressed his hope that Cuba "*will realize at last that such tactics do not hurt the United States*."<sup>28</sup> The combination of secrecy and lies had greatly damaged the world peace organization. Had the US been honest

<sup>22</sup> R. ROA to the President of the Security Council, December 31, 1960, UN Security Council Official Records, Supplement Doc. S/4605.

<sup>23</sup> UN Security Council Official Records, 921st meeting, §§63-125.

<sup>24</sup> The draft resolution is contained in the UN Security Council Official Records, Supplement Doc. S/4612.

<sup>25</sup> UN Security Council Official Records, 922nd meeting, §40.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, §11.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, §91.

<sup>28</sup> UN Security Council Official Records, 921st meeting, §52.

about its involvement in the planned invasion, a UN resolution condemning the US secret war would probably have followed. Such a sequence of events, although uncomfortable for the US at first glance, could have stopped the invasion and the dangerous spiral of violence.

#### IV - THE BAY OF PIGS INVASION

Kennedy, who had inherited the secret plan to invade Cuba and overthrow Castro from the Eisenhower administration, kept the secret and like Nixon lied to the American people when asked about the sensitive operation. On April 11, 1961, only four days before the invasion began, Kennedy was asked in Washington at his weekly press conference about a potential intervention in Cuba. He replied that he would not undertake, "*under any condition, an intervention in Cuba by the United States armed forces.*" It was not a lie in the strict sense of the word, because the US armed forces were not themselves going to invade, but instead trained and equipped Cuban exiles. Yet it was certainly, as a commentator correctly noticed, "*a superb effort in misdirection.*"<sup>29</sup>

The lies that surrounded the Bay of Pigs invasion not only seriously damaged the United Nations, but also the trust that US voters had placed into the White House and its foreign policy. US Senator William Fulbright noted correctly that lies have damaged international continuously, above all also in the totalitarian Soviet Union. With reference to the planned Bay of Pigs invasion Fulbright correctly stressed: "[t]o give this activity even covert support is of a piece with the hypocrisy and cynicism for which the United States is constantly denouncing the Soviet Union in the United Nations and elsewhere". "*This point will not be lost on the rest of the world – nor on our own consciences.*"<sup>30</sup>

Allen Dulles and Richard Bissell of the CIA had no such scruples. They disrespected the principles of the UN Charter continuously and assured Kennedy that the secret operation would work even better than the overthrow of Guatemala's President Arbenz, which the CIA had organized in 1954. Furthermore Dulles explained that there was a "*disposal problem*" with the secret Guatemalan army: "[w]e can't have them wandering around the country telling everyone what they have been doing."<sup>31</sup> The CIA argued that there was no way back, and President Kennedy gave the go-ahead.

The attack on Cuba began on Saturday morning, April 15, 1961. B-26 bombers with CIA-paid pilots took off from Nicaragua and began to bomb Cuba's airfields and destroyed most of the Cuban air force. In order to conceal the American hand, the bombers were flying under false colors. They had the Cuban flag painted under their wings and "FAR," the abbreviation for the Cuban air force, on their tail. Castro, who had been expecting the invasion of the big neighbor for a

<sup>29</sup> Quoted in HINCKLE (W.) and TURNER (W.), *op. cit.*, p.82.

<sup>30</sup> Quoted in SCHLESINGER (A.J.), *op. cit.*, p.236.

<sup>31</sup> A. DULLES on March 11, 1960, quoted in SCHLESINGER (A.J.), *op. cit.*, p.227.

long time, was ready. When the bombs fell he reportedly said, calmly, "[t]his is aggression."<sup>32</sup>

At the same time the 1.400 Cuban *émigrés* were moved by truck from the Guatemalan mountains to the Nicaraguan shore. When they boarded the boats, Nicaraguan dictator Luis Somoza waved and allegedly said, "[b]ring me a couple of hairs from Castro's beard."<sup>33</sup> The CIA trained invasion force waded ashore in Cuba at the Bay of Pigs in the early morning hours of Monday, April 17, 1961, and immediately engaged into combat with Castro's army.

While the invasion was unfolding, representatives of the Kennedy administration continued to lie about the US involvement. On April 17, Secretary of State Dean Rusk told in a press conference in Washington D.C.: "[t]he American people are entitled to know whether we are intervening in Cuba or intend to do so in the future. The answer to that question is no. What happens in Cuba is for the Cuban people to decide."<sup>34</sup> That was a flat lie.

In an attempt to confuse the public and world opinion the CIA claimed that the bombing of Cuba was due to Cuban pilots who had defected from Castro's army. And yet this lie did not last too long. In the early morning of Saturday, April 15, a B-26 bearing Cuban insignia crash-landed at the Key West naval air station in Florida. Minutes later, the show was repeated by another B-26 at Miami International Airport. Pilots disappeared behind closed doors, but the press was allowed to photograph the planes. In Florida, some unusually critical reporters noticed that the B-26 had a Plexiglas nose. However, the Cuban B-26 had opaque noses. Those planes thus could not really be Cuban planes. The CIA cover story was beginning to fade away.

In the end the invasion was a complete disaster for the *émigrés* and a total victory for Castro. The CIA's B-26s had not been able to destroy all the planes of the small Castro air force. A Cuban sea fury sank the vessel carrying the invader's ammunition for the next ten days. Castro's army was much stronger and more efficient than the CIA had expected. The CIA's belief that the Cuban people were dissatisfied with their revolution and would support the invasion with an internal uprising was equally miscalculated. The invaders were doomed. The CIA-forged provisional Cuban government, held under house arrest in a clapboard house next to an airfield outside Miami, was never flown into Cuba.<sup>35</sup> On Wednesday afternoon, only 72 hours after they had first set foot on Cuba, the invading force surrendered.

Some of the B-26s bombers had been shot down over Cuba by the Cuban artillery; four pilots were killed, and Castro, who recovered one of the bodies, could

<sup>32</sup> HINCKLE (W.) and TURNER (W.), *op. cit.*, p.85.

<sup>33</sup> According to L. HAYNES JOHNSON of *The Washington Post*. Quoted in HINCKLE (W.) and TURNER (W.), *op. cit.*, p.84.

<sup>34</sup> SCHLESINGER (A.J.), *op. cit.*, p.257.

<sup>35</sup> Castro was well aware of the fact that after 72 hours of holding an area a government-in-arms could be declared. Had the invasion been successful, the CIA would have flown its provisional Cuban government from Miami to the Bay of Pigs. This government then could have asked other States, the US for instance, for military assistance. This was a purely Cuban affair, of course. Castro said, after the invasion, to newsmen: "[i]t became an urgent political need for us to oust them as quickly as possible so that they would not establish a government there" (quoted in HINCKLE (W.) and TURNER (W.), *op. cit.*, p.94).

demonstrate to the world that the United States of America had been actively involved in the invasion. On April 21, Kennedy held a press conference in which he said, "*I'm the responsible officer of the Government.*" In a White House statement the following Monday, he put it more directly: "*President Kennedy has stated from the beginning that as President he bears sole responsibility.*"<sup>36</sup> US Historian Richard Walton commented: "[i]t is true that Kennedy shouldered the blame, but why not? The blame was his."<sup>37</sup>

The Soviet Union was outraged. On Monday, April 17, while the invasion force was in full battle, Khrushchev sent Kennedy a diplomatic note. He denounced the invasion and promised "*all necessary assistance*" to Castro.<sup>38</sup> On April 19, Khrushchev warned Kennedy against arming Cuban *émigrés* for future attacks on Cuba. Such a policy of "*unreasonable actions,*" he wrote, "*is a slippery and dangerous road which can lead the world to a new global war.*"<sup>39</sup> I agree with historian Tad Szulc who concluded that "*the Cuban Missile crisis of October 1962 was a historically inevitable consequence of the Bay of Pigs events.*"<sup>40</sup>

## V - CUBA COMPLAINS TO THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY DURING THE INVASION IN APRIL 1961

If one studies the statements that UN Members made before the Bay of Pigs invasion, one sees clearly that all NATO countries backed the US and its claim that it was not planning to invade Cuba, which later turned out to be a lie. During the Security Council meetings of July 1960, Mr. Ortona, speaking for Italy, said: "[w]e do not believe that our friend and ally, the United States of America, is pursuing a policy of aggressive acts against Cuba."<sup>41</sup> Mr. Berard, representing France, said that "*one could not but be impressed by the formal assurances [of non-invasion] which [the representative of the USA] repeated here.*"<sup>42</sup> Countries that did not belong to NATO also backed the US. Sir Corea of Ceylon remarked at that same meeting: "[t]his is a clear statement made by a responsible official of the United States, and must be taken at face value."<sup>43</sup> Mr. Slim, speaking for Tunisia, pointed out that "*the United States representative's formal assurances, expressed with his usual sincerity, leave, in our view, no room for doubt as to his Government's peaceful intentions towards the Government of Cuba.*"<sup>44</sup>

Exactly the same pattern can be found in the records of the meeting of the Security Council in January 1961, where Cuba had once again presented its fear of a coming invasion. Mr. Padmore, representing Liberia, said that "*it is inconceivable*

<sup>36</sup> Both quotations in SCHLESINGER (A.J.), *op. cit.*, p.271.

<sup>37</sup> WALTON (R.), *op. cit.*, p.49.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, p.257.

<sup>39</sup> Soviet Public Statements with Respect to Cuban Security, September 10, 1962. Quoted in CHANG (L.) and KORNBLUH (P.), *The Cuban Missile Crisis, 1962. A National Security Archive Documents Reader*, New York, The New Press, 1992, p.349.

<sup>40</sup> SZULC (T.), *op. cit.*, p.562.

<sup>41</sup> UN Security Council Official Records, 875th meeting, §14.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, §20.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, §27.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*, §38.

that the great United States in these days of our Lord would attack the territory of the Cuban people," and that his delegation "heartily welcomes the categorical denial of the United States in connection with such an [invasion] plot."<sup>45</sup> Mr. Schweitzer, speaking for Chile, stated: "[w]e are very much relieved to hear the representative of the United States emphatically reject the Cuban charge and refute the arguments on which it was based."<sup>46</sup> Mr. Menemencioglu of the NATO Member Turkey pointed out: "we have noted the statement of the representative of the United States in which he has reiterated his Government's denial of any intention of aggressive action."<sup>47</sup> Mr. Tsiang of China said: "[w]e must note that the United States representative has categorically denied this charge."<sup>48</sup> All UN Members trusted the US and its promise not to invade Cuba.

Then came the Bay of Pigs invasion and the US was caught lying. Cuba's Foreign Minister Raul Roa therefore brought the issue before the United Nations once again. While bombs were falling on Cuba on Saturday, April 15, 1961, the UN Political Committee still had the Cuban invasion charge on its agenda. The UN reacted quickly and the General Assembly started on that same day to debate the Cuban issue. The discussion lasted for a week, and forty-two nations presented their view of the situation. And yet no consensus was reached, the invasion was not condemned, and once again the debate provided ample evidence of how a torrent of lies and distortions destroyed the UN from within.

At 3 p.m. on Saturday, April 15, 1961, Raul Roa perhaps still hoped that, despite the bombings, the invasion could be averted. He explained to the First Committee that B-26 bombers had just attacked Havana, San Antonio de los Baños and Santiago de Cuba, killing seven people. He said that the invasion coming from Guatemala was imminent. And yet Adlai Stevenson, the US ambassador to the UN, lied to the General Assembly and refuted Cuba's complaints with "*a few facts*", as he called them.<sup>49</sup> Stevenson claimed that the US was not involved at all. He repeated the CIA cover story and declared that defecting Cuban pilots had bombed Cuba prior to leaving for the United States. To back up his story Stevenson exhibited the photograph of one of the planes which had crashed in Florida, pointing to the clearly visible tail markings indicating that the plane belonged to Castro's Air Force. Most UN Members did not know at that moment that Stevenson was lying and that the faked insignias of the planes had been painted by the CIA. Zorin, the ambassador of the USSR, was not convinced by the speech of Stevenson and urged the United Nations to take immediate measures. "*It should not be forgotten [...] that Cuba has many friends in the world who are ready to come to its aid, including the Soviet Union.*"<sup>50</sup> As the superpowers disagreed, no consensus could be reached and all ambassadors left for a weekend break.

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<sup>45</sup> UN Security Council Official Records, 923rd meeting, §§4 and 8.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, §53.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, §69.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*, §75.

<sup>49</sup> UN General Assembly Official Records, 15th Session, First Committee, 1149th meeting, §6.

<sup>50</sup> 1149th meeting, §14.

On Monday morning discussions resumed. Roa stated that his country had, that day, been invaded by *"a mercenary force organized, financed and armed by the Government of the United States and coming from Guatemala and Florida."*<sup>51</sup> That information was correct. Roa stressed that *"the present case is a decisive test for the United Nations."*<sup>52</sup> And yet US ambassador Stevenson, loyal to his strategy, lied and said Cuba's claims were *"totally false. The United States has committed no aggression against Cuba."*<sup>53</sup>

Some UN Members, observing the secret war in the press, felt concerned and demanded that the UN, according to its Charter, condemn the aggression. Mr. Camara from Guinea said that his delegation, *"recalling its own experience as a victim of colonialism was ready to support any measure aimed at putting an end to the aggression launched from abroad."* He stressed that the United Nations *"could not remain indifferent."*<sup>54</sup> Mr. Brucan of Romania explained that *"should the United Nations fail again, with respect to the Cuban complaint, the Organization itself and each Member State would bear a heavy responsibility."*<sup>55</sup> Mr. Pavicevic of Yugoslavia thought that *"the invasion of Cuba was a flagrant violation of the letter and spirit of the United Nations Charter."*<sup>56</sup> Mr. Loutfi, speaking for the United Arab Republic, condemned the aggression and made the intelligent comment that arms and transport for the ongoing invasion *"must have required considerable funds."*<sup>57</sup> Mr. Ly expressed *"the indignation of the Government and people of Mali at the aggression which Cuba was suffering from counter-revolutionaries which had powerful assistance."*<sup>58</sup> Mr. Malile of Albania said that the *"United States struck at the very roots of the United Nations Charter."*<sup>59</sup>

Leading the critics was Soviet ambassador Zorin, who stressed that *"the sequence of events had been exactly the same as when the United States had organized an invasion of Guatemala"* in 1954. Zorin therefore urged for *"immediate measures"* to stop the invasion.<sup>60</sup> Mr. Pachachi from Iraq supported Cuba, *"whose problems and aspirations were strikingly similar"* to their own. He asked for *"effective measures,"* and formulated, in an unusually clear way, that it would be far more honest for those who stood behind the invasion *"to say frankly that they had decided to get rid of Castro."*<sup>61</sup>

Meanwhile Roa informed the Committee that the fighting was still going on in his country, providing further data on US involvement. A US aircraft had been downed. The pilot's name was Leo Francis Berliss; he carried his pilot's license,

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<sup>51</sup> 1150th meeting, §1.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*, §20.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*, §21.

<sup>54</sup> 1151st meeting, §14 and 1159th meeting, §30.

<sup>55</sup> 1151st meeting, §26.

<sup>56</sup> 1153rd meeting, §3.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*, §23.

<sup>58</sup> 1154th meeting, §3 and 1158th meeting, §24.

<sup>59</sup> 1154th meeting, §6.

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*, §§37 and 39.

<sup>61</sup> 1155th meeting, §§1-3.

health insurance, driver's license and invasion documents on him.<sup>62</sup> At the UN, more and more critical voices were heard. Mr. Jha from India clearly saw that the invasion "*must have received outside assistance*,"<sup>63</sup> and Nepal, through Mr. Shaha, reminded the Committee that "*what had happened in Cuba might happen in anyone of the smaller countries unless the United Nations could become an effective instrument for relieving situations of that kind.*" He made it clear that "*the active participation by any foreign country in a counter-revolution was not permissible.*"<sup>64</sup> U Thant who was speaking for Burma and later became UN Secretary General, stressed that there was "*ample evidence that some foreign Powers were involved in accelerating the conflict.*"<sup>65</sup> Mr. Noseh of Czechoslovakia concluded that there was now "*irrefutable evidence that the United States had instigated aggression against Cuba.*"<sup>66</sup>

The Latin American countries, however, had a completely different view of the situation. Ecuador, through Mr. Benites Vinuesa, claimed wrongly that the bloodshed in Cuba was a "*civil war.*"<sup>67</sup> Mr. Sosa Rodriguez of Venezuela, stressing that his country felt deep sympathy for the people of Cuba, also spoke of a "*civil war.*"<sup>68</sup> Mr. Schweitzer said that the "*Chilean delegation believed that the United States authorities were sincere in their denial of any participation by their country in the civil war in progress.*"<sup>69</sup> Mr. Amadeo said that Argentina had "*no reasons to doubt the sincerity*" of the United States.<sup>70</sup> Surely, the best effort to distort the truth was made by Guatemala through Mr. Alejos: "[t]he forces which had landed in Cuba had not been trained in Guatemala and had not come from Guatemalan territory", Alejos said. This was a flat lie. "*Guatemala had never allowed and would never allow its territory to be used for the organization of acts of aggression against its American sister republics*", Alejos claimed falsely.<sup>71</sup> Nicaragua, through Mr. Roman, also contributed to the lies being spread in the General Assembly and denied that the Nicaraguan Government "*had participated in any way in aggressive acts.*" Nicaragua had maintained "*complete neutrality.*" That was yet another lie, and if every lie had been as visible as mud, the UN by then would have been covered in dirt.<sup>72</sup>

If Member States of the UN lie, the world peace organization is doomed to fail. Despite the evidence presented by Cuba that it was being invaded, Italy's Mr. Ortona said that "*the course of events showed that the United States has scrupulously refrained from interfering*", adding: "[t]hat restraint was [...] remarkable."<sup>73</sup> Australia commented as well admiringly on the "*good neighbor*

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<sup>62</sup> 1156th meeting, §46 and *ibid.*, §14.

<sup>63</sup> 1156th meeting, §2.

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*, §§9-10.

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*, §34.

<sup>66</sup> 1159th meeting, §35.

<sup>67</sup> 1153rd meeting, §7.

<sup>68</sup> 1155th meeting, §15.

<sup>69</sup> 1156th meeting, §21.

<sup>70</sup> 1155th meeting, §21.

<sup>71</sup> 1154th meeting, §4.

<sup>72</sup> 1159th meeting, §14.

<sup>73</sup> 1158th meeting, §12.

*policy of the United States*" and stated that it was impressed with the statements of the Latin American representatives.<sup>74</sup> Sir Patrick Dean explained that it "*had been the experience of the United Kingdom Government that it could rely upon the word of the United States.*"<sup>75</sup> Mr. O'Brien of Ireland drew a parallel to the brutal invasion of Hungary which had occurred five years before and said: "*[i]t is true that the Assembly, which seldom condemned the actions of a Member State, had condemned the Soviet action in Hungary. That, however, was a case in which a great Power had actually used its armed forces to overthrow the recognized Government of a small country and to crush its people, whereas in the case under consideration the President of the United States has declared that United States forces would not intervene in Cuba. There is thus a very clear distinction between the two cases.*"<sup>76</sup>

The statement of Ireland emphasizes how far reaching the lie of the US was for the dysfunction of the UN. Many Members, some clearly against solid information they were fully aware of, based their argument on the US claim that the US was not involved and the lies of Guatemala and Nicaragua. US ambassador Stevenson repeated his lies several times, and even argued that "*the best evidence that the United State is not concerned in the present action is the fact that it has so far failed of its purpose.*"<sup>77</sup>

In the end, four draft resolutions were handed in of which only one, supported by the Soviet Union, called the United States an aggressor. This resolution did not find sufficient support. A milder resolution simply called for the "*immediate cessation of military operations against Cuba*" while another draft resolution asked that all countries "*put an end to any activity which might result in further bloodshed.*" In the end – despite the bombings and the invasion – the UN decided to take no specific action at all and to label no one an aggressor. This was a heavy disappointment for Cuba. The UN only agreed to call on all its Member States "*to take such peaceful action as is open to them to remove existing tensions.*"<sup>78</sup>

The question arises why the United Nations failed so bitterly in the case of the Bay of Pigs invasion. The answer is obvious. The main reason was that the United States deceived the UN Members about the leading American hand in the invasion. Furthermore Guatemala and Nicaragua, who were both directly involved in the invasion, also lied to the United Nations. Had these three nations admitted their actions, the United Nations would have been able to act and probably would have acted. A second reason was that, in this case, a very powerful Member was the accused. Quite a few Members knew that the accused could influence their own spheres of interest and, as they did not want that, they sacrificed Cuba.

I was interested in finding out whether the Kennedy administration had misled cold war liberal Adlai Stevenson. Did the US ambassador know that the US was secretly behind the Bay of Pigs invasion? Or did Kennedy leave his US

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<sup>74</sup> *Ibid.*, §17.

<sup>75</sup> 1156th meeting, §39.

<sup>76</sup> 1159th meeting, §34.

<sup>77</sup> *Ibid.*, §17.

<sup>78</sup> GANSER (D.), *Reckless Gamble, op. cit.*, p.47.

ambassador uninformed? Available data suggests that Stevenson until early April 1961 was still in the dark about the US invasion plans, but then became suspicious due to oblique references in *The New York Times* on April 7. Stevenson's investigation in Washington D.C., where Kennedy "*had been much concerned about the UN aspect of the Cuban operation,*"<sup>79</sup> clarified things. On April 8, several days before the invasion, Arthur Schlesinger and CIA agent Tracey Barnes came to New York City and briefed Stevenson in a long talk about the secret invasion.<sup>80</sup> Stevenson therefore knew about the invasion and consciously misled the public and the United Nations with his lies. Publicly he offered few regrets. A year later, at the height of the Cuban missile crisis, he declared about the Bay of Pigs invasion: "*I have no apologies to make for [...] the assistance which these brave Cuban refugees received from our hands.*"<sup>81</sup>

Kennedy was very embarrassed by the Bay of Pigs invasion. He was not embarrassed that it had taken place because he had authorized it, but he was embarrassed that the American hand had, for once, been exposed. He was especially embarrassed that the invasion had failed. After the invasion Kennedy said to Nixon: "*[i]t was assured by every son of a bitch I checked with – all the military experts and the CIA – that the plan would succeed.*"<sup>82</sup> However, the plan did not and, consequently, those who were responsible had to go. Allen Dulles, the CIA chief that had been in office for eight years, was fired and replaced by John McCone. Richard Bissell, former Yale professor and architect of both the Guatemala's 1954 *coup d'Etat* and the Bay of Pigs, was fired too.

## VI - THE SECURITY COUNCIL DEBATES THE CUBAN MISSILE CRISIS

I am firmly convinced that the failure of the UN to react adequately to the Bay of Pigs invasion has had far reaching consequences. Lies are not harmless, much to the contrary they can be lethal. After the Bay of Pigs the USSR was of the opinion that the UN was powerless and could not protect the government of Fidel

<sup>79</sup> SCHLESINGER (A.J.), *op. cit.*, p.253.

<sup>80</sup> Stevenson's biographer, Jeff BROADWATER, emphasizes Schlesinger's quote according to which the briefing had been "*probably unduly vague*" (*ibid.*, p.254). Compare: BROADWATER (J.), *Adlai Stevenson and American Politics. The Odyssey of a Cold War Liberal*, New York, Twayne Publishers, 1994, p.205. I of course did not access transcripts of the allegedly "unduly vague" meeting of April 8, 1961. It is even doubtful that any exist at all. But I conclude that, although it is credible that Stevenson had "*wholly disapproved of the plan,*" he was an actor, not just a victim. He lied and he knew it. Not for nothing had Stevenson briefly considered resigning after the debate on the first day. Not for nothing had he described the whole episode to Pierre Salinger as the "*most humiliating experience*" of his public career (BROADWATER (J.), *op. cit.*, p.207). Charles Yost, who supported the US in the General Assembly Plenary, reports that Stevenson "*thought his credibility and usefulness had been destroyed*" (MCKEEVER (P.), *Adlai Stevenson. His Life and Legacy*, New York, William Morrow and Company, 1989, p.490). To Agnes Meyer, Stevenson wrote in May that "*the Cuban absurdity made me sick for a week,*" and in the same letter he said: "*but I've been surprised how little it seems to have affected my personal regard.*" (BROADWATER (J.), *op. cit.*, p.207). Yost was similarly surprised: "[w]e got amazingly little flak under the circumstances." (MCKEEVER (P.), *op. cit.*, p.490.)

<sup>81</sup> UN Security Council Official Records, 1022nd meeting, §50, October 23, 1962. Schlesinger drafted and Kennedy cleared the speech (MCKEEVER (P.), *op. cit.*, p.523).

<sup>82</sup> Quoted in HINCKLE (W.) and TURNER (W.), *op. cit.*, p.96.

Castro in Cuba from US aggression. At a top level policy-maker meeting in Moscow on May 21, 1962 Soviet leader Nikita Khrushchev decided to launch the top secret operation Anadyr: to deploy and install medium – and intermediate – range atomic missiles in Cuba.<sup>83</sup>

Historians have wondered why Khrushchev had taken such a great risk, as the nuclear missiles provoked the US greatly and almost lead to a direct nuclear confrontation of the superpowers. "*The main thing was that the installation of our missiles in Cuba would, I thought, restrain the United States from precipitous military action against Castro's government*", Khrushchev declared in his memoirs. "*In addition to protecting Cuba our missiles would have equalized what the West likes to call "the balance of power."*"<sup>84</sup> Anatoli Gribkov in his account of operation Anadyr agrees and concludes that "[missiles to Khrushchev seemed "*the soundest means of protecting Cuba. [...] a third attraction for Khrushchev [was that] in one stroke he could redress the imbalance in strategic nuclear forces*".<sup>85</sup>

The Soviets attempted to transport their nuclear missiles over the Atlantic to Cuba in absolute secrecy and set them up in Cuba without informing the US. And yet this did not turn out as planned. The Soviets were still working on their missiles when on October 14, 1962, a high flying United States U-2 plane entered the Cuban airspace and photographed the missile sites. The pictures were presented to President Kennedy and confirmed that Cuba was being armed with nuclear missiles. The missiles were not ready yet, but Soviet ships continued to arrive in Cuba. It was a very tense moment of world history. How should Kennedy react?

After meeting his top advisors and debating possible reactions at length Kennedy decided to set up a military blockade. The "quarantine", as the US euphemistically called it, consisted of a line of US warships off Cuba's north-east coast that had orders to stop, board and search every foreign ship heading for Cuba. If a ship was an offensive military cargo the plan was to send it back. If it refused to follow orders, the plan was not to sink it immediately but to fire a shot into the rudder and thus to cripple it. If these plans failed, complications could at worst result in nuclear war between the superpowers.

At the height of the crisis, US bombers were in the air, carrying nuclear bombs and flight plans that could take them to targets in the Soviet Union. US military forces had assembled in the South of the United States in an increased alert position. Soviet ships and Soviet submarines were moving into the Caribbean. In Cuba, Soviet soldiers were working on the missile sites. Castro expected an imminent invasion and positioned his military forces.

Kennedy sent his ambassador Stevenson to the United Nations and called "*for the prompt dismantling and withdrawal of all offensive weapons in Cuba, under*

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<sup>83</sup> GRIBKOV (A.) and SMITH (W.), *Operation Anadyr. US and Soviet Generals Recount the Cuban Missile Crisis*, Chicago, Editions Q, 1994, p.8. On the timing see also: TALBOTT (S.), *Khrushchev Remembers*, New York, Bantam Books, 1970, p.546.

<sup>84</sup> TALBOTT (S.), *op. cit.*, p.547.

<sup>85</sup> GRIBKOV (A.) and SMITH (W.), *op. cit.*, p.13.

the supervision of UN observers."<sup>86</sup> The UN Security Council debated the missile crisis on October 24 and 25, 1962. The atmosphere was extremely tense, as UN Members rightly feared a direct confrontation of the superpowers. The seemingly harmless lies on the Bay of Pigs invasion had brought the world on the brink of disaster.

By establishing a blockade – an act of war – without the prior consent of the Security Council, the United States had bypassed the UN once again. Adlai Stevenson nevertheless argued before the UN that such a blockade was necessary, as the US had had to act under great time pressure: "[i]f we were to have delayed our counteraction, the nuclearization of Cuba would have been quickly completed. This is not a risk which this hemisphere is prepared to take", Stevenson said.<sup>87</sup> He furthermore argued that the US had had to act without the UN's authorization because the Council would not have adopted a resolution enabling the US to establish a blockade. "*Could we reasonably be expected to [...] have waited [...] while the Soviet representative in the Security Council vetoed a resolution?*"<sup>88</sup>

Stevenson informed his stunned audience that while they were debating this issue in the UN the Soviets were still working on setting up the missiles in Cuba. Therefore a Soviet nuclear attack on the United Nations headquarters could become – at least technically – possible in the near future. "*One of these missiles can be [...] pointed at New York,*" Stevenson warned, "*and land above this room five minutes after it was fired.*"<sup>89</sup> When despite the real and present danger some Members questioned the legality of the blockade, Stevenson replied that the US had been forced to act to protect itself: "[w]ere we to do nothing until the knife was sharpened? Were we to do nothing until it was at our throats?"<sup>90</sup>

With the introduction of nuclear missiles the roles had suddenly changed. It was no longer Cuba, but the US which felt threatened, while Cuba found itself in the midst of a conflict between the two superpowers of the Cold War. Garcia Inchaustegui, speaking for Cuba, did not lie about the weapons but confirmed in the Security Council that nuclear missiles were indeed being set up in Cuba, while insisting that they were not of an offensive nature. "*The weapons in Cuba's possession are exclusively of a defensive nature*", Inchaustegui claimed. "*They are weapons which we were compelled to acquire owing to the aggressive and interventionist policy of the United States Government towards Cuba.*"<sup>91</sup> The representative of the Soviet Union, Mr. Zorin, backed Cuba and explained that "*the crux of the matter*" were "*the aggressive intentions of the United States with regard to Cuba.*"<sup>92</sup>

During the Bay of Pigs invasion the United States had lied to the Security Council about its involvement. Now, during the missile crisis, the roles changed and it was the Soviet Union which lied to the UN about the deployment of nuclear

<sup>86</sup> U THANT (S.), *View from the UN*, Garden City, Doubleday, 1978, p.155.

<sup>87</sup> UN Security Council Official Records, 1025th meeting, §§12 and 13

<sup>88</sup> 1025th meeting, §13.

<sup>89</sup> *Ibid.*, §14.

<sup>90</sup> *Ibid.*, §18.

<sup>91</sup> *Ibid.*, §26.

<sup>92</sup> *Ibid.*, §31.

missiles. Zorin, who knew that the Soviet Union was, at the very moment of the Council's debate, establishing nuclear missiles in Cuba, referred to Stevenson's charges repeatedly as "*fake evidence*."<sup>93</sup> When, after hearing this, Stevenson presented enlarged photographs of the Cuban missiles to the Council, Zorin pursued his tactics and called the pictures "*faked photographs*."<sup>94</sup> That was a lie.

The photos were this time genuine, and Stevenson therefore directly asked Zorin whether there were nuclear missiles in Cuba or not: "*Mr. Zorin, I remind you that the other day you did not deny the existence of these weapons [...] let me ask you one simple question: Do you, Ambassador Zorin, deny that the USSR has placed and is placing medium and intermediate-range missiles and sites in Cuba? Yes or no? Do not wait for the interpretation. Yes or no?*"

Zorin replied: "*I am not in an American court of law, and therefore do not wish to answer a question put to me in the manner of a prosecuting counsel. You will receive the answer in due course in my capacity as representative of the Soviet Union.*" And yet Stevenson remained firm and said: "*You are in the courtroom of world opinion right now, and you can answer 'Yes' or 'No'. You have denied that they exist – and I want to know whether I have understood you correctly.*" But Zorin refused to take a stand and replied: "*Please continue your statement, Mr. Stevenson. You will receive the answer in due course.*" Whereupon Stevenson ended the debate with the statement: "*I am prepared to wait for my answer until Hell freezes over, if that is your decision.*"<sup>95</sup>

Although Stevenson had not received a clear and definite answer he had been able to show to other UN Members that Zorin had deliberately and hypocritically misled the Council. By presenting enlarged photographs of the missiles in Cuba Stevenson had been able to hold a simultaneous conversation with the rest of the world, which would not have been possible through the normal channels of bilateral diplomacy. It is in this sense that the United Nations became useful to the United States. It was a forum that allowed Kennedy to gain world support.

In the end Kennedy and Khrushchev were able to solve the Cuban missile crisis bilaterally through peaceful means. Both agreed to withdraw their nuclear missiles. Kennedy withdrew his missiles from Turkey, where the US had been stationing nuclear missiles on the Soviet boarder for several years, while Khrushchev withdrew his missiles from Cuba.

## VII - CONCLUSION: HOW LIES DAMAGED THE UNITED NATIONS

The men and women who had founded the United Nations had been fully aware of the horrors of World War II as they had all lived through that most

<sup>93</sup> *Ibid.*, §§35 and 42. I am somewhat unsure of the exact point in time when Zorin was informed by Khrushchev about the Soviet missiles in Cuba. U Thant, in his biography, is convinced that on Wednesday "*Zorin had been completely in the dark about the presence of Soviet missiles in Cuba.*" (U THANT (S.), *op. cit.*, p.166). I work here on what seems to be the most plausible premise, i.e. the premise that Zorin knew by Thursday midday.

<sup>94</sup> *Ibid.*, §83.

<sup>95</sup> *Ibid.*, §§49-53.

dreadful period of human history that had left 60 million dead. In vivid memory of the incredible suffering and the firm conviction that such a human made catastrophe shall never happen again, the Charter of the United Nations was signed on June 26, 1945, in San Francisco. The principles declared in the Charter are still valid today: "[a]ll Members shall refrain in their international relations from the threat or use of force against the territorial integrity or political independence of any state, or in any other manner inconsistent with the purposes of the United Nations."<sup>96</sup>

The conflict between Cuba and the US is best known today in international politics because of the economic embargo which the US imposed on Cuba in 1960, and which every US government ever since, including the Obama administration, has refused to lift. The UN General Assembly, in a somewhat peculiar ritual, has been asking the US to lift the embargo every year for the last twenty years. And yet each time the US refused to do so, highlighting the powerlessness of the UN in that conflict. The last resolution of the UN General Assembly that urges the US to lift the embargo was adopted in October 2010, and supported by 187 of the 192 UN Member States. Only Israel and the US voted for the embargo, and three States abstained.

The debate about the embargo reminds every year UN Members of the conflict between the United States and Cuba. Data presented in this paper shows, however, that the embargo is but the surface of a complicated relationship in which lies damaged the United Nations profoundly. To conclude, it is therefore important to remind some of the most dangerous lies that were presented in the UN in the context of this conflict.

In July 1960, the US ambassador to the UN, Mr. Lodge explained in the Security Council: "[u]nnecessary though it most certainly seems to me, let me here and now give him [Castro] this assurance, heaped up and overflowing: *The United States has no aggressive purpose against Cuba.*" This was a lie. In reality, President Eisenhower, together with the CIA, secretly prepared an invasion and aimed at overthrowing the Castro government.<sup>97</sup> Half a year later, in January 1961, three months before the invasion, Mr. Lodge of the United States described the Cuban charge that the US was planning an invasion as "*empty, groundless, false, fraudulent.*" This was yet another lie. For in reality, the invasion preparations were already in their final phase.<sup>98</sup>

In April 1961, during the Bay of Pigs invasion, US ambassador to the UN Adlai Stevenson presented faked photos to the Council and argued that Cuba was being attacked by its own air force. This was a lie. The planes, in reality, were under US command, as well as the invasion force.<sup>99</sup> During the same UN meeting, as stated above, Mr. Alejos from Guatemala said: "[t]he forces which had landed in Cuba had not been trained in Guatemala and had not come from Guatemalan territory. Guatemala had never allowed and would never allow its territory to be

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<sup>96</sup> UN Charter, *op. cit.*, Article 2§4.

<sup>97</sup> UN Security Council Official Records, 874th meeting, §96.

<sup>98</sup> UN Security Council Official Records, 922nd meeting, §11.

<sup>99</sup> UN General Assembly Official Records, First Committee 1149th meeting, §§6-8.

used for the organization of acts of aggression against its American sister republics." Everything in this statement is untrue.<sup>100</sup>

During the Cuban Missile Crisis in October 1962 the ambassador of the Soviet Union to the UN, Mr. Zorin, claimed that Stevenson's charges about missiles in Cuba were based on "fake evidence," and said that the photos of the missiles were equally "faked evidence." In reality the Soviet Union had secretly shipped nuclear missiles across the Atlantic and was installing them in Cuba. Zorin lied to the UN in order to gain time for the missile buildup.<sup>101</sup>

Unfortunately the lies that are being told in the UN are not limited to the Cuban conflict and to the 1950s and 1960s. Many other debates in the Security Council and the General Assembly suffer from the same problem exactly. The most recent example in that century were the lies regarding the weapons of mass destruction that US Secretary of State Colin Powell presented in the UN Security Council on February 5, 2003, one month before the US-led invasion of Iraq. Powell presented tapes and satellite photographs of trucks that he claimed were mobile biological weapons laboratories. Powell in the UN claimed the US had "undeniable and irrefutable evidence" that Iraq was hiding illegal weapons. Iraqi officials protested and shortly before the outbreak of the war stressed that Powell's evidence presented to the Security Council "was filled with lies intended to give the United States a reason for war against Bagdad."<sup>102</sup>

Many UN Members had their doubts about Powell's speech. In the end the UN did not give the US a mandate to invade Iraq. According to the UN Charter the war was therefore, as Secretary General Kofi Annan correctly put it, "illegal."<sup>103</sup> But with his lies Powell had nevertheless significantly contributed to the confusion that had preceded the outbreak of the war. Years later, Powell offered his apologies for the lies he had presented in the UN Security Council. "The fact of the matter is that a good part of [the data that I presented in the Security Council] was wrong, and I am sorry that it was wrong," he said.<sup>104</sup> Powell explained that he felt "terrible" for the lies he had presented, regretting that his United Nations speech making the case for the US war on Iraq was "a blot" on his record.<sup>105</sup>

Whether UN Members in future conflicts will be able to detect lies at a very early stage in the debate is unclear. Will the UN be able to celebrate its 70<sup>th</sup> birthday in 2015 with pride and joy as a strong organization for world peace? We do not know what the future will bring yet. But I firmly agree with Ingvar Carlsson, who on the occasion of the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the UN already declared that the most important reforms must take place at the level of the behavior of the UN Member States. "If the United Nations has failings, if it is unable to do the tasks it is given, if corruption and waste go uncorrected, then this is the responsibility of its owners –

<sup>100</sup> UN General Assembly Official Records, First Committee 1154th meeting, §4.

<sup>101</sup> UN Security Council Official Records, 1025th meeting, §§35 and 42.

<sup>102</sup> Webster's Quotations, Facts and Phrases, ICON Group, 2008, p.106.

<sup>103</sup> "Iraq war illegal, says Annan", BBC News, 16. September 2004.

<sup>104</sup> O'SULLIVAN (C.), *Colin Powell: American Power and Intervention from Vietnam to Iraq*, Lanham, Rowman and Littlefield, 2009, p.176.

<sup>105</sup> "Powell regrets UN speech on Iraq WMDs", ABC News, September 9, 2005.

*the 185 Member States and, most especially, the major powers with their seats on the Security Council", Carlsson emphasizes. "It follows that many of the real solutions to the problems faced by the UN system must come from a process of change that begins in national behavior, national decision making, and national policies – not in the 38 floors of the UN building in New York or in smaller buildings in Geneva, Vienna, and elsewhere."*<sup>106</sup>

It goes without saying that, in a changing world, the UN must change too. Reforms are therefore also necessary in the context of the 70<sup>th</sup> birthday of the UN. The extension of the Security Council, the introduction of mechanisms that guarantee the financial health of the UN, the inclusion of environmental issues into the Charter and other important reforms are currently being debated, and rightly so. However, it seems that if Member States are not willing or not able to stop lying in the UN Security Council and in the UN General Assembly, all reforms are futile.

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<sup>106</sup> CARLSSON (I.), "The UN at 50: A Time to Reform", *Foreign Policy*, vol.100, Fall 1995, pp.3 and 15.