

BOOK REVIEW

Playa Giron

Bay of Pigs – Washington's first military defeat in the Americas

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Repelling the Yankees

During Clinton's presidency, many in Ireland found it possible to ignore the murderous nature of US foreign policy, despite its glaring imperialist interventions, whether it be in Palestine, the Balkans, East Timor, Iraq, Colombia or wherever. With George W. Bush now resident in the White House, such duplicity is going to be far more difficult, if only because of the crass nature of his statements and actions.

Of course, there is one aspect of US foreign policy that has been unchanging - its continuing attempt to destroy the Cuban Revolution. Despite what is commonly believed, US aggression towards Cuba intensified during the Clinton presidency, with the 40-year-old economic blockade tightened considerably. And yet, the Cuban Revolution continues to defy all those who have been predicting (hoping for) its downfall for well over three decades. The accepted wisdom is that once Fidel Castro stands down the US will move to exploit the expected political hiatus and the Revolution will fall apart. One option that will already be planned for is military invasion. If so, Bush's lackeys would be well advised to read this book, *Playa Giron*, about the last time such a move was attempted.

A varied collection of speeches, communiqués and testimonies from the time, by those such as Fidel Castro and Che Guevara, are presented. These well catch the knife-edged political tension and subsequent triumph of the momentous days in April 1961. Using fascinating military maps, photographs and a full chronology of the time, the book provides previously unpublished details surrounding the CIA-backed invasion and the subsequent defeat of the 1,500 US mercenaries at the Bay of Pigs.

The testimony to the People's Court in Havana two years ago by Jose Ramon Fernandez, who commanded the main column that repelled the invaders and who is now Vice-President of the Cuban Council of Ministers, forms the core of the book. It is here that one gets a real feel for the bravery and conviction of the revolutionary Cuban forces, and their willingness to defend the socialist principles of the Revolution at any cost. As a result, and as Fidel Castro said at the time, "Yankee imperialism suffered its first defeat in the Americas". Is the Bush administration stupid enough to let history repeat itself?

In a world of continuing US imperialism, dressed up as free-trade globalisation, the Cuban Revolution is a unique and shining example of socialist development. It needs to be defended by all Irish socialist republicans. This book provides invaluable inspiration.