

**USING KGB DOCUMENTS:
THE SCALI-FEKLISOV CHANNEL
IN THE CUBAN MISSILE CRISIS**

**by Alexander Fursenko
and Timothy Naftali**

From the time that former State Department official Roger Hilsman revealed in 1964 that ABC News television correspondent

that he presented.” Thus Scali described in a 1964 television broadcast how this meeting opened. Scali said that Feklisov feared that war would begin soon, and was so concerned that he volunteered a way out of the stalemate.⁵

He asked, according to Scali’s notes, what Scali “thought” of a three-point proposition:

a) The Soviet missiles bases would be dismantled under United Nations supervision.

b) Fidel Castro would promise never to accept offensive weapons of any kind, ever.

c) In return for the above, the United States would pledge not to invade Cuba.⁶

Feklisov was confident that if U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations Adlai Stevenson “pursued this line,” Soviet UN ambassador Valerian Zorin “would be interested.” As if to give some weight to his proposal, Feklisov noted that the Cuban delegate to the UN had already made a similar proposal in a session of the Security Council but that it had been met with silence. Feklisov asked that Scali run this proposal by his contacts at the State Department and then gave the journalist his home telephone number, to be sure he could be reached at any time.⁷

Scali rushed this proposal to the State Department. Roger Hilsman, State’s director of Intelligence and Research, and Secretary of State Dean Rusk were extremely interested in it. Rusk considered this to be the first concrete offer from the Soviet leadership for ending the crisis. The letters already exchanged by Khrushchev and Kennedy had only brought about a hardening of each side’s position. So long as the Soviets refused to discuss removing the missiles, there seemed to be no peaceful way out of the deepening crisis.⁸

Transcripts of the ExComm [Executive Committee of the National Security Council] meeting of October 27⁹ confirm that the Kennedy administration interpreted the “offer” from the KGB representative as an elaboration of a more general proposal contained in a private letter from Khrushchev that arrived late in the afternoon of October 26, in which the Soviet leader had written:

ships bound for Cuba are not carrying any armaments. You will declare that the United States will not invade Cuba with its troops and will not support any other forces which might intend to invade Cuba. Then the necessity for the presence of our military specialists will be obviated.¹⁰

By itself the Khrushchev letter did not promise anything except that future Soviet ships would carry non-military cargoes. But when the letter was coupled with what Scali had relayed from Feklisov, the Kennedy administration believed it had received an acceptable offer from the Kremlin. Rusk instructed Scali to contact Feklisov to make clear that the U.S. found a basis for agreement in his offer.

Sometime between 7:30 and 7:45 p.m. on Friday evening, Scali and Feklisov met at the Statler Hotel, near the Soviet Embassy. In a very brief meeting Scali conveyed his message: He was authorized by the highest authority to say that there were “real possibilities in this [proposal]” and that “the representatives of the USSR and the United States in New York can work this matter out with [UN Secretary General] U Thant and with each other.” Feklisov listened carefully, then repeated the proposal to be sure that he understood the White House’s offer correctly. Unsure of Scali, he asked repeatedly for confirmation that Scali spoke for the White House. Finally, Feklisov added that it was not enough for there to be inspection of the dismantling of Soviet missiles, it would be necessary for UN observers to observe the withdrawal of U.S. forces from the southern United States. This idea went beyond Scali’s instructions, so he demurred.

The situation changed the next day, October 27, which U.S. veterans of the Missile Crisis describe as “Black Saturday.” Just as the ExComm was discussing a formal response to the Khrushchev letter and the Feklisov proposal, a second message arrived from Moscow, which this time immediately publicized the communication. Khrushchev had upped the ante. Now he demanded that the U.S. dismantle its Jupiter missile bases in Turkey before he went ahead with any deal

We, for our part, will declare that our

resident to test some ideas that had occurred to him as perhaps the best way of averting nuclear disaster?

The KGB documents suggest that in the heat of discussion, with the fear of war hanging over their heads, Scali and Feklisov fastened on a revival of a formula for ending the crisis that, among others, UN Secretary

ing. Gromyko not only had obtained no hint of the American discovery of the missiles, he reported that from all available information, including Soviet intelligence (referred to by the usual circumlocution as information received “through unofficial channels”) and from other countries (which would include Cuba), “the acuteness of the anti-Cuban campaign in the United States has somewhat abated,” and that under prevailing conditions “a military adventure against Cuba is almost inconceivable.” Notwithstanding his own knowledge of the secret missile deployment underway, he even said, “Everything that we know about the position of the USA government on the Cuban question permits the conclusion that the situation in general is completely satisfactory.” How did he think the United States would react when it found out about the missiles? And this evaluation followed his meetings with Kennedy and Rusk.

Dobrynin’s cables on his meetings with Robert Kennedy on October 23, 27, and 28—or, rather, the excerpts that have been released—help to clarify these important exchanges. Among other things, they make clear that there *was* not merely a statement by Kennedy, but “an understanding” on withdrawing the American Jupiter missiles in Turkey, but also that it had to be kept in “strict secrecy.” The material released does

not, however, include the reports on Dobrynin’s delivery to Robert Kennedy on October 29 of a draft *written* agreement, and its sharp rejection in another meeting on October 30.

The reporting on Mikoyan’s talks in Cuba, while not complete, does give the main discussions in considerable detail. Incidentally, apart from Mikoyan’s efforts to persuade Castro to agree to the withdrawal of Soviet IL-28 bombers from Cuba and his reassurances on Soviet support on other matters, both Mikoyan and Castro discussed aspects of the crisis itself that shed light on earlier Soviet and Cuban thinking and actions. Both, for example, had clearly concluded by October 27 that an American attack on Cuba was imminent—although they drew different conclusions on what the Soviet Union should do about it. While not all statements made in that exchange were necessarily accurate, it is of interest to note that reassurances on the withdrawal of the missiles in Turkey followed the American attack on Cuba.

And this evaluation followed his meetings with Kennedy and Rusk.

Everything that we know about the position of the USA government on the Cuban question permits the conclusion that the situation in general is completely satisfactory.

**Telegram from Soviet Ambassador to Cuba
Alekseev to the USSR MFA, 11 September
1962**

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CIPHERED TELEGRAM

In a conversation with me on September 11 of this year, [Cuban Defense Minister] Raoul Castro, noting the publication in the Soviet press of the TASS report, announced that it had been met with great enthusiasm by the Cuban leadership as timely and well-argued. Castro said that this report will be regarded by the whole Cuban people and supporters of the Cuban Revolution in other countries as a reliable shield against the aggressive intrigues of the American imperialists.

Castro also asserts that the thesis put forth in the report allows opponents of direct intervention in the United States itself—including Kennedy—to put up more decisive resistance to pressure from the aggressive forces. Regarding this, he, nonetheless, is allowing a sharp increase in anti-Soviet propaganda in the USA and in countries under its influence.

Raoul Castro believes that N.S. Khrushchev's conversation with [U.S. Secretary of the Interior Stewart] Udall on the Cuban question, during which the government of the USA was warned without any hint of propaganda about all the consequences which could result from its treacherous actions towards Cuba, is even more important. In Castro's opinion, the public announcement, as a consequence of this warning, will force the USA ruling circles to search for new means of strangling the Cuban revolution.

Castro considers as very important the part of the announcement which deals with the American bases around the USSR, and also the USA's Sixth and Seventh fleets in foreign waters and its effort to convince public opinion that this is the inalienable right of the USA.

The use of this line of argument to explain Soviet assistance to Cuba will be very easy for ordinary Latin Americans and for the people of the USA itself to understand.

Raoul Castro asserts that in the course of the developing situation the Americans are trying to isolate Cuba from the Latin American countries and to intensify the small-scale provocations against Cuba allegedly carried out by irresponsible elements of the Cuban counter-revolution, the apparent shelling of populated areas and foreign ships bound for Cuban ports from the sea.

Today's pirate attack on Cuban and English ships in the Caribbean area, in Castro's opinion, is aimed at frightening certain capitalist countries and to give the governments of NATO a pretext to forbid its ships to visit Cuban ports.

According to a dispatch by the Chairman of the Institute for Agricultural Reform C.R. [Carlos Rafael] Rodriguez, the crews of Japanese fishing boats who are now in Cuba, citing the danger, posed the question of leaving for their homeland right after the first attack on Havana.

C.R. Rodriguez announced that he had just spoken with Fidel Castro, who optimistically evaluates the developing situation and asserts that the Americans, following N.S. Khrushchev's conversation with Udall and the publication of the TASS dispatch, will have to reject attempts to organize direct aggression against Cuba.

F. Castro, according to Rodriguez, with great enthusiasm greeted these acts as a manifestation of genuine friendship for Cuba from the Soviet government and personally from N.S. Khrushchev, and expressed for this his sincere thanks.

Rodriguez recounted that the TASS declaration had been received with great enthusiasm in the factories, in peoples' estates, establishments and military units, where demonstrations and meetings are spontaneously conducted as a sign of gratitude to the Soviet Union.

Rodriguez believes that the publication of the TASS dispatch increases the authority of the Soviet Union in the eyes of the Cuban and other Latin American peoples and helps those not insignificant elements which are attracted to the unruliness of the revolutionism of our Chinese friends understand the difference between a truly revolutionary policy and a policy of revolutionary phrases.

In Rodriguez' opinion, in Cuba for a long time already Chinese representatives have had no opportunities to cultivate any Cuban leaders, but the publication of the Soviet-Cuban communique and the TASS dispatch once and for all undermines the ground beneath their feet and

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eral participants in the meeting, Rusk put much pressure on the meeting. The point of the communique about trade with Cuba, which elicited the most disagreement, was accepted only after Rusk, referring to the mood in the USA Congress, threatened to cut off all American assistance to countries which would refuse to accept that point. In addition to this, Rusk and Kennedy informed the participants in the meeting about the unilateral measures which the government of the USA itself is now considering regarding a maximum limitation on the use of ships of various countries in trade with Cuba.

As indicated by certain information which we are now reconfirming, the following measures were named:

1. American ports will be closed to ships of those countries of which even a single ship would bring arms to Cuba. In essence, this is directed entirely against the USSR and socialist countries.

2. Ships of all countries will not be allowed into ports of the USA and will not be allowed to take on any cargo for the return voyage, if in the past they carried goods to Cuba from the countries of the "Soviet-Chinese" bloc. This refers equally to cargos of military supplies and those of consumer goods.

3. No cargo belonging to the government of the USA (for example, big shipments for "assistance programs) may be carried on foreign ships, if ships of the same owners are used for the shipment of goods to Cuba. This point is directed against "non-communist" countries and allies of the USA, many of whom have now reluctantly given in to American pressure.

4. No American-flag ships or ships the owners of which are American citizens (although ships may sail under a different flag, as is often done) are allowed to ship goods to or from Cuba.

Overall, this is a continuation of the prior unyielding line of the Kennedy Administration towards the tightening up of the economic blockade of Cuba, which is viewed here as one of the most effective means in the struggle with the Castro government and the increase in assistance to him from the Soviet Union.

The first reaction to the meeting in Washington diplomatic circles is summarized as follows: although the USA didn't get everything it wanted, the decisions of the meeting will be used by the Kennedy Administration to the maximum degree for the long-term isolation of Cuba from the countries of Latin America; for the strengthening of all aspects of the struggle against the Castro government. It is revealing that Kennedy today signed a declaration, accepted by the American Congress, to the effect that the USA can use troops in order to "prevent the spread of Cuban Communism to the American continent." At the same time he signed a Congressional bill, giving him the right to call up 150,000 reserves.

4.X.62 A. DOBRYNIN

[Source: AVP RF, copy courtesy of NSA; translation by Mark H. Doctoroff.]

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**Telegram from Soviet Ambassador to the
USA Dobrynin to the USSR MFA, 18
October 1962**

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CIPHERED TELEGRAM

On October 15-16 a closed briefing (i.e. "instructional meeting") for editors and leading observers of American newspapers, radio, and television was held at the State Department. According to information which we received, the USA policy toward Cuba occupied a major place in the work of the meeting. The essence of the statements of Kennedy, Rusk, Taylor, and Martin (aide to the Secretary of State) on this topic is summarized as follows:

I. "Don't joke about the idea of American intervention in Cuba," because such intervention would unavoidably prompt serious counter-measures from the USSR, if not directly aimed at the USA, then in other regions of the world, particularly in West Berlin; for many years [intervention] would complicate the mutual relations of the USA with the countries of Latin America, Asia, and Africa, and overall would create more problems than it solved.

2. At present Cuba is a political problem, and not a problem of security of the USA; thus, political, economic and other means are needed to solve it, rather than military.

Proceeding from this, the USA intends to achieve the greatest possible political, economic, and moral isolation of Cuba from other Latin American countries and other countries of the "free world," and also hinder the provision of assistance to Cuba from Socialist countries in all possible ways (short of, however, a sea blockade).

All this, in the calculations of the USA government, should cause serious economic and political complications for Cuba and ultimately (not in the coming weeks and months but in the next year or two) lead to the outbreak there of mass dissatisfaction and to huge anti-government demonstrations. The USA's concrete course in this case will depend on the situation.

3. At the present time the USA has no plans to create "a provisional Cuban government in exile," since in view of the mixed nature of the Cuban emigration it would be hardly possible to form a sufficiently authoritative government and in any case such a government, created on foreign territory, could not count on broad popularity

among the population of Cuba itself; in the same way the recognition of an exile government by the United States "mcount oo oh -0.-issati.ssu of the

In these last days the sharpness of the anti-

egorically reject any attempts to generalize or to draw conclusions about Soviet foreign policy in the postwar period, which USA government officials make with the intent, apparently, of white-washing its own policy, in this case towards Cuba.

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garding the capability of the Soviet army to occupy all of Europe, if the Soviet Union had striven for that after the rout of Hitler's Germany. Nor did he challenge the significance of the foreign policy steps of the Soviet Union introduced after the condemnation of the cult of personality of Stalin. More to the point, he let it be understood that in general he shares these thoughts, although he did not make any direct comments.

However, he at this point started to talk about the fact that the USA, at the end of the war, and also in the first postwar period to the greatest extent conducted itself well. It, declared Rusk, had not tried to use the advantage which it had at that time vis a vis its monopoly possession of the atomic bomb.

I let him know that that, apparently, had not been so much because the United States had wanted to conduct itself well, as that the atomic bomb at that time could not play a decisive role in the serious standoff of the leading powers.

Rusk did not challenge this declaration, but all the same expressed the thought that the USA had had an advantage at that time in its possession of the atomic bomb and that it had not even tried to use it politically.

In this connection he brought up the Baruch Plan, saying that he was wondering why the Soviet Union had not associated itself with the Baruch Plan.

I gave an appropriate answer and briefly set forth our position. I stressed the point that the Baruch Plan was a one-sided plan, advantageous only to the USA, that it had not even envisioned the destruction of nuclear weapons, rather, under Rusk's tongue c(arise? Plan.)Tj 2 -1.222 TD -0.055 saRus saying thaorguve c,iansiw (tn okt wn Mly set)Tj -2 -1.167 TD3 0.187 Tw,1 Pla r tply muTw lon the te
 I used this screen of allegedly international control had left this weapon at the practical disposal of the USA, and even on the territory of the USA.

Rusk did not go into details and limited himself to the above comments about the Baruch Plan.

Suddenly Rusk jumped to the issue of the Communist ideology and the influence of the Soviet Union on other countries. He tried to assert that the main reason of all the complications in international affairs is that the Soviet Union by some or other means influences the situation in other countries, inspires dissatisfaction (sonalityrTh0tentn03 Tw (been so mubyp play a TD -0.0D 0 les oairsropriere-ervficanceinflw [(n im
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provocative character, and that all responsibility for possible grave consequences of the aforementioned actions of the United States will be entirely on the American administration.

I also expressed surprise that neither the president nor Rusk found it necessary to have an open talk on all the questions raised in the address, with A.A. Gromyko, with whom they met only a few days ago, while now the USA administration is seeking with artificial means to create a grave crisis. The Soviet Union fears no threats and is prepared to meet them in an appropriate way, if the voice of reason would not triumph in the governing circles of the USA.

Rusk did not respond. He was clearly in a nervous and agitated mood, even though he tried to conceal it. At that the meeting came to an end. Then almost all ambassadors /except socialist/ were summoned to the State Department, and they have been given, by groups, the text of the president's address with corresponding commentaries by the senior officials of the State Department.

Before I left, Rusk noted that there is no plan, so far, to publish the personal letter of Kennedy to N.S. Khrushchev, but overall this cannot be excluded.

22.X.62 A. DOBRYNIN

[Source: AVP RF, copy courtesy of NSA;
translation by Vladislav M. Zubok.]

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**Telegram from Soviet Ambassador to Cuba
Aleksiev to the USSR MFA, 22 October 1962**

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CIPHERED TELEGRAM

Regarding the threats of the USA toward Cuba, we remain in constant contact with Fidel Castro and Raoul Castro.

The Cuban command gave an order for full mobilization of the army and occupation of defensive positions. Besides telegraphic dispatches of information agencies and Kennedy's speeches, our friends have no other information.

We will quickly inform you of all new facts.

We are taking steps to ensure security and the organization of a duty roster in Soviet institutions.

Please issue an order to the radio center to listen to us around the clock.

22.X.62 ALEKSEEV

[Source: AVP RF, copy courtesy of NSA;
translation by Mark H. Doctoroff.]

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**Telegram from Soviet Ambassador to the
USA Dobrynin to the USSR MFA,
23 October 1962**

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CIPHERED TELEGRAM

Following Kennedy's speech on the Cuban issue yesterday, a broad campaign was deployed here, called forth in order to impart to the developing situation even more extraordinariness and seriousness than was done in Kennedy's speech itself.

In a briefing conducted by the USA Ministry of Defense yesterday evening, [Secretary of Defense Robert S.] McNamara categorically declared that the USA will not stop short of sinking Soviet ships which are bringing "offensive types" of weapons to Cuba, if those ships will refuse to obey the demands of American warships.

It is reported that the President's official proclamation about the introduction into force of measures to assert a quarantine on the delivery to Cuba of offensive types of weapons will be published before the end of the day today or tomorrow morning after the formal agreement with other members of the Organization of American States. For the practical implementation of the quarantine in the area of Cuba, there has been assembled, according to the reports of military observers, around 450 military ships, more than 1,200 airplanes and around 200 thousand soldiers.

Almost without interruption, the commentaries which are broadcast on radio and television—and also the commentaries which appeared in today's morning newspapers—are directed towards supercharging the atmosphere and predictions of an early "test of force," as soon as the first Soviet ship approaches Cuba (we broadcast similar commentaries via TASS).

An analysis of the public statements which Kennedy has made, his message to N.S. Khrushchev, and also the statements of officials who are close to the White House and the State allow us to make, as it is presented to us, a preliminary conclusion that the measures which have been undertaken by the Kennedy Administration in regard to Cuba are the product of a range of domestic and foreign policy considerations, the most important of which, apparently, are the following.

I. To try to "take up the gauntlet" of that challenge which Kennedy believes has been

thrown down by the Soviet Union to the USA in the form of military deliveries to Cuba. Regarding this, insofar as up to now a direct military attack by the USA on Cuba is not on the table (the President, as is known, also persistently stressed this during the meeting with A.A. Gromyko), Kennedy evidently is counting on the Soviet Union in this case not responding with military actions directly against the USA itself or by delivering a blow to their positions in West Berlin. As a result, in Kennedy's thinking, the United States will succeed in establishing at least in part the correlation of forces which existed in the world before July, that is before the announcement of our military deliveries to Cuba, which delivered a serious blow to the USA's positions as the leader of the capitalist world and even more constrained their freedom of action on issues like the one in West Berlin.

Kennedy apparently believes that a further demonstration by the United States of indecisiveness and lack of will to risk a war with the Soviet Union for the sake of its positions would unavoidably lead to an even quicker and more serious undermining of their positions around the globe.

2. That which Kennedy said yesterday in his appeal to the American people and the complex of measures which were announced in this connection by the USA government in fact touch not only upon Cuba alone or our deliveries of weapons to it, or even our missiles for Cuba. More to the point, it is a decision connected with a certain risk and determined by a whiff of adventurism, to try to bring to a stop now the development of events in the whole world, which are generally disadvantageous to the USA.

In this regard, some information which we have just received by confidential means and which we are now reconfirming, may be interesting. According to this information, prior to the President's decision a hot discussion was conducted recently in the government regarding the future foreign policy course of the USA follow-

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Hemisphere itself. What then of the obligations of the USA in other parts of the world? And all this is happening at a moment—as asserted by representatives of the military brass—when America for the time being still has an advantage over the Soviet Union in nuclear missiles, an advantage which is gradually being liquidated by the successes of Soviet weapons, and now also by the creation of a missile base in Cuba in direct proximity with the USA. This means, the American chiefs of staff maintain, that time is not waiting, if the Kennedy government really intends to prevent a further disadvantageous development of events.

In Berlin also, the USA is constantly on the defensive, which does not add to the Administration's prestige. The latest meetings with A.A. Gromyko (this argument was attributed to Rusk) strengthened the President's and Rusk's belief that the Soviet Union seriously intends to sign a peace treaty with the GDR, with all the consequences that will flow from that for the USA. This, almost unavoidably will bring about a crisis at the end of the year, since the USA will not withdraw its forces from West Berlin. Wouldn't it be better then to try to force the Soviet Union to retreat by "striking a blow on the Cuban issue ["—no close quotation mark—ed.], which gives more benefits to the USA than the Berlin question, if the moods of public opinion and geographic and military-strategic factors are taken into account[?] Precisely on the Cuban issue it is best for President Kennedy to take a firm position and to "demonstrate his character." This approximately was the basic argument of those government representatives who support a more hard-line course of action (several of them speculated also that the President maintains the opinion that the Soviet government apparently does not particularly believe in the President's steadfastness following the failure of last year's incursion in Cuba). It follows, evidently, to recognize that the supporters of this course for the time being have taken the upper hand in the USA government.

3. Having created the extraordinary situation around Cuba, the Kennedy administration is hoping that in that situation it will be able quickly to get from its NATO allies and from the Latin American countries support for its course towards the full isolation of Cuba from the "free world," and the ultimate overthrow of the current government of Cuba. In this regard it should be noted that although the West European and Latin American diplomats express alarm about the possible consequences of realizing in practice the announced "quarantine" of Cuba, they express, as a rule, confidence that their governments under current conditions will not be able to deviate from support for the USA. In particular, it became known to us that the Chilean representative in the Organization of American States received

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Saying goodbye, already at the door of the Embassy, R. Kennedy as if by the way asked what sorts of orders the captains of the Soviet ships bound for Cuba have, in light of President Kennedy's speech yesterday and the declaration which he had just signed about the inadmissibility of bringing offensive weapons to Cuba.

I answered R. Kennedy with what I knew about the instructions which had been given earlier to the captains: not to obey any unlawful demands to stop or be searched on the open sea,

a portion of the speech, and made it available to us for publication.¹ That portion concerns the Missile Crisis, which Cubans call the October Crisis. The statement not only constitutes President Castro's most extensive remarks about the 1962 confrontation, but also provides his reflection on the episode only five years after it occurred.² This document is usefully read in conjunction with notes taken by the Soviet ambassador to Cuba, Aleksandr Alekseev, during meetings immediately after the crisis between Soviet Deputy Premier Anastas Mikoyan and Cuba's principal leaders. Translated excerpts from both documents are printed below. Taken together, the documents provide a deeper understanding of the nature and roots of the Cuban-Soviet relationship between the crisis and the August 1968 Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia.

Those six years were the defining moments of both the Cuban revolution and the remaining 23 years of the Cuban-Soviet relationship. It is notable, then, that just eight months prior to the 1968 invasion, Castro provided his party's leadership with such an extensive review of Cuban-Soviet ties, starting with the Missile Crisis. To appreciate the significance of this speech, it is necessary first to review Cuba's perspective on the Missile Crisis.

Cuba's Perspective on the Crisis

Until recent years, Cuba had been largely excluded from or marginalized in analyses of the Cuban Missile Crisis. It was seen as no more than the stage on which the U.S.-Soviet confrontation brought the world to the brink of nuclear war. But new information about Cuba's role indicates that a full appreciation of the event can only be gained by examining Cuba's goals and fears prior to the crisis and its actions during the crisis.³

Early in his speech, Castro asserted that when a Soviet delegation (headetw[r7.5 0

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the 27th). In that letter, the Cuban leader predicted that U.S. military strikes, and conceivably an invasion, were likely to occur in the next 24 to 72 hours (that is, possibly 10-12 hours after the Kremlin received the letter). In order to protect Cuba, Mikoyan contended, the Soviet Union had to act swiftly, without consulting Cuba. But, Castro retorted, the formula worked out between Kennedy and Khrushchev seemed to be based on a secret letter the Soviet leader had sent to the U.S. president on October 26, prior to receiving the Cuban leader's assessment.¹⁰ Cuba thus felt aggrieved at being ignored.

Second, Castro was angry over the Kennedy-Khrushchev agreement itself. Why, he demanded of Mikoyan, did the Soviets not extract anything more substantial from the United States that would increase Cuban security and defend Cuba's honor? On October 28, the Cuban leader had articulated five points that he stated should have been the basis of an agreement, including a cessation of U.S. overflights and a withdrawal from Guantanamo Naval Base.¹¹ At a minimum he expected that the Soviets could have forced the United States to meet with Cuba to discuss the five points face to face. That would have at least recognized Cuban sovereignty. Instead, the Soviets seemed oblivious to Cuban sovereignty, even agreeing to an internationally sponsored inspection of the dismantling of the missiles on Cuban soil without first asking Cuba's permission.

Third, there was the issue of Cuba's vulnerability, which had several elements. The Cuban leadership interpreted the agreement as a Soviet capitulation to U.S. threats, and correctly understood at the time what was made explicit only twenty years later: that the Soviet Union was unwilling ultimately to put itself at risk to protect Cuba.¹² "We realized," Castro said to the Central Committee, "how alone we would be in the event of a war." In the same vein, he described the Soviet decision to remove all but 3,000 of its 42,000 military personnel from Cuba as "a freely granted concession to top off the concession of the withdrawal of the strategic missiles."

The Cubans saw the Soviet soldiers more as a deterrent to potential U.S. aggression—a kind of tripwire that would involve the Soviet Union in a Cuban-U.S. conflict—than as a necessary military support. Cuba had more than 100,000 soldiers under arms

and an even greater number in militias. But Cuban leaders did want to retain other weaponry that the United States was demanding the Soviet Union withdraw. Most important were IL-28 bombers, which were obsolete but capable of carrying a nuclear payload. Castro explained in 1968 that

they were useful planes; it is possible that had we possessed IL-28s, the Central American bases [from which Cuban exiles were launching Mongoose attacks] might not have been organized, not because we would have bombed the bases, but because of their fear that we might.

Mikoyan recognized their importance. On November 5, Mikoyan told the Cuban leadership that "Americans are trying to make broader the list of weapons for evacuation. Such attempts have already been made, but we'll not allow them to do so."¹³

"To hell with the imperialists!" Castro approvingly recalled Mikoyan saying, if they added more demands. Nevertheless, Castro lamented in 1968, "some 24, or at most 48 hours later...Mikoyan arrived bearing the sad news that the IL-28 planes would also have to be returned."¹⁴ (Castro's memory may be in error here: according to the declassified Soviet records of the Mikoyan-Castro conversations, Mikoyan conveyed Moscow's decision to withdraw the bomber's, to Castro's evident fury, in a meeting on November 12.¹⁵) From the Cuban perspective, Cuba was even more vulnerable than before the Missile Crisis because the hollowness of Soviet protection was exposed and key weaponry was being taken away.

Castro also was concerned that the U.S.-Soviet accord would weaken Cuba internally and encourage counter-revolution and perhaps challenges to his leadership. He remarked to Mikoyan on 3 November 1962:

All of this seemed to our people to be a step backward, a retreat. It turns out that we must accept inspections, accept the U.S. right to determine what kinds of weapons we can use....Cuba is a young developing country. Our people are very impulsive. The moral factor has a special significance in our country. We were afraid that these decisions could provoke a breach in the people's unity....

Finally, Cuba perceived it was nothing more than a pawn in Soviet calculations. Castro's comments to Mikoyan about this confuse the sequence of events, but the source of the anger and disillusionment is clear. He said on November 3:

And suddenly came the report of the American agency UPI that "the Soviet premier has given orders to Soviet personnel to dismantle missile launchers and return them to the USSR." Our people could not believe that report. It caused deep confusion. People didn't understand the way that the issue was structured—the possibility of removing missile armaments from Cuba if the U.S. liquidated its bases in Turkey.

In 1992, the Cuban leader intimated that this initial confusion hardened into anger during his six-week trip to the Soviet Union, in early 1963, after Khrushchev inadvertently informed Castro that there had been a secret understanding between the United States and Soviet Union for the removal of U.S. missiles from Turkey. This seemed to confirm his suspicion that the protection of Cuba was merely a pretext for the Soviet goal of enhancing its own security.

nated trading bloc of socialist countries.

The January 1968 speech, then, appears to have given the Cuban leadership the freedom to choose a closer relationship with the Soviet Union. By asserting Cuban independence, Castro could accept the kind of ties that would have appeared to make Cuba less independent.

It is impossible to know whether this sort of calculation prompted his speech. In January 1968, the Cuban leadership may not have had a clear sense of where they were taking their country. The internal debate during the following two or three months—which undoubtedly engendered the March closure of small businesses—proved to be critical for the future direction of the Cuban revolution.

With hindsight, it seems that Cuba had few options left. It had experienced a major rift with China by 1966. The October 1967 death of Guevara in Bolivia convinced several Cuban leaders that armed struggle was not going to be a viable means of building revolutionary alliances in Latin America. While the Soviet Union continued to trade with Cuba despite its fierce independence, Kosygin's visit may have been a warning to Castro that the Soviet Union would not give Cuba any more rope with which to wander away from the fold. Indeed, Soviet technicians were recalled during the spring of 1968.²⁹

These factors thus impelled Cuba toward a rapprochement with the Soviet Union, and the decision to do so coincided with the micro-faction trial and Castro's speech. In choosing to join the fold, Cuba would try to do it on its own terms, determined to protect its sovereignty and to be the principal guardian of its national interest. That determination clearly grew out of its experiences during the Missile Crisis and in the prior five years of tense relations with the Soviet Union. It is in understanding these terms with which Cuba established its ties to the Soviet Union that the January 1968 speech makes an important contribution to the history of the Cold War.

1. The full text of the Missile Crisis portion of the speech will be published in James G. Blight and Philip Brenner, *The October Crisis: Fidel Castro, Nuclear Missiles, and Cuban-Soviet Relations* (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, forthcoming).

2. At the time, Castro was First Secretary of the Communist Party of Cuba and Commander-in-Chief of the Cuban Armed Forces. He was referred to as Commander Castro. Today he is also President of

Cuba.

3. Much of the information has been derived from two major conferences—held in Moscow in 1989 and in Havana in 1992—which brought together former policymakers and scholars from the United States, Soviet Union and Cuba, and included President Castro, as well as from documents declassified through the efforts of the National Security Archive. See James G. Blight and David A. Welch, *On the Brink: Americans and Soviets Reexamine the Cuban Missile Crisis*, 2d ed. (New York: Noonday Press of Farrar Straus and Giroux, 1990). James G. Blight, Bruce J. Allyn, and David A. Welch, *Cuba on the Brink* (New York: Pantheon, 1993); *Back to the Brink: Proceedings of the Moscow Conference on the Cuban Missile Crisis, January 27-28, 1989*, eds., Bruce J. Allyn, James G. Blight and David A. Welch, CSIA Occasional Paper No. 9 (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1992); Philip Brenner, "Thirteen Days: Cuba's Perspective on the Missile Crisis," in James A. Nathan, ed., *The Cuban Missile Crisis Revisited* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1992); Laurence Chang and Peter Kornbluh, eds., *The Cuban Missile Crisis, 1962: A National Security Archive Documents Reader* (New York: The New Press, 1992).

4. This formulation was the same he provided in an interview five months after the crisis. See Claude Julien, "Sept Heures avec M. Fidel Castro," *Le Monde*, 22 and 23 March 1963.

5. Indeed, the Soviets similarly assessed the suspension. See Blight and Welch, *On the Brink* (2d ed.), 238.

6. On pre-crisis U.S. military planning and covert actions against Cuba, see James G. Hershberg, "Before 'The Missiles of October': Did Kennedy Plan a Military Strike Against Cuba?" in Nathan, ed., *The Cuban Missile Crisis Revisited*, 237-80. Notably, former Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara observed in 1989 that were he a Cuban leader in 1962, he would likely have assessed that U.S. actions portended an invasion. See Allyn, Blight, and Welch, *Back to the Brink*, 7. McNamara argued, though, that despite Cuba's reasonable conclusion, the United States never intended a military invasion.

7. Operation Mongoose was devised as a total plan for low intensity conflict. It also included propaganda operations through an off-shore radio station and economic pressure that was implemented through the formal establishment of the U.S. embargo in February 1962. Gen. Edward Lansdale, the operational chief of the project, had proposed a very detailed plan of action that foresaw U.S. pressure leading to a general uprising that would ultimately require a direct U.S. military invasion. See Chang and Kornbluh, eds., *The Cuban Missile Crisis, 1962*, Documents 5 and 7.

8. Fabian Escalante Font, *Cuba: la guerra secreta de la CIA* (Havana: Editorial Capitán San Luis, 1993).

9. Castro made a similar case in 1992. See Blight, Allyn and Welch, *Cuba on the Brink*, 205-210. Notably, President Kennedy understood the matter of secrecy in the same light, asserting that whoever revealed the missiles first would be able to set the terms of debate. See Richard Reeves, *President Kennedy: Profile of Power* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1993), 382. Also see McGeorge Bundy and Theodore Sorensen's comments in Allyn, Blight and Welch, *Back to the Brink*, 20-21.

10. The Castro-Khrushchev correspondence was reprinted in *Problems of Communism*, Special Edition, Spring 1992, 37-45, and in Blight, Allyn, and Welch, *Cuba on the Brink*, 474-491.

11. *Revolucion*, 29 October 1962.

12. Jorge I. Domínguez, *To Make the World Safe for*

Revolution: Cuba's Foreign Policy (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1989), 108; Cole Blasler, *The Giant's Rival: The USSR and Latin America* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1983), 126.

13. See record of Mikoyan-Castro conversation, 5 November 1962, Russian Foreign Ministry archives.

14. The correspondence between Kennedy and Khrushchev over the removal of the IL-28s is reprinted in *Problems of Communism*, Special Edition, Spring 1992, 77-96. Also in this issue see: Philip Brenner, "Kennedy and Khrushchev on Cuba: Two Stages, Three Parties."

15. For an English translation of the November 12 minutes, and of Mikoyan's ciphered telegram to Moscow summarizing it, see Gen. Anatoli I. Gribkov and Gen. William Y. Smith, *Operation ANADYR: U.S. and Soviet Generals Recount the Cuban Missile Crisis* (Chicago: Edition Q, 1994), 189-99.

16. Blight, Allyn, and Welch, *Cuba on the Brink*, 224-225.

17. *Granma*, International Edition (English), 4 and 11 February 1968.

18. Lourdes Casal, "Cultural Policy and Writers in Cuba," in Philip Brenner, William M. LeoGrande, Donna Rich, and Daniel Siegel, eds., *The Cuba Reader: The Making of a Revolutionary Society*, (New York: Grove Press, 1989), 508-509.

19. *Granma*, International Edition (English), 7 January 1968, 2-3.

20. Yuri Pavlov, *Soviet-Cuban Alliance: 1959-1991*

**The October Crisis:
Excerpts of a Speech by Fidel Castro
[Translated from Spanish by the Cuban
Council of State]**

**MEETING OF THE
CENTRAL COMMITTEE**

tion, in which they depicted the planes flying above them, the Yanquis sticking their tongues out at them, and their planes and guns covered with cobwebs. And we realized once again to what extent the men who were supposed to be very experienced in struggling against the imperialists were actually totally oblivious to imperialist mentality, revolutionary mentality, our people's mentality, and the ultra-demoralizing effects of such a passive—more than passive, cowardly—attitude.

So we warned Mikoyan that we were going to open fire on the low-flying planes. We even did him that favor, since they still had the ground-to-air missiles and we were interested in preserving them. We visited some emplacements and asked that they be moved given that they were not going to shoot and we did not want them destroyed, because we were planning to open fire on the planes.

We recall those days because of the bitter decisions that had to be made.

1. [Ed. note: Castro is here alluding to his exchange of correspondence with Khrushchev of 26-31 October 1962 (esp. Castro's letters of October 26 and 31 and Khrushchev's letter of October 30), first released by the Cuban government and published in the Cuban Communist Party newspaper *Granma* on 23 November 1990, and published as an appendix to James G. Blight, Bruce J. Allyn, and David A. Welch, *Cuba On the Brink: Castro, the Missile Crisis, and the Soviet Collapse* (New York: Pantheon, 1993, 474-91.)

2. [Ed. note: It is not clear what lengthy letter Castro is referring to here, or whether it has been made available to researchers: a lengthy letter reviewing the crisis and its impact on Soviet-Cuban relations, dated 31 January 1963, from Khrushchev to Castro was released at the 1992 Havana conference.]

3. Soviet Deputy Premier Anastas Mikoyan arrived in Havana on 2 November 1962. The first meeting with the Cuban leader was on November 3. By the account here, Mikoyan notified the Cubans on about November 5 or 6 that the IL-28s would be removed. Declassified contemporary documents, however, including Kennedy-Khrushchev correspondence and Castro-Mikoyan conversation minutes, suggest that Mikoyan informed Castro about Moscow's acquiescence to Kennedy's demand to remove the IL-28s only on November 12.

4. It is not clear to what Castro is referring. Central American bases were used for training Cuban exiles in 1960 and 1961, and for launching the Bay of Pigs invasion. There is evidence that plans also were made for creating a Nicaraguan and Costa Rican base, but there is not clear evidence on whether they were used. See Fabian Escalante Font, *Cuba: la guerra secreta de la CIA* (Havana: Editorial Capitán San Luis, 1993), 180; Warren Hinckle and William Turner, *Deadly Secrets* (New York: Thunder's Mouth Press, 1992), 165-166.

5. In fact, U.S. estimates were never more than half of that number. See Dino A. Brugioni, *EyeBall to EyeBall: The Inside Story of the Cuban Missile Crisis* (New York: Random House, 1991), 308. Also see "'Soviet Military Buildup in Cuba,' 21 October, 1962," in Mary S. McAuliffe, ed., *CIA Documents on the Cuban Missile Crisis, 1962* (Washington: Central Intelligence Agency, 1992; HRP 92-9), 258.

After discussing all the logistical and organizational problems related to the project, the Cuban leader began to recall those troubled days of October 1962 when the fate of the humanity was played out in the game between Moscow, Washington, and Havana. And even though Castro repeatedly spoke on this topic later, that conversation contained a series of statements and judgments that shed some light on the development and outcome of the 1962 crisis, and on Fidel Castro's perspective on it:

"I Know Something About The Caribbean Crisis"

(Notes from a conversation with Fidel Castro,



defense...[Ellipsis in original.]

And suddenly—concessions...[Ellipsis in original.]

Concessions on the part of the Soviet Union produced a sense of oppressiveness. Psychologically our people were not prepared for that. A feeling of deep disappointment, bitterness and pain has appeared, as if we were deprived of not only the missiles, but of the very symbol of solidarity. Reports of missile launchers being dismantled and returned to the USSR at first seemed to our people to be an insolent lie. You know, the Cuban people were not aware of the agreement, were not aware that the missiles still belonged to the Soviet side. The Cuban people did not conceive of the juridical status of these weapons. They had become accustomed to the fact that the Soviet Union gave us weapons and that they became our property.

And suddenly came the report of the American [news] agency UPI that “the Soviet premier has given orders to Soviet personnel to dismantle missile launchers and return them to the USSR.” Our people could not believe that report. It caused deep confusion. People didn’t understand the way that the issue was structured—the possibility of removing missile armaments from Cuba if the USA liquidated its bases in Turkey.

I was saying, Fidel Castro continued, that in the post-revolutionary years we have carried out much ideological work to prepare people for understanding socialist ideas, marxist ideas. These ideas today are deeply rooted. Our people admire the policies of the Soviet government, learn from the Soviet people to whom they are deeply thankful for invaluable help and support. BET 1 s[(Oureturne

We were very worried by the fact that the moral spirit of our people had declined sharply. That affected their fighting spirit too. At the same time the insolent flights of American planes into Cuban airspace became more frequent, and we were asked not to open fire on them. All of this generated a strong demoralizing influence. The feeling of disappointment, pain and bitterness that enveloped people could have been used by counter-revolutionaries to instigate anti-so-

tion that the threat of aggression was so critical, that there was no time for consultations.

...

Then for half an hour A.I. Mikoyan discussed the issues about which Fidel Castro had talked, but these explanations were interrupted by an incoming report about the death of Mikoyan's wife. The transcript of this part of the conversation will be transmitted with the notes of the next conversation.

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[Source: Russian Foreign Ministry archives, obtained and translated by NHK television, copy provided by Philip Brenner; translation by Vladimir Zaemsky.]

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**Document II:
"It was necessary to use the art of diplomacy"
— The Second Castro-Mikoyan Conversation,
4 November 1962**

MEMORANDUM OF CONVERSATION

A.I. MIKOYAN with Fidel CASTRO, [Cuban President] Oswaldo DORTICOS TORRADO, [Defense Minister] Raul CASTRO, Ernesto GUEVARA, Emilio ARAGONES and Carlos Rafael RODRIGUEZ

4 November 1962

A.I. MIKOYAN transmitted to the Cuban leaders cordial fraternal regards on behalf of the Presidium of the CC CPSU and N.S. Khrushchev. He said that the Central Committee of the CPSU feels admiration and respect toward Cuban leaders, who from the very beginning of their struggle demonstrated courage and fearlessness, confidence in revolutionary victory in Cuba, readiness to devote all their forces to the struggle. We are proud of the victory achieved by the Cuban revolution against interventionists on Playa Giron [Giron Beach, Bay of Pigs]. Cuban revolutionaries demonstrated such a potent spirit of resistance that it inspires admiration and proves that the Cubans are always ready to fight until victory is achieved. Cuban leaders have shown great courage, intrepidity, and firmness in dangerous days. The CC CPSU admires the readiness of the Cuban people to stand up. We trust Cuban leaders as we do ourselves.

In the course of the Cuban events our party and government were acting having in mind to do whatever was necessary to make [the situation] better for Cuba. When Ambassador Alekseev informed [us] about the opinion of comrade Fidel Castro, that there are some differences between our parties, we were very pained. Immediately all

the leadership held a meeting. For the question of Cuba worries us a lot. We felt it necessary to re-establish mutual trust because trust is the basis of everything, the basis of really fraternal relations. We understood that no correspondence can suffice to explain completely the misunderstanding of those days. Therefore the CC CPSU decided to send me to Cuba in order to explain to our friends the Soviet position and to inform them on other subjects that may be of interest to them. We know, - Mikoyan continued, - that if we explain everything frankly then you, our brothers, will understand us. Comrade Mikoyan made the observation that he, naturally, had no intention to put pressure [on Cuba], that his task was to explain our position. Being acquainted with the Cuban comrades, - A.I. Mikoyan said, - I'm confident that they will agree with it. It is certainly possible that even after our explanations there will remain some issues about which we shall still have different points of view. Our task is to preserve mutual trust which is needed for really friendly relations with Cuba, for the future of Cuba and the USSR and the whole world revolutionary movement.

Yesterday comrade Fidel Castro explained very frankly and in detail that the Cuban people had not understood everything regarding the most recent actions of the Soviet government. Comrade Fidel Castro also spoke on the issues which worry the Cuban leadership. He underlined the role of the psychological factor which has special significance in Cuba. Several particularities of the psychological mold of Cubans have formed as a result of the historical development of the country. And, as comrade Fidel Castro was saying, it is very important to take this into account.

In New York, said Mikoyan, I learned the substance of the speech by comrade Fidel Castro on 1 November. Certainly I could not perceive completely the speech insofar as the American press frequently distorts the substance of the statements made by Cuban leaders. But even on the basis of the American press interpretation I understood that it was a friendly speech pronounced by comrade Fidel Castro underlining the great significance of friendship between the Soviet Union and Cuba, mentioning the broad aid rendered by the Soviet Union to Revolutionary Cuba. He also said that there were some differences in views between us, but those differences had to be discussed on the level of parties and governments, not massive rallies. Those words of Fidel Castro, testifying sentiments of friendship and trust toward our country, were reaffirmed by the welcome reception on my arrival to Havana. The very tone of the conversation with comrade Fidel Castro was imbued with a sense of fellowship and trust.

I'm confident, continued Mikoyan, that the existing mutual trust between us will always be there notwithstanding some differences of opin-

tance, is why have we decided to withdraw the

Nevertheless, the Americans managed to take a photo of the missiles in the firing position. Kennedy didn't want to speak about Soviet missiles in Cuba until the end of the Congressional elections. He did not want to strain relations. But two Republican senators [a clear reference to Sens. Kenneth Keating of New York and Everett Dirksen of Illinois—ed.] learned about the fact of the strategic missiles placed in Cuba and therefore Kennedy hastened to take the initiative into his hands, or else he would be hardpressed. We had no information on how he intended to act.

The United States of America organized maneuvers in the area of Vieques Island [in the Caribbean], naming them "Ortsac," i.e., Castro, if you read it backwards. But those maneuvers could appear to be not an exercise, but a sea cover for a strong blow against Cuba. At that moment, when Kennedy made a statement and announced [on October 22—ed.] the decision of declaring a blockade against Cuba, we didn't know if the Americans were really carrying out maneuvers or were preparing for a direct attack upon Cuba.

On 28 October in the morning [presumably this refers to Moscow time, which would mean the evening of 27 October in Washington—ed.] we received reliable reports of preparations for an attack against Cuba. Indeed we were aware of the fact that the Americans had interrupted their maneuvers because of a hurricane. The maneuvers did not resume when the hurricane went away but the American combatant ships remained in the same area in direct proximity to Cuba. N.S. Khrushchev rebuked Kennedy for declaring a blockade around Cuba. We strongly opposed the American attempts to assume the right to determine what weapons Cuba can use and what armaments it may not possess. And then the Americans decided to carry out a direct aggression. Their plan consisted of two parts. Wishing to free themselves from the threat of a blow from the strategic missiles, they decided to liquidate the launchers in Cuba with the help of conventional warhead missiles and immediately after that land troops on Cuban territory in order to liquidate centers of resistance as soon as possible.

It would have been impossible for us in these circumstances not to repulse the aggression of the USA. This assault would mean an assault upon you and us, as far as in Cuba there were situated Soviet troops and strategic missiles. Inevitably, nuclear war would be unleashed as a result of such a collision. Certainly we would destroy America, our country would be strongly damaged too, but we have a larger territory. Cuba would have been destroyed first. Imperialists would do their best to liquidate Cuba.

The objective of all the measures undertaken by the Soviet Union was the defense of Cuba. It was necessary to determine our line of conduct. The loss of Cuba would mean a serious blow to the whole socialist camp. And exactly at the moment when we were pondering the ques-

tion of what to do in the created situation we received the communication from comrade Castro, it was on Sunday, that an aggression against Cuba would be unleashed in the next 24 hours. From other sources we were in possession of information that the USA aggression would begin in 10-12 hours. Despite the fact that these were separate sources, the information corresponded. Until the moment of the start of the USA aggression against Cuba remained 10-12 hours. It was necessary to use the art of diplomacy. Had we not been successful in this regard there would have been unleashed a war. We had to use diplomatic means.

Kennedy was making statements that he had nothing against the stationing in Cuba of Soviet weapons, even troops, but that placing strategic weapons in Cuba was evidence of preparations for an assault against the USA. Therefore the USA would defend itself. Considering that the missiles had been discovered and were no longer a means of deterrence we decided that for the sake of saving Cuba it was necessary to give an order to dismantle and return the strategic missiles to the Soviet Union and to inform Kennedy of this. You agreed with the withdrawal of strategic missiles from Cuba while leaving there all the other kinds of armaments. We managed to preserve all the forces and means which are necessary for the defense of the Cuban revolution even without strategic missiles which had been a means of

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All of this could take more than 10 hours and such a consultation would not have made sense by that time. It would be too late. It could happen in such a way, that the answer would be received, but Cuba itself would have ceased to exist, a war would have been unleashed. It was a critical moment. We thought our Cuban friends would understand us. Moreover we knew from the cable from Fidel Castro that the Cuban leadership was aware of the direct threat of assault. At that moment the main objective consisted of preventing an attack. We thought, the Cuban comrades would understand us. Therefore, we made the decision to act immediately, but without paying due attention to the psychological factor, about which comrade Fidel Castro spoke here.

Regarding the possibility of a truce at that moment, mentioned by the Cuban comrades, the Americans would not take such a step in those conditions. There are a lot of revanchists in the Pentagon, and Kennedy is a deterrent element with respect to them. The Americans would have burst into Cuba. We had no time. Certainly, it was a decision that created some difficulties for you, the Cuban people.

Let us compare the situation at the present time and the situation before the crisis. Before the crisis the Americans were preparing an intervention against Cuba. Now they have committed themselves not to attack Cuba. It is a great success. Certainly, the events also had negative consequences, especially as American propaganda was trying suit their own ends by using some facts and distorting them. But that is inevitable. These are the costs of events that have crucial importance. Our task is to eliminate the negative consequences of the recent events.

Comrade Dorticos is correct when he asks why did we give our consent to Kennedy's message on non-aggression against Cuba without the concordance of the Cuban government. But it was exactly our consent (and nothing else) that ensured some truce for a certain time.

One cannot perceive nihilistically all agreements and commitments, although sometimes these agreements and commitments are important only during a certain time, until conditions change. So they keep their importance until the situation changes.

We were asked about our demand on the liquidation of American bases in Turkey.

Speaking frankly, we were not thinking about bases in Turkey at all. But during discussion of the dangerous situation we received information from the United States of America, including an article by [columnist Walter] Lippmann [in the *Washington Post*

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me that the Cubans could try to prevent the withdrawal from Cuba of the strategic missiles. He added that the Cubans had 140 thousand soldiers and Soviet troops are only 10 thousand. Regarding the first remark I told him that it was nonsense, because Fidel Castro himself had announced that he was not objecting to the withdrawal of the Soviet strategic missiles. Certainly, I didn't dispute his data on the numbers of the troops.

By the way, he said that the U-2 plane had been shot down over Cuban territory [on 27 October—ed.] by Russian missiles, though anti-aircraft launchers, in his opinion, could be operated by the Cubans. I neither confirmed, nor disputed, this observation of McCloy.

F. CASTRO. These planes are flying at the altitude of 22 thousand meters and the limit of our artillery is lower. Therefore it's understandable that in this case the anti-aircraft missiles were used.

A.I. MIKOYAN. I didn't engage in further discussion with him of this issue.

We insist on immediate lifting of the quarantine. If you want us to finish the withdrawal of strategic missiles from Cuba as soon as possible, I said to McCloy, then give anti-aircraft missiles, artillery is lower.

could not be present on the American continent in whatever form. They know about the Soviet military in Cuba, but do not speak of the Monroe doctrine.

Cuba found itself in the center of international political events. The United Nations Organization is engaged in the Cuban issue. U Thant practically backs Cuba and comes out against the USA policy. And you remember that previously it was not possible to obtain support for Cuba at the UN. World public opinion has been mobilized and even some nations who were previously against Cuba.

In the USA there are hysterics, but in their souls many people understand the fairness of the Cuban demands.

In the end, the prestige of the socialist camp has strengthened. It defended peace, though the USA was rapidly sliding down toward war.

People have united in order to resist American plans aimed at unleashing a war, and simultaneously the Soviet policy was carried out in the framework of settling the issues by peaceful means.

The immediate threat of military attack against Cuba is gone. I believe it is moved aside for several years.

It is necessary now to fix that success on the diplomatic field, so that Cuba—a beacon of Latin American revolution—could develop more rapidly in every respect and give a decisive example for mobilizing other peoples for struggle.

Our support becomes more and more active. We are helping you as our brothers. More possibilities have been created.

Americans are obliged to take Cuba into account, to solve issues, regarding Cuba, with our participation. We are not speaking about Russia [sic—ed.] as such, but as a country of socialism. Socialism, which you are also meritoriously representing, became a decisive factor of international policy. American propaganda is repeating over and over again about a diminishing of Cuba's prestige. Just to the contrary Cuba's prestige has been undoubtedly strengthened as a result of recent events.

In conclusion A.I. Mikoyan apologized to the Cuban comrades for having tired them out. Joking he adds that the only compensation is that he is worn out too. So there is complete equality.

He suggests to set the time of the next meeting.

F. CASTRO asked, if it was possible, to discuss Soviet policy regarding the Berlin issue.

A.I. MIKOYAN answered that he would do so, and also would discuss the exchange of letters between the CPSU and communist parties of India and China on the issue of conflict between India and China. He can explain our plans in the sphere of disarmament, on the ceasing of tests of hydrogen weapons, and answer all other ques-

tions including economic issues.

It was decided to have another meeting in the Presidential Palace at 14 hours [2 pm—ed.] on 5 November.

Ambassador Alekseev was also present on the Soviet side.

Recorded by V. Tikhmenev

[signature]

[Source: Russian Foreign Ministry archives, obtained and translated by NHK television, copy provided by Philip Brenner; translation by Aleksandr Zaemsky slightly revised.]

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Document III:

**“I don’t understand such a sharp reaction”
—The Third Castro-Mikoyan Conversation,
5 November 1962 (afternoon)**

MEMORANDUM OF CONVERSATION

A.I. MIKOYAN with Fidel CASTRO, Oswaldo PORTICOS, Raul CASTRO, Ernesto GUEVARA and Carlos Rafael RODRIGUEZ

5 November 1962

A conversation between A.I. Mikoyan and the same composition of the Cuban leadership, as on the previous occasion, took place on 5 November, at the Presidential palace. The conversation lasted 2 hours 30 minutes.

During the previous meeting F. Castro asked comrade Mikoyan a question which showed his doubts as if we had not given him all the messages from N.S. Khrushchev to president Kennedy. He asked how the statement of Kennedy of 27 October could be explained, insofar as there was already a reference to our consent to dismantle ground launchers for special equipment.

Comrade Mikoyan answered Castro that all confidential letters from N.S. Khrushchev had been given to the Cuban comrades and the open messages are known to them from the media. No other letters have been sent from N.S. Khrushchev to Kennedy, said Mikoyan.

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the messages we had the possibility to send them quickly to Cuba, but we could not wait for an answer because it would take a lot of time to encode, decipher, translate, and transmit them.

Acting in this way, we were proceeding from our conviction that the most important objective in that situation was to prevent an attack against Cuba. I would like to underline that our proposals to dismantle the strategic missiles and to liquidate the American bases in Turkey had been advanced before receiving the letter from comrade Fidel Castro of 27 October. The order for the dismantling of the strategic missiles and their evacuation was given after we had received the letter from Kennedy of 27 October and the letter from Fidel Castro. In our message of 28 October, as you have noted, the demand for the liquidation of bases in Turkey was no longer suggested. We did this because we were afraid that in spite of our proposal of 27 October the American imperialists could assault Cuba. We had nothing else to do but to work on the main task—to prevent an attack against Cuba, believing that our Cuban friends would understand the correctness of our actions, although the normal procedure of coordination had not been observed.

The question was that there were 24 hours left before an assault against Cuba. It must be taken into consideration that we had only a few [literally, “counted”—ed.] hours at our disposal and we could not act other than we did. And there are results: an attack against Cuba is prevented, the peace is preserved. However you are right that the procedure of consultations, which is possible under normal circumstances, was not followed.

F. CASTRO. I would like to respond to comrade Mikoyan.

We have listened with great attention to the information and explanations offered by comrade Mikoyan. Undoubtedly all those explanations are very valuable because they help us to understand better the course of events. We are thankful for the desire to explain everything to us, for the efforts undertaken in this regard. The arguments, that the strategic missiles after being discovered by the enemy practically lost whatever military significance or their significance becomes extremely small, also cause no doubts among us.

We are grateful for all these explanations and do understand, that the intentions of the Soviet government cannot be assessed only on the grounds of an analysis of the most recent developments, especially as the atmosphere is rapidly changing and new situations are created. The totality of adopted decisions, which became the basis for supplying strategic weapons and the signing of [the Soviet-Cuban—ed.] agreement, must be taken into consideration. It was supposed to publish that agreement after the installation of the strategic missiles and after the elec-

tions in the USA. These decisions are testimony to the firm resolution of the Soviet Union to defend Cuba. They help to understand correctly the policy of the Soviet Union. Therefore, I repeat, an analysis of the USSR position can be correct only with due regard for all the events and decisions both before and during the crisis.

We do not doubt that if all the works on the assembly of the strategic weapons had been completed in conditions of secrecy then we would have received a strong means of deterrence against American plans for attacking our country. In this way objectives would have been achieved which are pursued both by the Soviet government and the government of the Republic of Cuba. However, we consider that the installation of Soviet missiles in Cuba was significant for the interests of the whole socialist camp. Even if we consider it to be a military advantage, it was politically and psychologically important in the struggle for the deterrence of imperialism and the prevention of its aggressive plans. Thus, the installation of the strategic missiles in Cuba was carried out not only in the interests of the defense of Cuba, but of the whole socialist camp. It was done with our complete consent.

We understood perfectly well the significance of this action and we considered it to be a correct step.

We also completely agree that war must be prevented. We do not object that the measures undertaken were in pursuit of two objectives, that is—to prevent an attack against Cuba and to avoid starting a world war. We completely agree with these aims pursued by the Soviet Union.

Misunderstanding arose in connection with the form of discussion of this issue. However, we understand that the circumstances were demanding urgent actions and the situation was abnormal. Assessing past events, we come to the conclusion that the discussion of these sharp questions could be carried out in another form. For example, the issue, which we have already discussed here, in regard to my letter in connection with the decision of the Soviet government and the publication of the Soviet government statement of 28 October. True, my letter bore no relation to issues mentioned in the messages of 26 and 27 October between the Soviet government and the USA Administration. Such a letter [from Castro to Khrushchev—ed.] pursued one objective—to inform the Soviet government about the inevitability of an assault against Cuba. There was not a word about any minor hesitation on our side. We clearly declared our resolve to fight. Besides, we didn’t say that we were expecting an invasion. We wrote that it was possible, but not so likely. In our opinion, more probable was an air attack with the sole aim of destroying the strategic weapons in Cuba. The basis of the Soviet government decision of 28 October had already been reflected in the message to Kennedy of 26 October and clearly manifested itself in the

letter from N.S. Khrushchev to Kennedy of 27 October. In those two documents there is the real basis for the decision announced in the letter of 28 October. So, Kennedy’s letter of 27 October meant acceptance of proposals by N.S. Khrushchev of 26 October consisting of his consent to evacuate from Cuba not only strategic armaments, but all the weapons if the USA stops threatening Cuba with an attack. Because the threat on the part of the USA had been the only reason that forced Cuba to arm itself. When Kennedy accepted this proposal (we didn’t know that he was accepting it), the conditions were created to develop the Soviet proposals and prepare a declaration regarding the agreement of the parties. The USA could have been told that the USSR was ready to dismantle the equipment but would like to discuss it with the Cuban government. In our opinion the issue should have been solved in this way instead of giving immediately an order to evacuate the strategic weapons. Such a procedure would have lessened international tension and secured the possibility to discuss the issue with the Americans in more favorable conditions. In this way it could have been possible not only to achieve a lessening of international tension and to discuss the issue in better conditions, but also to achieve the signing of a declaration.

It is only a simple analysis of previous events that does not have special importance right now.

Nowadays it is important for us to know what to do under the new conditions. In what way shall we seek to achieve our main goals and at the same time fight to prevent an aggression and preserve peace. Certainly, if in due course we manage to secure a lasting peace, then we’ll have an opportunity to better assess the undertaken steps in light of new facts. Future results of our struggle will demonstrate the importance of today’s events. Certainly, only a little bit in this struggle depends on us personally.

We are very grateful for all the explanations given to us by comrade Mikoyan, for all the efforts undertaken by him in order to make us understand the recent events. We take into consideration the special conditions under which it was necessary to act. We have no doubts regarding the friendly character of our relations, based on common principles. Our respect for the Soviet Union is unshakable. We know that it respects our sovereignty and is ready to defend us from an aggression on the part of imperialism. Therefore, the most important thing now is to determine our joint steps.

I would like to assure you, comrade Mikoyan, of our complete trust.

A.I. MIKOYAN. I’m deeply satisfied by the statement of comrade Fidel Castro. We have always been confident of our sincere friendship which nothing can disrupt. I’ll transmit word by

word your statement to the CC CPSU and I'm sure that it will produce gladness on the part of the Central Committee.

I would like to make a small explanation, very briefly.

I agree completely with the assessment, made by comrade Fidel Castro of his own letter. He is interpreting it correctly. It's a legitimate question raised by him—could we have made another decision instead of [sending] instructions for dismantling the strategic weapons[?] But we had been informed that an attack against Cuba would begin within the next few hours. Perhaps it was really intended to deliver a blow first of all against the strategic missile sites, but it would be followed by a strike against Cuba. We had to act resolutely in order to frustrate the plan of attack on Cuba. We realize that by doing this we had to sacrifice the necessity of consultations with the Cuban government.

Regarding comrade Fidel Castro's opinion that in the letter from N.S. Khrushchev to Kennedy of 26 October, there was a promise to withdraw from Cuba all the weapons and all military specialists. The Americans did not demand from us such a step. The issue was the offensive weapons. Perhaps comrade Fidel Castro made such a conclusion on the basis of the phrase where a withdrawal of technical specialists was mentioned. But this implied specialists who operate strategic missiles. The fact that it regarded only them is confirmed by all the letters, by the totality of their context. They were about offensive weapons only.

FIDEL CASTRO confirms, that his understanding was just the same.

A.I. MIKOYAN. It is no coincidence that in his answer to this letter Kennedy does not raise the question of removing from Cuba all the weapons. If such a proposal had been present in our letter, Kennedy would undoubtedly have taken advantage of it. Therefore the opinion, outlined by comrade Fidel Castro regarding this part, is incorrect. There is nothing of the kind in the letters of 27 and 28 October.

I would like to mention, that the Americans are trying to broaden the list of weapons for evacuation. Such attempts have already been made, but we will not allow them to do so. On our part, we gave our consent only to withdraw strategic weapons. When I was speaking to McCloy he told me with a smile that it would be good if we removed from Cuba the anti-aircraft missiles, too. But those are defensive weapons, not offensive.

Half an hour before my departure from New York, those pilferers (now we are speaking about Stevenson) sent a letter to comrade Kuznetsov, saying that they supposedly had forgotten to raise questions about some kinds of weapons. They were referring to the IL-28 bombers and

“Komar” [“Mosquito”] patrol boats. Stevenson wrote that it would be necessary to discuss that issue. Immediately I told comrade Kuznetsov that this issue was not a subject for discussion. These bombers have low speed and low altitude limits. Nor can the “Komar” patrol boats operate at great distance. Therefore those weapons are clearly defensive.

In the first Kennedy message [possibly an allusion to Kennedy's October 22 speech, which included a reference to the bombers—ed.] the American administration spoke about the bombers, later this question fell away. Now they want to raise again this question. We have resolutely rejected such a discussion. Comrade Kuznetsov received corresponding instructions from Moscow. This is nothing more than attempts to complicate the whole matter in order to create once again a tense atmosphere and dangerous situation.

Let me specify the list sent by Stevenson. Here it is. There are mentioned: bombers, “Komar” patrol boats, “air-to-surface” bombs and missiles, “sea-to-surface” and “surface-to-surface” projectiles [cruise missiles—ed.]. The Americans

an on-site verification, in the forests? I'm afraid if we go along such route we can even reach an inspection on site, where the strategic missiles previously have been located.

A.I. MIKOYAN. The imperialists are not the point. Such a verification is necessary for us. If the imperialists protest we can send them to hell. But it's necessary to take into consideration that the support of U Thant is very important for us, and the imperialists can say what they want. We'll send them to hell, the more so as they have already been convinced of the dismantling of the missiles with the help of air photography. If we manage to come to an agreement over verifications on ships, then the UN representatives will be able to control the process of loading also. We will not accept any more. Indeed, appetite comes with eating, but we will resolutely oppose such a rise of appetite, we'll do a step forward and that's enough for them. We rejected inspection, we didn't allow surface verification, we won't permit control over dismantling. But in order to strengthen our position at the UN, the representatives of this organization should be given the facts. Otherwise it will be difficult to restrain revanchists at the Security Council. But if the evacuation of weapons would be carried out and verified, then we'll obtain the lifting of the quarantine. I think, we should not put the sign of equality between the UN and the American imperialists. The matter is that the UN cannot exceed the limits settled by the two messages. If we manage to receive support from the UN, then the Americans would go to hell. We promised to allow verification of the evacuation. That verification can be organized by means of the UN. We didn't pledge anything else. But if we do not fulfill our promise, the situation may become considerably complicated. Perhaps you will discuss this issue without our presence and at the same time consider the possibilities of our further joint actions. If you find the opportunity we can meet today. However the meeting can be held tomorrow.

F. CASTRO. And what will the inspection look like?

A.I. MIKOYAN. Representatives of U Thant will arrive at the port of loading. Currently there are 4-5 ships assigned for that purpose. Then they'll climb on board. They will be shown the cargo and given corresponding information. In this way they will be convinced that we are fulfilling our promise and will go away. That is my understanding of this form of verification. If we come to an agreement regarding this proposal, I'll inform our representative to the UN and then we'll have the opportunity to settle the technique and procedure of this work.

I would be able to inform Moscow that we agreed to give both U Thant and the UN informa-

tion necessary to declare the verification to be carried out.

stand your reaction to my proposal.

Our Central Committee entrusted me to explain in detail the Soviet position on all the issues that are of interest to the Cuban comrades, entrusted me neither to impose our opinion, nor pressure you in order to obtain consent for inspection of the Cuban territory.

F. CASTRO. But verification would be carried out from the Cuban territory.

A.I. MIKOYAN. No, it could be carried out only aboard the ships. For that purpose Soviet and neutral country ships could be used. The UN representatives could live and sleep aboard those steamers.

F. CASTRO. Such a verification in the ports does not differ from control on ships on open sea.

A.I. MIKOYAN. There is no doubt that a verification can be carried out on open sea too, but does not bear relation to Cuba.

O. DORTICOS. It seems to me that now we should interrupt our work. We can agree upon further meetings through Ambassador Alekseev.

Ambassador Alekseev was also present on the Soviet side.

Recorded by V. Tikhmenev
[signature]

[Source: Russian Foreign Ministry archives, obtained and translated by NHK television, copy provided by Philip Brenner; translation (by Aleksandr Zaemsky) has been slightly revised.]

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Document IV:

**“The USA wanted to destroy us physically,
but the Soviet Union with Khrushchev’s
letter destroyed us legally”—**

**Mikoyan’s Meeting with Cuban Leaders,
5 November 1962 (evening)**

Copy

Top Secret

MEMORANDUM OF CONVERSATION

A.I. Mikoyan with Oswaldo Dorticos, Ernesto Guevara, and Carlos Rafael Rodriguez

Evening 5 November 1962

After mutual greetings, Com. Dorticos said

that Fidel Castro had not been able to come because he is feeling poorly.

acts not only from its own territory. This is a very important point for Cuba.

DORTICOS. It is necessary to work on the editing of this document. We are not prepared for this today. Here, it is necessary to think about the form, and also to work on the editing of this document, although we are essentially in agreement with this document and understand how important it is to achieve success. We can work a little bit together, significantly improving the formulation, but it makes sense to do it quicker.

ERNESTO GUEVARA. In essence we are in agreement with this document.

DORTICOS. Naturally, we have to overcome certain language difficulties, too. A more careful editing of the document evidently is necessary in both languages.

A.I. MIKOYAN. That is good. Our Ministry of Foreign Affairs is waiting for a communication about your attitude towards this document. Com. Kuznetsov also requested a clarification of your position on this issue. Now we could report about the principal agreement, excluding article 13, thoroughly editing article 5, and bearing changes in article 3 regarding the USA's position in respect to the countries of Central America. After our report about your fundamental agreement, but the MFA and also our representative at the UN will be able to begin work. Maybe we could present our variant tomorrow.

C. RAFAEL RODRIGUEZ. The formulation of article 5 bothers me.

A.I. MIKOYAN. Yes. It encroaches on the sovereignty of the countries of Central America, but the governments of those countries are conducting a very bad policy.

DORTICOS. We will try to prepare our variant by tomorrow.

A.I. MIKOYAN. Working out this document, we are thinking about providing for the security of Cuba. It seems to me that it is not possible to limit the declaration about non-aggression to the United States only. The United States of America can push other countries towards aggression and provide help to them in aggression, while remaining on the sidelines itself. We have to oblige the United States to fulfill Kennedy's promise. Com. Carlos Rafael Rodriguez is entirely right. It is not of course a matter of these governments, rather, the important thing is in the essence of this issue. Kennedy on this issue came to meet us. We demanded that not only the USA would give its word about non-aggression, but its allies too. This is a compro-

mise for them. We should use this compromise. It was not easy for the United States to make it.

ALEKSEEV. We should not miss this opportunity.

A.I. MIKOYAN. I am trying to evaluate the situation which flows from your positions. McCloy said that he gives his word that the camps will be liquidated, that there will be no preparations for aggression. This type of declaration has significance even in oral form. When the world knows, it will be uncomfortable for them not to fulfill their promises. I think, that it would be useful for you, comrades, to think about issues of mutual tactics. Let's say that the USA will not agree to inspection on its territory. However, as it seems to me, it would be important to organize observation on the territory of Guatemala, the Dominican Republic, and certain other territories with the assistance of the UN representatives.

It seems to me that it would be important to arrange for inspection in the countries of Central America. Is Cuba interested in this? What are the positive and negative sides of this type of proposal? I am in no way an authority on issues of Central American policy, but it seems to me that it would be important to secure the presence of the UN there, in order to mitigate the significance in this region of the OAS and the Organization of Central American States. Comrades, have you thought about this issue? It will be easier for you to decide, than for us. Could the following situation come to pass? They will say to us, that inspections of the Central American countries are possible, but they cannot be realized on the territory of the United States of America. Would you agree to that or, in your opinion, is that type of a resolution not interesting to you, if it does not extend to the USA? This would be important for us to know in order to work out a joint tactic. It is clear that the USA will figure on the list. Or perhaps an agreement can be reached on inspections of the Central American countries while the USA will be limited only by the declaration. You could give your answer to my questions not today, but tomorrow.

DORTICOS. If inspections of the USA will be excluded, then in the same way inspections of Cuban territory will be excluded too.

A.I. MIKOYAN. You could thoroughly consider this issue, and then inform us of your decision.

C. RAFAEL RODRIGUEZ. It would make sense to specify the terms of the multilateral inspections as they apply to Cuba. It should spell out the fulfillment of the obligation which the Soviet Union has accepted on itself, i.e. verification of the dismantling and evacuation of the Soviet missiles. As far as the rest of the countries

are concerned, this inspection would refer to the areas where camps for the training of counter-revolutionary mercenaries for aggression against Cuba are set up. The inspection could be extended to part of Florida, not touching, naturally, Cape Canaveral. It is also necessary to organize an inspection of camps in Puerto Rico, on the island of Vieques and in certain other territories, i.e., the inspection will touch not the entire territory of the mentioned countries, but rather those regions where these camps exist.

A.I. MIKOYAN. It is immediately evident that Carlos Rafael Rodriguez is a great specialist on these issues. In this way we could drive the aggressors into a corner. It is important to find an appropriate formulation. This variation represents a big step forward. Maybe tomorrow [Soviet officials] Bazykin and Alekseev will meet with some of you and confer on editorial issues. It will be important to have this document immediately following the elections in the USA. We will take the initiative, and we will not allow the Americans to capture it. Perhaps the Security Council can be convened on the 7th or 8th of November.

ALEKSEEV. According to my information this will be done on the 6th.

DORTICOS objects.

GUEVARA objects.

A.I. MIKOYAN. U Thant told me that on 6 November the Security Council cannot be convened: we will argue. There are protocol issues here, and declarations, and procedures. We mustn't underestimate the importance of the struggle in the UN and the opinions of the member states. We have to take the initiative, and all issues.

the Caucasus, but much later). And so the International Committee accepted a resolution in which it was stated that the concession in Brest was shameful. The point of Soviet power is lost. The comrades accepted the resolution as if rejecting Soviet power itself. Lenin wrote about this resolution: monstrous. How is it possible for such a thought even to occur to a communist? But you know, at that time we practically had no armed forces, but those comrades wanted to die heroically, rejecting Soviet power.

E. GUEVARA. Yes. I see that there is no analogy here, but great similarities.

A.I. MIKOYAN. There really is no analogy in this example. Imagine, Russia at that time was alone. We had no forces. There was some sympathy from the working class of other countries, but sympathy alone doesn't help much. Cuba is powerful. You have no war. You have

WHEN AND WHY ROMANIA DISTANCED ITSELF FROM THE WARSAW PACT

by Raymond L. Garthoff

In April 1964, the Romanian leadership issued a declaration in which it first expressed public dissatisfaction with the Warsaw Pact. Georghiu Dej, and after 1965 his successor Nicolae Ceausescu, increasingly distanced themselves from the Pact and Moscow's leadership, although without challenging the Soviet Union. Romania ceased to participate actively in the military command of the Warsaw Pact after 1969. All of this small slice of history has, of course, been well known. It has not been known why Romania launched itself on that path at that particular time. Above all, it has not heretofore been known that even earlier Romania essentially repudiated its allegiance obligations in a secret approach to the United States government in October 1963, promising neutrality in case of the outbreak of war. This was a stunning, unilateral breach of the central obligation of Warsaw Pact alliance membership, which Romania nominally maintained until the very end, when the Pact dissolved in 1991.

What precisely happened, and why? The precipitating event was the Cuban Missile Crisis of October 1962. The tensions generated by that crisis had reverberations throughout Europe. No country wanted to be brought into a war over the issue of Soviet missiles in Cuba. But while members of NATO and the Warsaw Pact dutifully gave public support to the United States and the Soviet Union, respectively, some did so with considerable trepidation. And in Bucharest, the leadership decided after that crisis that it would seek to disengage itself from any automatic involvement if their superpower alliance leader, the Soviet Union, again assumed such risks.

downing of American planes except those carrying out an attack.²⁰ When the U-2 was shot down, no one in Moscow was quite sure what had happened—Khrushchev and most others mistakenly thought that Castro had ordered Soviet troops to fire at the plane—but everyone was certain that further incidents of this sort might cause the crisis to spin out of control. The risks posed by accidents would have been especially great if the local commander (i.e., Pliyev) had been given independent authority to order the use

Intra-Pact Debate about Nuclear "Sharing"

The effects of the Cuban Missile Crisis could also be felt, if only implicitly, when the Soviet Union had to deal with complaints from its allies about the Pact's nuclear arrangements. The lack of East European input proved unsatisfactory to several of the allied governments, who urged that they be given some kind of role in nuclear-release authorization. Their concerns were prompted in part by changes in Soviet military doctrine in the mid-1960s, which seemed to open the way for a nuclear or conventional war confined to Europe. Under Khrushchev, Soviet military doctrine had long been predicated on the assumption that any war in Europe would rapidly escalate to an all-out nuclear exchange between the superpowers; but by the time Khrushchev was ousted in October 1964, Soviet military theorists had already begun to imply that a European conflict need not escalate to the level of strategic nuclear war.³⁰ Under Brezhnev, Soviet military analyses of limited warfare in Europe, including the selective use of tactical nuclear weapons, grew far more explicit and elaborate.³¹ Although this doctrinal shift made sense from the Soviet perspective, it stirred unease among East European leaders, who feared that their countries might be used as tactical nuclear battlegrounds without their having the slightest say in it.

The issue became a source of contention at the January 1965 meeting of the Warsaw Pact's Political Consultative Committee, where the assembled leaders discussed NATO's plans to create a Multi-Lateral Force (MLF) that would supposedly give West Germany access to nuclear-armed missiles. The PCC warned that if an MLF were formed and the West Germans were included, the Warsaw Pact would have to resort to "defensive measures and *corresponding steps*."³² The nature of these "corresponding steps" was never specified, but Romanian and Czechoslovak officials at the meeting maintained that the obvious solution was for the Soviet Union to grant its Warsaw Pact allies a direct say in the use of nuclear weapons stationed on East European soil.³³ The Romanians were especially insistent on having responsibility shared for all Warsaw Pact nuclear systems, including those deployed with the various Groups of Soviet Forces. Brezhnev and his colleagues,

however, were averse to any steps that would even marginally erode the Soviet Union's exclusive authority to order nuclear strikes, and it soon became clear during the meeting that Soviet views on such matters would prevail. As a result, the PCC communiqué simply called for both German states to forswear nuclear weapons, proposed the creation of a nuclear-free zone in central Europe, and advocated a freeze on all nuclear stockpiles.³⁴ The implication was that arrangements within the Warsaw Pact were best left unchanged.

That stance was reaffirmed over the next few months in a series of conspicuous Soviet declarations that "the Warsaw Pact is dependent on the *Soviet* strategic missile forces" and that "the security of all socialist countries is reliably guaranteed by the nuclear missile strength of *the Soviet Union*."³⁵ The same message was conveyed later in the year by the joint "October Storm" military exercises in East Germany, which featured simulated nuclear strikes authorized solely by the USSR.³⁶ In the meantime, the Soviet monopoly over allied nuclear weapons procedures was being reinforced by the series of agreements signed with Czechoslovakia, East Germany, Hungary, and Poland, as discussed above. The codification of exclusive Soviet control over nuclear weapons deployed in the other Warsaw Pact countries all but eliminated any basis for the East European governments to seek a role in the alliance's nuclear command structure.

Yet even after the Soviet Union tried to put the matter to rest, controversy persisted within the Warsaw Pact about the allocation of responsibility for tactical nuclear weapons. At a closed meeting of Pact leaders in East Berlin in February 1966, Romania again pressed for greater East European participation in all aspects of allied military planning, and was again rebuffed.³⁷ A few months later, the Czechoslovak Defense Minister, Army-General Bohumir Lomsky, publicly declared that the East European states should be given increased responsibility for the full range of issues confronting the Warsaw Pact.³⁸ That same week, a detailed Romanian proposal for modifications to the alliance was leaked to the French Communist newspaper, *L'Humanite*; the document called for, among other things, an East European role in any decisions involving the potential use of nuclear weapons.³⁹ Subsequently, at the July 1966 session of the PCC in Bucharest,

officials from Romania, Czechoslovakia, and Hungary renewed their bid for "greater rights of co-determination in planning and implementing common coalition matters," including (by implication) the use of nuclear weapons.⁴⁰

As on previous occasions, however, the Soviet Union resisted whatever pressure was exerted for the sharing of nuclear-release authority. In September 1966, a few months after the Bucharest conference, the Warsaw Pact conducted huge "Vltava" exercises, which included simulated nuclear strikes under exclusive Soviet control.⁴¹ The same arrangement was preserved in all subsequent Pact maneuvers involving simulated nuclear exchanges. Thus, well before the signing of the 1968 Non-Proliferation Treaty put a symbolic end to the whole nuclear-sharing debate, the Soviet Union had firmly established its exclusive, centralized control over the Warsaw Pact's "joint" nuclear forces and operations.

The Lessons of the Crisis and Allied Nuclear Arrangements

The legacy of the Cuban Missile Crisis helped ensure that the intra-Warsaw Pact debate in the mid-1960s did not bring about any change in the alliance's nuclear command-and-control structure. Had it not been for the dangers that were so clearly revealed by the events of October 1962, Soviet leaders might have been willing to consider an arrangement for the Warsaw Pact similar to the "dual-key" system that NATO adopted. When Operation "Anadyr" was first being planned in the late spring of 1962, Khrushchev had toyed with the idea of giving Fidel Castro broad command over Soviet tactical nuclear weapons in Cuba as well as over all non-nuclear forces on the island. Ultimately, Khrushchev decided not to share or delegate any responsibility for the nuclear-capable weapons based in Cuba, but the very fact that the issue was considered at all suggests that if the Cuban Missile Crisis had not intervened, the Soviet Union might have been receptive to some form of nuclear "sharing" with its East European allies. Indeed, a "dual-key" arrangement for the Warsaw Pact, which would not have provided any independent authority to the East European countries, could easily have been justified as a response to NATO's policy and as a useful means of strengthening allied cohesion. But after October 1962, when Soviet leaders

drew a number of lessons about the risks of even sharing, much less delegating, nuclear authority, the prospects of adopting a “dual-key” system for the Warsaw Pact essentially vanished.

Although Moscow’s willingness to share control over the Warsaw Pact’s “joint” nuclear arsenal would have been sharply constrained even before October 1962 by the lack of permissive-action links (PALs) and other use-denial mechanisms on Soviet nuclear weapons, that factor alone would not have been decisive if the Cuban Missile Crisis had not occurred. After all, when Soviet officials seriously contemplated allotting partial nuclear authority to Castro in 1962, that was long before Soviet tactical weapons were equipped with PALs. The physical separation of warheads from delivery vehicles, as had been planned for the missiles based in Cuba, was regarded at the time as a sufficient (if cumbersome) barrier against unauthorized actions. That approach had long been used for tactical weapons deployed by Soviet forces in Eastern Europe, and it would have been just as efficacious if a “dual-key” system had been adopted—that is, if the East European armies had been given control over the Pact’s

