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THE SOVIET MISSILE BASE VENTURE IN CUBA

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Prefatory Note

This is a working paper of the DD/I Research Staff. It is a reconstruction of the Soviet missile base venture in Cuba in 1962 (reflecting information available through December 1963), with an Appendix which discusses the background of the venture in 1961 and early 1962.

The conception of the missile base venture, in our view, was radically defective, and the execution of it was in some respects astonishingly inept. We have tried above all to discover why Khrushchev believed--throughout the course of the venture, from conception to retraction--that his conduct was rational, i.e., why he concluded at least until September that the United States would very probably acquiesce, why he concluded until late October that the venture could be managed to his profit even if the United States did not acquiesce, and why he managed the venture as he did during the week of the crisis in late October.

In preparing this study, we have not asked others to contribute directly to our paper, but we have taken much profit from their work in various forms and from their continuing counsel.

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We have also had the benefit of work of members of the community outside CIA: we found particularly useful, in the early stages of our study, a paper prepared during the crisis by the Policy Planning Council of the Department of State, another prepared shortly thereafter by IRA of the

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Department of Defense, and various articles appearing in the Department of State's monthly Sino-Soviet Affairs.

It seems to us impossible to write a definitive study of the missile base venture--one which would be generally accepted as supplying the final answers to the many questions presented by the venture. With respect to almost all questions of Soviet motivation, calculation, and interpretation, two or more opinions are possible. We have been struck, however, by the extent of agreement that there is among those who have been involved most heavily in the examination of the venture--including those who have been working from different directions.

In this connection, we commend to our readers the staff study--just published--prepared by the Military Programming Branch of the Office of Research and Reports, Cuba, 1962: Khrushchev's Miscalculated Risk. The two studies--theirs and ours--both discuss such matters as Soviet objectives, the estimates of risks, the timing of various decisions, and the reasons for retreat; and they reach similar conclusions about these matters. However, the two studies are focused very differently. The ORR study collates and studies the hard facts of the build-up, which it presents in great detail, and it draws its principal conclusions from those facts. Our own paper sets the venture in the context of Soviet foreign policy, especially the record of Soviet confrontations with the United States, and it emphasizes the Soviet reading of the American antagonist throughout the course of the venture. In other words, the two studies consider much the same range of questions, but they concentrate on different bodies of evidence. Thus we regard the papers as complementary, each offering additional material to the reader of the other, and each giving additional reasons for their similar conclusions.

We have incorporated in this paper corrections and suggestions from many sources. However, no one has been asked for his formal concurrence in our paper, and no one except ourselves can be held to account.

The DDI/RS would welcome additional comment on this paper, addressed in this instance to either the Chief or the Deputy Chief of the staff, [redacted]

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Summary

This is a lengthy summary of (1) the allure of the Cuban missile base venture, as of early 1962, (2) Khrushchev's assessment at that time of the chances of success, (3) the progress of the venture during the spring and summer of 1962, (4) the management of the venture in September and early October 1962, the period in which the strategic missiles were being deployed and in which Khrushchev changed his mind about the probable U.S. response, and (5) developments during the critical week of 22-28 October.

The Allure of the Bases: Early 1962

When the missile base venture was being considered in early 1962, by far the most important advantage seen by Khrushchev in a successful venture was to be the effect of the bases in altering the balance of power between East and West--partially redressing the imbalance in a military sense, and perhaps more than redressing it in a political sense. The two sets of considerations--military and political--were bound together; the USSR would gain in both senses or in neither.

As for the strategic considerations, even if no more than 40 launchers were to be installed in Cuba, the USSR would be increasing by more than 50 percent its strategic missile capability against the United States. Moreover, this capability could be achieved much more quickly through the missile bases in Cuba than through the slow ICBM program in the USSR. Further, the missiles in Cuba would make more dramatic the threat of sudden death to American cities. Finally, if the first installment of missiles were not successfully challenged, many additional launchers could be installed if desired, along with large numbers of medium-range bombers and submarines.

If the change in the military balance of power to be produced by the installation of 40 or more launchers in Cuba was not sufficient in itself to make the venture attractive, the addition of political gains would make a very powerful case. If the United States were too obtuse, faint-hearted, or indecisive to repel the challenge of Soviet missile bases in Cuba, the Soviet assertion of moral and political superiority and the Soviet confidence in an eventual triumph would seem to be justified. Moreover, if the Soviet claim to such superiority were to seem justified, there would in fact be a shift in the political balance of power: the United States itself would be increasingly deterred from making effective responses elsewhere; the genuine allies of the United States, whether governments or individuals, would be greatly disheartened, and the nominal allies would move to a position of neutrality; the few pro-Soviet regimes in the underdeveloped areas would become more so, and at least some of the unaligned nations would shift to a pro-Soviet position; and existing pro-Soviet and leftist extremist forces in all countries of the non-Communist world would be greatly augmented and emboldened.

With respect to particular East-West issues, of greatest immediate importance, among the advantages of the bases, was the gain to be made, through threats or barter, on the status of the GDR and Berlin. Of probably lesser but considerable importance, over a longer term, was the potential of the bases as a bargaining counter in negotiations on either "general and complete disarmament" or partial measures, and on overseas bases; the Cuban bases would dramatically focus attention on this latter issue, and, if U.S. bases were negotiable under Soviet pressure, then the United States would no longer be regarded as a reliable ally. There would be other important gains with respect to the underdeveloped areas, in that the bases would demonstrate the USSR's willingness to protect such countries and to help them to achieve their goals. Further, the bases might well help to control Cuba--in the sense of making Castro more responsive to Soviet wishes; and, if the venture succeeded, the bases would help to protect Cuba. Finally, of great importance was the advantage to be gained by deflating the Chinese challenge, both immediately and over the long term.

The Chances of Success: Early 1962

In the first year of the Kennedy Administration, there were several aspects of U.S. behavior--in response to Communist challenges--which apparently served to encourage Khrushchev's thinking about a missile base venture in Cuba. The most important were: the U.S. self-denial in the Bay of Pigs affair in April 1961; the U.S. acceptance--partly owing to Allied disunity--of the Berlin Wall in August 1961; the U.S. reluctance to intervene in Laos in the same period; the limited character of the U.S. intervention in Vietnam in October 1961; and the inability of the United States, demonstrated in early 1962, to gain the support of the most important Latin American states for a hard policy toward Cuba.

By early 1962, in Khrushchev's presumed view, the United States had shown itself to be in general reluctant to employ armed force, to be vulnerable to pressure from its allies, and to be disposed both to accept accomplished facts and to make responses which could be contained. With respect to Cuba in particular, the United States had made only a feeble effort to alter the accomplished fact of Castro's Cuba; it had shown itself to be sensitive about appearing to be an aggressor against Cuba; and it had had differences with the major Latin American states about Cuba.

The President in the first year or so of his Administration had also made a number of statements meant to discourage such initiatives as the missile base venture--his warnings in April 1961 about intervention in the Western hemisphere by a foreign power, his warnings in the Vienna talks about the dangers of miscalculation, his warnings in July 1961 along the same lines, and his reaffirmations in March 1962 that the United States might take the initiative in some circumstances in using nuclear weapons against the USSR. However, Khrushchev and his comrades thought they had reason to discount these warnings--which were in general terms, and which, with respect to Cuba, were in effect cancelled by American inaction and by the failure to issue a specific warning about Cuba. Even a

strong specific warning about Cuba might not have deterred Khrushchev, as the deployment of strategic missiles in Cuba was an action which could be revoked, permitting Moscow to explore U.S. intentions while the build-up was underway and giving the USSR an avenue of escape if necessary.

The conception of the venture probably called for all components of the program--both defensive and offensive--to become operational about mid-November (although, as it turned out, there was a lag in the IRBM portion of the program). The USSR apparently did not foresee a high risk--of an attack on Cuba or the USSR--at any point in the venture. While some risk was probably recognized, and thus Khrushchev would probably have preferred to keep the build-up secret until the program was complete (in order to confront the U.S. with an accomplished fact), it was apparently judged infeasible to camouflage the large IRBM sites against U.S. aerial reconnaissance. Thus Khrushchev decided to do what he could to deceive the United States--without counting on it--by good security and through misleading statements of Soviet intentions. In this connection, the weapons were to be described as having a defensive purpose, a formula which might help to deceive the United States but which, if not, could serve as the form of an invitation to the U.S. to acquiesce.

The United States was indeed expected to acquiesce in the build-up, at whatever time discovered. If this estimate proved wrong, however, and the United States were to send a signal of alarm, the USSR could turn to its various means (not including military means) of preventing effective intervention. It was apparently the Soviet calculation that the United States, even if alarmed, would not attack either the USSR or Cuba, would at most impose a blockade, and could probably be tied up in negotiations, during which the build-up could perhaps be completed--thus increasing the Soviet deterrent to action against the bases--or in which the USSR could obtain large concessions. If this estimate also proved wrong, and the USSR had to withdraw the strategic missiles, at least Cuba itself could very probably be saved.

Khrushchev was, of course, mistaken in his basic estimate, as the United States credibly threatened to use whatever degree of force was necessary and proved to be

unwilling to let itself be tied up in negotiations or to give him substantial concessions. Of the various factors which may have contributed to Khrushchev's miscalculation, we see wishful thinking as the most important. While the American record as of early 1962 suggested a marginal possibility of success for a missile base venture, it was wishful thinking which converted that possibility into an estimate of probable success. Khrushchev seems in particular not to have seen that, if Soviet gains from a successful missile base venture were to be so great, it was probable that the United States would recognize what was at stake and therefore probable that the United States would act to deny such gains to its principal antagonist--just as the President had told Khrushchev, in effect, on several occasions. Moreover, the venture was not thought through, in the sense of recognizing the consequences of the possible failure--namely, that failure would make most of Khrushchev's problems worse than they were before.

The Progress of the Venture, April-August 1962

By mid-March, the Cuban Communist effort to take power from Castro--an effort aimed at creating a secure political base for the missile base venture--had clearly failed, but the Soviet effort to persuade Castro that an American invasion of Cuba was being planned, and that a deterrent was urgently needed, had proved successful. By mid-April, the USSR also succeeded in persuading him that the deployment of strategic missiles in Cuba was the answer. The agreement on the missile bases was followed by new economic agreements, by the recall of the disfavored Soviet ambassador, and by Khrushchev's public promises of continued aid. In June, Khrushchev admitted that "weapons" were being sent to Cuba, but Soviet complaints about the Cubans served the interest of deception.

In this period of spring 1962, developments outside Cuba confirmed Khrushchev's judgment that he needed the Cuban missile bases. American spokesmen continued to express confidence that the balance of power favored and would continue to favor the United States, and Khrushchev

publicly reiterated his complaint that the West was continuing to act from "positions of strength" and would not give him what he wanted. The Soviet hope or even expectation of a Berlin settlement was disappointed, and there was no progress on disarmament. Khrushchev in this period expressed in strong terms his disappointment with the results of his earlier policy toward the underdeveloped countries, and Moscow's recent decision to emphasize military rather than economic aid to such countries was expressed spectacularly in a new military aid agreement with Indonesia, which provided equipment and Soviet crews which could be used for an invasion of West New Guinea. And the Sino-Soviet relationship continued to deteriorate.

Throughout the spring of 1962 Soviet spokesmen expressed concern that the United States intended to take military action against Cuba, but Khrushchev's real concern seemed to be over the President's statements (of March) that the United States might in some circumstances take the initiative in using nuclear weapons. Khrushchev may have been having some second thoughts on the question of whether the risks were low in the Cuban venture. If so, he may have been encouraged again by the U.S. response to fresh operations by pro-Communist forces in Laos, a response which could be read as acceptance of another accomplished fact. He may also have been reassured to some degree by Washington's presentation of an American counter-force strategy; he did not, at least, show the same concern over this 'no cities' doctrine that he had shown over the President's statements of March.

Raul Castro's trip to Moscow in the early summer of 1962 was probably related to the administration of the missile base venture, and he may again have tried and failed to get a formal Soviet commitment to Cuba's defense. Khrushchev at the same time reiterated his concern about American readiness to employ nuclear weapons, and the reported Soviet incitement of the Indonesians to use Soviet weapons and crews against West New Guinea may have reflected a wish to test American intentions in this area before going ahead with the build-up in Cuba. In any case, and despite his probable knowledge by July that American U-2s were overflying Cuba, Khrushchev went ahead with it; shipments of

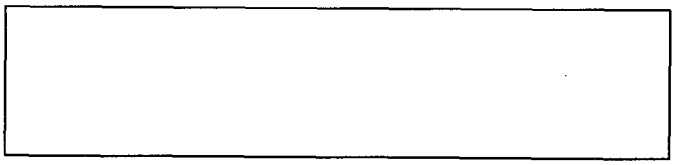
unidentifiable material to Cuba soon increased sharply. While Raul Castro in Moscow publicly boasted that his negotiations with the Russians had changed the balance of power in the world, Soviet spokesmen did not even reaffirm Khrushchov's admission that "weapons" were being sent.

By the end of August, SAMs were deployed in Western Cuba, about 3,000 Soviet personnel were believed to be in Cuba, farmers had been evacuated from areas which became MRBM sites, and materials and equipment necessary to construct the MRBM and IRBM launch positions (but not the missiles themselves) had probably arrived. Soviet broadcasts at this time were giving misleading descriptions of Soviet shipments to Cuba, and the Cubans did their part by sending out feelers for an improvement in American-Cuban relations. Reconnaissance at the time revealed no activity identifiable as associated with the preparation of sites for strategic missiles.

While the build-up was underway in late July and August, and particularly in late August, Soviet spokesmen renewed charges that the United States was preparing to attack Cuba, and Moscow renewed its cautious expressions of support for Cuba in such an event. Moscow did not seem really to believe, however, as of late August, that the U.S. was about to attack Cuba.

Deployment of the Missiles, September-October 1962

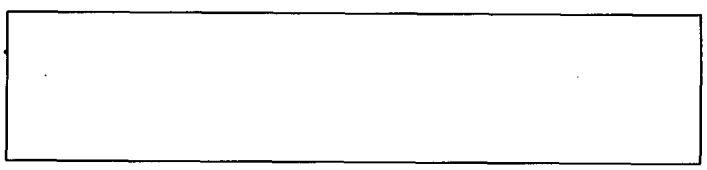
As this stage of the missile base venture began, the stage in which some of the strategic missiles were to be deployed, the USSR admitted that its cargoes to Cuba included military equipment and technicians, and said that Cuba was taking measures to "ensure its security." Soviet propaganda at the time both asserted differences and drew parallels between the American position in Turkey and the Soviet position in Cuba.



With the President's statement of warning on 4 September, Khrushchev lost some of his confidence, we think, and now recognized a good possibility that the United States would not acquiesce in the build-up in Cuba. Thus, with an increased Soviet interest in delaying American discovery of the bases as long as possible (so that the USSR would be in the strongest possible military and political position when discovery came), Khrushchev's ambassador on 6 September made a seriously misleading statement (still short of a flat lie) about Soviet intentions in Cuba. This statement, an assertion of the "defensive" character of Soviet actions in Cuba, which came immediately after the President's distinction between offensive and defensive capabilities, preceded by a few days the USSR's public introduction of the concept of the defensive purpose of the weapons--a formula which was to serve, if deception failed, as the form of the Soviet invitation to the United States to acquiesce.

On 11 September, the USSR issued an elaborate statement introducing the half-revealing formula of defensive purpose, while including a quite misleading formulation. The statement was designed also to deter the United States from imposing a blockade if the U.S. did not acquiesce in the build-up, and to deter the United States from attacking Cuba if the U.S. were tempted to take any military action against Cuba beyond a blockade; in this connection, the statement vaguely foreshadowed Khrushchev's final fallback position of a withdrawal for a no-invasion pledge. Also, it invited the United States to believe that Soviet policy toward Germany and Berlin would reflect U.S. policy toward Cuba. Several Soviet commentaries on the 11 September statement underlined the point about the defensive purpose in Cuba, but some were more misleading.

That the United States continued to be unaware of the character and scope of the missile base venture was made evident by President Kennedy on 13 September. The President warned the USSR in strong terms, however, against deploying strategic missiles in Cuba or establishing there any capability to take action against the United States. This warning, we think, caused another and larger change in Khrushchev's expectations: he now judged it probable that the U.S. would not acquiesce. (We judge this from



his earlier response to a specific warning of this type on Berlin, from his soon-expressed fear of an American blockade of Cuba and his threats to use military force against it, and from his soon-to-be-taken decision to tell a flat lie about his intentions in Cuba.) From this point, we think, he expected only his second best case: American non-acquiescence, expressed as willingness to impose a blockade, but unwillingness to go beyond a blockade, along with willingness to undertake negotiations, so that (in Khrushchev's view) the venture could still be managed to the USSR's profit.

During September, the USSR moved steadily ahead with the build-up. Additional SAM units were deployed, work on the MRBM sites proceeded, MRBMs began to arrive (all or almost all after 13 September); one or two of the MRBM sites may have achieved some degree of operational capability, and work continued or began on three IRBM sites. The peripheral flights conducted in this period observed nothing of this except the SAMs.

In the last two weeks of September, Moscow took additional political measures to prepare for the day of discovery. Khrushchev, apparently fearing an early blockade of Cuba, threatened privately to use military force to enforce the right of passage and hinted at (without clearly threatening) retaliation elsewhere. Gromyko pointed publicly to militant features of earlier Soviet statements on Cuba, and also made a new disarmament proposal which, Moscow may have thought, would be attractive to Washington later in the light of the Cuban bases or at least would strengthen the probability (as Khrushchev saw it) that the U.S. would not go beyond a blockade. Gromyko at this time (21 September) failed to reiterate the half-revealing formula of the defensive purpose of the weapons in Cuba; perhaps Khrushchev had already decided to employ the flat lie in order to delay the discovery of the missile bases.

By the end of September or the beginning of October, at the latest, Khrushchev had made this decision to employ a flat lie. Expecting that American discovery of the bases would lead to a blockade, he sought by the lie to halt the reconnaissance, to get into Cuba the remaining elements of

his program, to be able to present the U.S. with the accomplished fact of the bases--so that the United States would either accept them or give large concessions to get rid of them. Khrushchev apparently saw the change in the pattern of U.S. reconnaissance of Cuba as indicating a possible retreat from a confrontation, a possible willingness to halt reconnaissance if assured--as the flat lie was to promise--that the USSR would not send weapons to Cuba capable of reaching targets in the United States. This seems to have been the same kind of wishful thinking that went into the original conception of the missile base venture, and to have been an instance too of failure to act logically even in terms of his own estimate.

While the actual date of delivery of the flat lie to American officials is uncertain, there is no reason to doubt that Khrushchev meant it to be delivered in the first week of October. Moreover, on 13 October the Soviet ambassador described the weapons in Cuba in terms even more misleading than his remarks of 6 September. Strongly implying that he understood and was using the President's distinction between offensive and defensive capabilities, Dobrynin insisted that the USSR was not sending offensive weapons to Cuba. In possible contrast, Gromyko and the Cubans may have been preparing for American discovery of the missile bases.

The flights over inland Cuba were resumed on 14 October, and within a few days Khrushchev was almost certainly able to judge that the U.S. had discovered or was about to discover the missile bases. In two conversations in mid-October, Khrushchev discussed the possibility of an American blockade and appealed for a "responsible" attitude.

Within a few days, the general design of the build-up was clear. There were now 24 SAM sites, Soviet armored groups were in encampments, and, of greatest importance, MRBMs had been deployed at several sites, and work was under way on three IRBM sites. In talking with the President on 18 October, Gromyko may or may not have been attempting to deceive the President (depending on how much Khrushchev knew at that time about the resumed flights over inland Cuba). It seems possible that Gromyko thought of himself

as extending a final invitation to the United States to acquiesce; if so, he got the message: No.

The Week of the Crisis, 22-28 October 1962

On 22 October, the President revealed his knowledge that, contrary to the burden of several seriously misleading Soviet statements, strategic missiles were being deployed in Cuba. He reminded Moscow of his implicit and explicit warnings against ventures of this kind and against this particular venture, announced an imminent quarantine of Cuba, stated that further action would be taken if the build-up continued, threatened retaliation against the USSR if missiles were launched from Cuba, called on Khrushchev to withdraw "all offensive weapons," and warned the USSR against hostile action elsewhere.

The USSR replied publicly on 23 October with a statement designed to put the United States on the defensive, so that the USSR could gain time for the purpose of involving the United States in negotiations aimed at gaining yet more time or some large concession. In this statement, the USSR neither admitted nor explicitly denied the deployment in Cuba of strategic missiles, adhered to the formula of defensive purpose, and presented the dispute as being really between the United States and Cuba. The statement denied the right of the U.S. to forbid a military build-up in Cuba (or elsewhere) or to impose a quarantine, warned of the dangerous consequences of American actions, took no note of the threat to the USSR, and asserted that the USSR would try to keep the peace while looking to its military readiness. On the same day, Khrushchev ordered his ships carrying military cargoes to Cuba to turn back. These ships were believed to be carrying some if not all of the remaining elements of the program in Cuba.

In the next three days, Khrushchev worked along several lines, sometimes in a disorderly fashion. He made further statements designed to reassure the United States about the possibility of general war and also to deter the U.S. from attacking Cuba. He threatened to run the

quarantine, but after ordering the course changes; and in fact he took additional steps to avoid a confrontation of Soviet and American ships in the Caribbean. He privately admitted the deployment of strategic missiles in Cuba, said that the U.S. would have to learn to live with them, and continued the work on the bases there. He tried hard to involve the U.S. in negotiations. He conducted probes on a particular proposition, the mutual dismantling of bases in Cuba and Turkey. And he made preparations for a fast backdown if necessary, a backdown in the form of a proposal for the withdrawal of offensive weapons in exchange for a no-invasion pledge.

By 26 October, the President had made clear to Khrushchev that the United States would not permit itself to be tied up for long in negotiations. Moreover, it was apparent from the massing of forces and from public statements that the U.S. was preparing to move to a higher level of military action against Cuba in the near future. Because the Cubans are known to have expected an attack on or soon after the night of 26 October, it seems likely that Khrushchev's sense of urgency was heightened by frantic messages from Havana. Thus Khrushchev's letter of 26 October, in which he implied his willingness to withdraw offensive weapons from Cuba in exchange for American assurances against an invasion of Cuba, seems to have been designed to head off any imminent attack on Cuba.

Without waiting for a reply, Khrushchev in a 27 October letter failed to reaffirm that position and instead proposed a settlement more favorable to the USSR, namely the mutual dismantling of bases in Cuba and Turkey. This letter apparently reflected a fresh calculation of his position. The attack on Cuba which he had feared on the previous day had not taken place; and he now estimated that he still had a little time--perhaps as he said, two or three days--in which to work; and his 27 October letter, like the earlier threat to defy the quarantine, was a last effort to induce the United States to change its mind, which, this failing, simply served to put the Soviet position on the record.

On the evening of 27 October, the President, imposing an order on the apparent confusion in Moscow, made explicit the proposal implicit in Khrushchev's 26 October letter and attributed it to Khrushchev. Within about 10 hours of his receipt of this letter, Khrushchev capitulated. He was almost certainly helped to this decision--reached by the early afternoon of 28 October, Moscow time--by additional indicators received between the afternoon of 27 October and the morning of 28 October that the deadline might be either 28 October or 29 October, and by those passages in the President's 27 October letter (received in the morning of 28 October) which suggested the possibility of a 29 October deadline and which in any case emphasized the urgency of an early agreement. Just as Khrushchev had ordered his ships to turn back as soon as he recognized that the United States was serious about the quarantine, and just as he had written his 26 October letter when he first feared an attack on Cuba, so he accepted as his own the proposal attributed to him by the President as soon as he was brought to believe that his time was indeed up.

At least in the short run, Khrushchev had lost heavily. He had been shown up as a liar (even if a half-hearted and clumsy liar), as being willing to sacrifice an ally (and without even consulting that ally), and as a much less cool and capable man in a crisis than his principal adversary. Most of the problems which he had thought to solve with the missile base venture were now worse than they had been before. He had not changed the balance of power, and the inferior Soviet position in this balance was now plain for all to see. He had now no hope of getting something for nothing in negotiations, and had weakened his position in any negotiations. He had lost ground with the underdeveloped countries. He had exposed himself to Chinese ridicule and had strengthened the Chinese case against his leadership. He had exacerbated his problems in attempting to control Castro. He had broken even in only one respect: he still had his "socialist" Cuba, his foothold in the Western Hemisphere; and even here it was made clear that this foothold could be maintained only on American sufferance. Thus, from an American point of view, if the Bay of Pigs misadventure in April 1961 had been properly described

as a "perfect failure," then the week of 22-28 October 1962 could properly be regarded as a dazzling success.

How much Khrushchev would lose in the long run was another question. Some observers, seeing the failure of the venture as the extinction of Khrushchev's last hope of attaining a position from which he could make rapid advances, have expected a new era, in which Khrushchev would learn to live comfortably with the unfavorable balance of power, would provoke fewer and less serious crises, and in negotiations with the United States would aim less at taking profit from crises which he himself had provoked and more at reaching mutually beneficial agreements. Even if this conclusion is sound, it is still open to Khrushchev to attempt to change the balance of power by less spectacular means: to try to achieve a recognized military parity, for example, by agreements on limited measures of arms control, together with a greater effort in research on advanced weapons. In this connection, he may regard the test-ban agreement itself as evidence that he can still get more out of negotiations than the West can (i.e., it may be his judgment that the test-ban will damage American more than Soviet military development). With respect to the related problems which he had sought to answer with the missile base venture, he may still hope to reduce his Chinese problem through changes in the Chinese leadership combined with fresh Soviet inducements; he may expect to gain much from American troubles with the underdeveloped countries; and he may believe that Cuba's situation can be stabilized by Cuban efforts to reduce tensions, exploiting an American reluctance to intervene.

In sum: Khrushchev's immediate losses were great; his long-term losses, beyond the loss of time, remain uncertain.

I. The Allure of the Bases, Early 1962

Most of the problems which Khrushchev hoped to solve with the deployment of strategic missiles in Cuba had been problems for him before the Kennedy Administration took office in January 1961. In the 12 to 14 months, however, between that time and the apparent time of his decision to go ahead with the Cuban missile base venture, these problems had become more serious, and new problems had appeared.

The Problems in the Background

Even in January 1961, there had been a need to improve the USSR's strategic position, which even then was not regarded by the West as strong enough to compel important Western concessions--a need which would become much greater if it should be discovered that Khrushchev had been grossly overstating his strength. There had also been the need, reflecting Khrushchev's emphasis on "peaceful coexistence," to get some Western concessions in negotiations, especially on recognition of the GDR and the status of West Berlin, and/or on disarmament, including the question of foreign bases. There had been the desire to entice the leaders of the underdeveloped countries into a closer association with the bloc. As for Cuba itself, the only place in the underdeveloped areas in which the USSR had decisive influence, there had been the wish to ensure control over the Castro regime and to protect the island against the United States. Finally, there had been the need to deflate the Chinese Communist challenge.

After January 1961, the problem of the balance of power in all respects grew worse. The balance, which even in January 1961 had been favorable to the United States, became more so. By autumn 1961 it was apparent to the USSR that American leaders knew that the balance was considerably in their favor, were determined to make this fact generally known, and were determined also to increase the gap. By mid-January 1962, according to a reliable Soviet source, Khrushchev was so concerned over the imbalance of

power that he decided to do his best to redress it by the end of 1962--a goal which he could not achieve, in this period, with his ICBM program in the USSR.

The Kennedy Administration from the first disappointed Khrushchev's hope of making important gains in negotiations. After threatening to conclude a peace treaty with East Germany by the end of 1961, and taking the stopgap measure of building the Berlin Wall in August, Khrushchev in October publicly withdrew his deadline for a treaty. By January 1962, Khrushchev's frustration on Germany and Berlin was said (by the reliable Soviet source cited above) to be the largest consideration in his decision to redress the imbalance of power during 1962. Similarly, there was no significant progress on disarmament.

Throughout 1961 and early 1962, the Soviet effort in the underdeveloped areas continued to present a mixed picture of successes and failures. The USSR seemed disappointed with the balance, increasingly concerned over the prospects for U.S. programs in these areas, and vulnerable to Chinese criticism and to Chinese inroads in these areas.

As for controlling Cuba, Castro from the start had seemed an imperfect instrument for Soviet purposes; and the Cuban Communists, while making progress, were still a long way from having the Castroites under their complete control. As for defending Cuba, there was really no answer to the problem of protecting an island so close to a large hostile power.

The Soviet party's relationship with the Chinese party continued to deteriorate through 1961 and early 1962. In October 1961, Khrushchev, trying to recoup his losses since 1960 to the CCP and to isolate the Chinese party in the movement, used his Soviet party congress for a systematic attack on Chinese positions and Chinese supporters. After a winter of polemics with the Chinese, including Soviet threats to disregard the Soviet commitment to Chinese defense and even to break relations with the Chinese party, by early 1962 the Chinese challenge was being seen by Moscow as so serious that the Russians were trying to induce Peiping simply to cease its public attacks.

The Military Change

The change in the military balance of power to be effected as a result of the Cuban missile base venture was certainly a basic consideration in Khrushchev's thinking.

As of spring 1962, around the time of the decision to go ahead with the missile base venture, the USSR was estimated to have fewer than 50 operational launchers (all in the USSR), while the USSR probably credited the United States with a total of 110 to 125 ICBMs on launchers and Polarises on station (along with much greater striking power in other categories of strategic forces). Assuming that the USSR intended to install no more than 40 launchers in Cuba by the end of November or December 1962, the USSR would have at that time an estimated 60 to 70 ICBMs in the Soviet Union plus those 40 launchers in Cuba, against an American total of something like 130 to 150 ICBMs on launcher and Polarises on station (plus IRBMs in Europe). If the figures were projected to mid-1963, the USSR would have an estimated 125 to 175 ICBMs in the USSR plus those 40 launchers in Cuba, against perhaps 350 American ICBMs and Polarises. (In addition, the USSR possessed more than 100 submarine-launched ballistic missiles, but, in the absence of any well-established pattern of patrol activity within range of U.S. targets, Khrushchev probably was not in a position to consider these as adding greatly to his active threat.)

Even if it were assumed that no more than 40 launchers were to be installed in Cuba, the increase in Soviet capabilities would be impressive, in terms of the number of targets the USSR could reach with strategic missiles. Because the Cuban-based missiles (including the IRBMs of 2200-mile range) could reach most American cities, a considerable part of the U.S. command and control system, and almost any of the SAC bomber bases (the bombers at that time would be carrying the bulk of the U.S. megatonnage), the USSR would be increasing its strategic missile capability against the mainland United States by more than 50 percent. Moreover, the missiles in Cuba would make much more dramatic

the threat of sudden death to American cities.* Further, if the first installment of missiles were not successfully challenged, many additional launchers could be installed (IRBMs as well as MRBMs would then be in plentiful supply in the USSR, in greater quantity than needed for strategic targets in Western Europe), along with large numbers of medium-range bombers and submarines.**

It is true that, even if Cuba were saturated with Soviet launchers and other weapons, U.S. strategic forces would remain objectively superior, in part because the

*Some observers have emphasized the importance of the bases in Cuba as giving the Russians the capability for a no-warning attack. As we understand the matter, however, this would have been a very short-term asset, as an American early-warning system could have been established quickly after the bases were discovered. One observer has surmised that only a short-term capability was required, as (he believes) the Soviet plan was to use this capability, as soon as acquired, for a surprise attack on U.S. command and control installations, calculating that the U.S. would be unable to deliver an effective retaliatory blow. While this view cannot be dismissed, it is an isolated view.

**Some observers have surmised that the Cuban base venture was to be only the first step in redressing the imbalance, and that, if it had succeeded, other bases with nuclear strike capabilities against the U.S. would have appeared in other states of Latin America. That is, a successful missile base venture in Cuba might have so demoralized Latin American governments that some would be replaced by pro-Soviet governments willing to provide the USSR with additional bases, and the USSR might believe that extensive deployment of such weapons outside the USSR would enhance all the advantages of the Cuban program and would also reduce the forces which could be brought to bear on the USSR. It seems to us, however, that the USSR would have to calculate that by the time such a program could be carried out, the United States would have more than enough missiles for all targets.

weapons on Cuba would be very vulnerable to American action. The Soviet launchers could probably be detected and targeted, and would be of soft configuration. The Cuban bases could be eliminated by short-range U.S. weapons without any reduction in the nuclear delivery forces programmed against the USSR itself.

Nevertheless, whether with a small number or a large number of launchers and other weapons in Cuba, the USSR could expect the weight of its deterrent to be increased, and its first strike capability (whether in pre-emption or cold blood) to be appreciably enhanced.* On one hand, the USSR even with the new capability could not reasonably expect to prevent the United States from destroying the USSR in the event of general war. On the other hand, Soviet capabilities against the continental United States would be greatly increased with the Cuban bases. In deciding to go ahead with the missile base venture, Khrushchev had necessarily to give greater weight to the second consideration than to the first--that is, to judge that the greatly increased Soviet capabilities against the United States would weigh heavier with American leaders themselves than the fact that the United States could still do greater damage to the USSR.

It is uncertain whether the economic cost of the missile base venture was a factor in its favor--i.e., whether it was appreciably less expensive to install 40-odd launchers in Cuba than to acquire an equivalent additional capability against the United States with ICBMs based in the USSR. Most observers believe that if cost was a factor at all, it was not a controlling factor. The much more important factor (assuming the truth of the report that Khrushchev felt a need for a rapid increase in his capabilities against the United States) was that the

*We do not understand why two missiles were assigned to each launcher in the Cuban venture; we do not see how the Russians could expect to get a second salvo off. Most observers regard this as simply an example of Soviet inflexibility.

USSR almost certainly could not increase its strategic capabilities by 40 ICBMs between spring 1962 and autumn 1962 at any price. The Cuban bases might not be cheaper, but they would be quicker.

The Political Change

If the change in the military balance of power to be produced by the installation of 40 or more launchers in Cuba was not sufficient in itself to make the venture attractive, the addition of a change in the political balance would make an impressive picture.

It was noted in SNIE 11-17-62 of 17 October 1962 ("Implications for Soviet Policy of Strategic Missile Deployment in Cuba") that the Soviet leaders presumably calculated that an operational missile capability in Cuba would be a telling demonstration of their claims that the world balance of power "is shifting" in their favor. This is the essential point.

The Soviet concept of bloc strength usually has emphasized the qualitative factors and has treated expectations as present achievements. For a time, this assessment of strength included an assertion of superiority in a plain military sense, but, since the discovery in 1961 that Khrushchev had been greatly overstating his strength, this claim has rarely been made. The bloc's strength has been said to represent a combination of political virtue (a freedom from the grave "contradictions" that weaken the imperialist enemy) and military and economic achievements, along with the moral support of most of the people of the world--factors which in combination give the bloc and its friends superiority in some respects even now ("the forces of peace are stronger than the forces of war"), and which will eventually be expressed as overwhelming superiority of all kinds. If the United States were to fail to repel the challenge of Soviet missile bases in Cuba, both the Soviet assertion of moral superiority and the Soviet confidence in an eventual triumph would seem to have been justified.

To spell it out, if the United States were to accept the advance of Soviet power in its own hemisphere, it would seem to be doing so for some one or some combination of the following reasons:

(1) it was not sufficiently perceptive to respond, i.e., it had such a poor sense of its vital interests that it could not see the threat to them; or

(2) it was too faint-hearted to respond, unwilling to accept the risk of injury even when in possession of superior forces both tactically and strategically; or

(3) it was too indecisive to respond, as a result of "internal contradictions" in the United States or in the Western camp (whether interpreted in Communist terms or in terms of neurotic behavior).*

Moreover, if the Soviet claim to moral and political superiority were to seem justified, there would in fact be a shift in the balance, expressed as a shift in the position of each of the components of the non-Communist world:

(1) the United States itself, if deterred from responding to the rocket threat from Cuba, would be increasingly deterred from making effective responses elsewhere (whether as a result of the President's own decision or as a result of pressures on him from other American leaders and from the public), and the U.S. would thus be much less of a threat to the USSR;

*It may be objected that Khrushchev knew very well that the West was not weak, cowardly, indecisive, etc., as witness that he had withdrawn his deadline for a German settlement. We would answer that he did not know that his retreat had been necessary, he had simply chosen not to risk a clear challenge there; and also that in the Cuban venture he hoped to gain (among other things) a better reading on just this question. Thus, if he had been successful in the Cuban venture, he would have been much more aggressive on the German question.

(2) the genuine allies of the United States, whether governments or individuals, would be greatly disheartened (as Mr. Henry Kissinger has put it, a "United States government incapable of preventing the establishment of Soviet missile bases in Cuba would certainly have been thought incapable of defending interests further from its shores"), and at least some of them would probably move to reduce their dependence on the United States and in the direction (even if slowly) of an accommodation with the USSR;

(3) the nominal allies of the United States, whether governments or individuals, would move rapidly to a position of neutrality or 'every man for himself';

(4) the few pro-Soviet regimes in the underdeveloped areas would become more so, and at least some of the unaligned nations, greatly impressed by this new evidence of Soviet strength, would shift to pro-Soviet positions; and

(5) existing pro-Soviet and leftist extremist forces in all countries of the non-Communist world would be greatly augmented and emboldened.

In sum, as we see Khrushchev putting the case to his comrades, the USSR had an opportunity with a single initiative not only to solve its outstanding problems but to prepare the ground for the rapid fulfillment of its fundamental prophecy.

Negotiations.

Khrushchev on several occasions had complained that the West had not drawn the proper conclusions from the "changes in the balance of power" in recent years--a way of saying that the West was aware that the balance of power was greatly in its favor and therefore was not willing to give Khrushchev what he wanted. He had said the same thing, in a livelier fashion, on that day in 1958 when he stated Moscow's intention to turn over remaining Soviet functions in Berlin to the East Germans: "If I

go to church to pray for peace, they throw bombs at me; but when I come there bomb in hand to ask for peace, they will listen." The deployment of strategic missiles in Cuba would of course be Khrushchev's "bomb in hand"; and he would of course be seeking something more than "peace."

Germany and Berlin: Of all the issues between East and West, those of Germany and Berlin were probably of greatest immediate importance to Khrushchev. His prestige was deeply committed to obtaining a German peace treaty or, failing this, to signing a separate treaty with the GDR. Despite the great strength of his tactical position in East Germany, he had made little progress in gaining Western recognition of the GDR and none in getting the Western allies to relinquish their rights in West Berlin. In addition, his East German satellite was having serious economic problems.

Khrushchev conceived that a rapid build-up of Soviet offensive strength in Cuba would enhance his capability for imposing a favorable settlement of the German and Berlin problems with the West. The Cuban bases once established, Khrushchev would be in a position to use threats successfully against the West in Berlin or, depending on the vigor of the U.S. reaction, to employ the bases in negotiations—in either case, returning to his maximum demand for a Western withdrawal. In turn, U.S. willingness to accept a Soviet-imposed settlement in Berlin would drastically affect the U.S. position throughout Europe and probably all over the world.

At a lower level of risk, Khrushchev as a first step could introduce the German and Berlin issues into the UN, probably in November, with Khrushchev himself presenting the case. (Several reports of autumn 1962 pointed to a Soviet plan to do this.) This move could be followed by a bloc-convened peace conference and, at a later date, by the signing of a separate peace treaty with the GDR, which would entail the turning over to the East Germans of control over Allied access to Berlin.

Disarmament: With the bases in Cuba, the USSR would probably lose whatever genuine interest in disarmament it

may have had--particularly if the changes in the political balance of power (noted earlier) were visibly taking place. However, if the Russians were to remain or to become seriously interested in either "general and complete disarmament" or any of the proposals on partial measures that the USSR had put on the record before the decision on the missile base venture was made, the missile bases would much improve the Soviet position. Moscow would be negotiating from a strategic position closer to parity with the U.S., and with the dramatic threat of the launchers in Cuba in the background.

Just as the bases could be used to support the USSR's demands for a settlement on Soviet terms on Germany and Berlin, so the bases could be used to try to induce Western acceptance of Soviet terms on disarmament--that is, an agreement on "general and complete disarmament" without adequate provision for controls, and envisaging (as in the Soviet proposal introduced in autumn 1960) the liquidation of overseas bases. For an agreement of this kind, the USSR might even decide that it could afford to give up the Cuban bases.*

The bases would of course be useful--and in this case without giving them up--in support of any smaller Soviet effort in disarmament: for example, in seeking agreements on the freezing of military budgets, renunciation of the use of nuclear weapons, the establishment of a nuclear-free zone in Europe, the non-proliferation of nuclear weapons, measures to reduce the danger of surprise attack, etc. However, we would not expect the Russians, having the Cuban missile bases, to be concerned primarily with such limited measures.

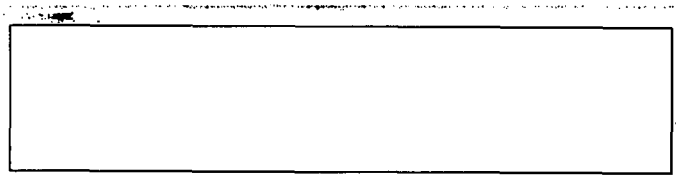
*Gromyko in September 1962 was to propose, in reply to U.S. objections to destroying all nuclear delivery vehicles in the first stage of general disarmament, that an exception be made for a "strictly limited and agreed number" of missiles to remain at the disposal of the U.S. and the USSR. The Soviet missiles would presumably be the ICBMs in the USSR; the prospect of getting the IRBMs and MRBMs out of Cuba would perhaps make this proposal look better.

Overseas Bases: The question of overseas bases could be a separate question as well as part of the Soviet position on disarmament. The Cuban missile bases would dramatically focus attention on this issue, suddenly displaying the USSR as the equal of the United States. As the Soviet Government was to observe in its statement of 11 September 1962, a statement which was addressed primarily to the Cuban situation and which linked this situation to the question of U.S. overseas bases as well as the question of a German settlement:

> The whole world knows that the United States has ringed the Soviet Union and other socialist countries with bases. What have they stationed there - tractors?.... No, they have brought armaments there in their ships, and these armaments...are said to be there lawfully, by right. They consider this their right, but to others the United States does not permit this right even for defense... Equal rights and equal opportunities must be recognized for all countries of the world...

As many observers have noted, U.S. overseas missile bases, in the past two or three years, have been of greater political concern than of strategic concern to the USSR; they add little to the total threat and are so vulnerable to medium bombers and IRBMs and MRBMs (weapons which the Soviets have in great numbers) that they would be of little value except for a first strike. If these bases were removed, their striking power would be replaced by much less vulnerable weapons systems--Polarises and hardened, U.S.-based ICBMs. If the Cuban bases were to be used in negotiations designed to bring the USSR closer to strategic parity, the Soviets would be likely to bypass the bases and go after the ICBMs and Polarises--which effort would be a part of proposals on disarmament.*

*As witness, the USSR included the Polarises in its European withdrawal scheme of February 1963.

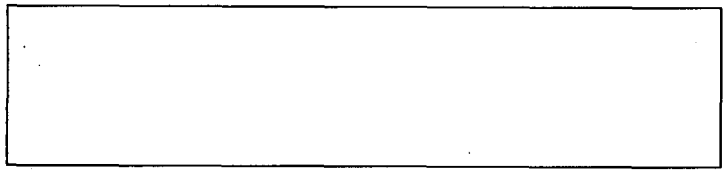


However, Soviet possession of the missile bases in Cuba could be used in an effort to effect further changes in the political balance of power. That is, the U.S. overseas bases are the symbol of mutual commitments, and the country accepting such bases is solidly within the U.S. system of alliances, not susceptible to Soviet overtures. The Cuban bases could be used in a base-trading proposal --relinquishment of the Cuban bases in exchange for liquidation of all U.S. overseas bases. The proposal need not even be serious: as another observer has noted, not only would the USSR have larger purposes in mind than base-trading, but the Soviets could accomplish most of the damage they wished to inflict on the U.S. alliance system simply by drawing the United States into negotiations on this matter. If the bases were negotiable under Soviet pressure, then the United States would surely be regarded as an unreliable ally.

The Underdeveloped Areas

The impetus that a successful missile base venture would give to the Soviet program in the underdeveloped areas was probably a smaller item--with less immediate and striking gains to be made--in the exposition of the advantages than were the gains to be made in changing the balance of power and in negotiations on East-West issues. The bases were almost certainly seen, however, as helping the Soviet effort in the underdeveloped areas in the long term, and probably in the short term as well in Latin America.

The bases would certainly be presented as a proof of the USSR's proclaimed willingness and ability to protect the forces (colonial peoples and newly-independent governments) of the "liberation movement" (to which the USSR had in fact given only moderate support in recent years). The colonial peoples would surely be encouraged by the Soviet success in challenging a great power generally identified with the colonial powers, and the newly-independent governments would be expected to feel either admiration for the accomplishment or fear of the consequences



or both. This success would also be presented as evidence of Soviet willingness to help smaller countries to acquire capabilities of their "own" for standing up to a great power. As noted previously, Khrushchev probably expected that the bases in Cuba, for whatever combination of reasons, would move at least some of the unaligned nations into a pro-Soviet position.*

This in turn would give the USSR greater opportunities for manipulating both the unaligned (but shifting) governments and the local Communist parties. Among other things, in some countries the USSR might be able to establish military bases (not necessarily including missile launchers), which could be used to threaten less conciliatory governments of those areas and to train forces for use against them (something like the way in which Cuba has been used, but under Soviet control); at the same time, or alternatively, the USSR could build a system of alliances with some of the pro-Soviet countries. In these and other countries which were particularly amenable to Soviet influence, the Communist parties could be kept on the leash. In the less amenable countries, the Communist parties could be turned loose and given greater support. In any case, the USSR would not need to fear that a United States which had not taken action against the missile bases in Cuba would take action to bring down new pro-Communist regimes in the underdeveloped areas.

*There is some question as to what degree this expectation was sound. Mr. Henry Kissinger has questioned the expectation in these terms: "The Soviets even misunderstood the temper of the uncommitted. Most of them are glad enough to play off both sides against each other, but their attitude is bound to be very different if the protection of 'national liberation movements' takes the form of nuclear missile bases that would project them into the very center of the East-West conflict."

Cuba

The value of the Cuban missile bases for the control and protection of Cuba itself was probably the smallest item, and perhaps a debatable item, on the list of asserted advantages for the venture.*

It could have been argued, and perhaps was, that the situation in Cuba was if anything a negative consideration: that Castro was so unreliable, and with such possibilities for exploding, that the missile base venture would be in danger from its own base; that that consideration had been an important part of the rationale of the recent Communist effort to dislodge Castro, and that that abortive effort had made him even more sensitive and dangerous; so that, if launchers were installed in Cuba at all, this must be done for very pressing reasons having nothing to do with Cuba except for Cuba's geographical location, which made it the only place where the launchers could be installed for the purpose of dramatizing a new threat to the United States.

There were two apparent answers to such an argument: first, that the missile bases would make Castro easier to handle; second, that even if this estimate were proved wrong, the USSR, not Castro, would be in control of the launchers, and there would be a strong enough Soviet military contingent on the island to beat off any Cuban effort to seize the missiles at least until such time as the warheads could be made inoperable (the troops could also assist the evacuation of all Soviet citizens if necessary).

Whether in response to such an argument or not, the contention that the missile bases would help to answer the

*In speaking of "control," we do not mean physical control; Soviet troops in Cuba were not intended to be an occupation force. We refer instead to psychological control, to the role of the venture as a whole in keeping Castro and the Cubans in line.

problem of controlling and protecting Cuba was, we think, put forward by Khrushchev. As for control, Castro could be made to believe that the bases would greatly extend the Soviet commitment to his defense at a time of continued agitation in the United States for action against him. Moreover, Castro would surely be impressed by the importance of the bases, which would make Cuba itself a place of global importance, enabling Castro's Cuba to play a key role in the degradation of Castro's main enemy.* Together with the launchers, there would be additional military aid to Castro's own forces, to help him put down "counter-revolution" from within or from other Latin American states, and there might be additional economic aid if needed. As a result of all this, Castro could reasonably be expected to be more responsive to Soviet wishes. This greater responsiveness would be expressed, among other ways, in Castro's economic policies, leading to better management of the Cuban economy and more rational requests of the USSR, and in a more selective program of Cuban assistance to revolutionary movements elsewhere in Latin America.

As for protecting Cuba, the SAM system (the presumed argument went) itself would be seen as greatly raising the costs of American action against Cuba, and as so increasing the time necessary to achieve the objectives of such action as to make the action much less likely. The true rationale would be: if the missile bases did not provoke a massive American attack on Cuba, or a threat of one which would cause their withdrawal, then a successful missile base venture which served to deter the United States in general would serve also in the particular case of Cuba.

*Castro himself has recently (November 1963) stated that the first consideration--Cuba's defense--was his entire reason for accepting the deployment of the missiles. We do not believe that, but we think it was his main reason. He seems to have been impressed also by the other consideration, the strategic importance of the venture and Cuba's importance as a result: witness Raul Castro's boast in Moscow in July, that his negotiations with the Russians had changed the balance of power in the world, and Fidel's sad remark, after the missiles had been withdrawn, that Cuba had been a "nuclear power" for a few weeks.

The Chinese Challenge

The value of the Cuban bases in deflating the Chinese Communist challenge was almost certainly an important item in the list of advantages. We do not believe, however, as some observers have concluded, that this was the most important consideration.

The essence of the Chinese position, in that part of the Sino-Soviet dispute concerned with world Communist strategy, was that Khrushchev had not been sufficiently militant in pressing the struggle with the United States. A successful missile base venture would not prove the Chinese to have been wrong--ironically, only the bloc's destruction in a general war could prove that, although an unsuccessful missile base venture would tend to prove it--but it would constitute a far more crippling blow to the American enemy than anything the Chinese had ever attempted or even advocated. Khrushchev could probably argue persuasively, to other Communists whom the Chinese had been influencing or seeking to influence, that his intention all along had been to move cautiously until he judged the time to be propitious for a great leap forward.

Similarly, the essence of the Chinese position on negotiations with the West was that nothing good would come of them (Peiping of course opposed agreements on some matters, such as a test-ban and non-proliferation of nuclear weapons), and that the effort to get something out of them retarded the Communist global struggle. Insofar as the missile base venture was intended to be a substitute for negotiations, the venture would support Peiping's view, but insofar as the venture would lead, as expected, to substantial gains on such matters as Germany and Berlin and disarmament (including the question of overseas bases), the Chinese estimate of the value of negotiations would seem mistaken.

Similarly, the heart of the Chinese position on the underdeveloped areas was that the Communist cause was getting a poor return on Soviet economic and military aid to unaligned governments, that large sums would be better

invested in deserving Communists (notably the Chinese), and that much greater support should be given to the Communist parties in the underdeveloped countries for armed struggle and other violence against their governments. The missile bases might greatly reduce this Chinese case over the long run, as an investment which might greatly increase Soviet influence in the underdeveloped areas (and, moreover, would do so by a means--the installation of advanced weapons--which could not be employed by the Chinese in their competition for influence*); the bases would not only do greater damage to the enemy than any number of guerrilla actions in non-strategic areas, but would permit the Soviets to give greater support to armed struggle in selected areas if they so desired.

Finally, the heart of the Chinese case on matters of authority and discipline was that the Soviet party had no authority over other parties and that no party could be compelled to accede even to a majority vote in the movement. The missile base venture would not refute this argument, but it would surely give the Soviet party a stronger claim to authority, and it could be expected to reduce Peiping's following in the movement, in terms of both individual parties and elements of parties.

In sum, the missile bases would take the force out of the Chinese charges, would reduce the Chinese camp, and might even take some steam out of the Chinese themselves.

*Specifically, the missile bases would reduce Chinese influence in Cuba itself, both by binding Castro to the USSR and by making Chinese positions on strategy seem childish.

Summary of Allurements

In our view (probably the view of most observers), by far the most important advantage seen by Khrushchev in a successful missile base venture in Cuba was the effect of the bases in changing the balance of power between East and West--partially redressing the imbalance in a strategic sense, and perhaps more than redressing it in a political sense. (It is not necessary to judge whether strategic or political considerations were the more important: the former were to be the ground of the latter, the latter were to be the most striking effect of the former, but in any case the two sets of considerations were bound together, the USSR would gain in both senses or in neither.) With respect to particular East-West issues, of greatest immediate importance was the gain to be made, whether in negotiations or outside of them, on the status of the GDR and Berlin; of lesser but considerable importance, over a longer term, was the use of the bases as a bargaining counter (after immediate gains had been made on Germany and Berlin) in negotiations on disarmament (including the matter of U.S. overseas bases). Of great importance also was the advantage to be gained by deflating the Chinese challenge, both immediately and over the long term. Of considerable importance, over the long term, were the gains to be made in the underdeveloped areas. And at the end of the list, as a possibly debatable item, advantages hoped for but perhaps not confidently foreseen, were the gains to be made in controlling and protecting Cuba.

II. The Chances of Success, Early 1962

It is self-evident that Khrushchev did not make the decision to go ahead with the missile base venture in Cuba in the expectation that the venture would fail. In other words, he had to judge, first, that the United States would probably acquiesce, or, if unwilling to acquiesce, would probably be unwilling to take military action (beyond a possible blockade); he had to judge so, because American willingness to fight, in view of the USSR's military inferiority both tactically and strategically, would leave the USSR no choice but to withdraw. Beyond this, he had to judge that, if the U.S. were indeed willing to fight and the failure of the venture had to be accepted, he would probably be given time to withdraw.

The Record of U.S. Responses

For several years before the Kennedy Administration came into office, Khrushchev had been contending that the United States, owing mainly to Soviet military strength, was increasingly deterred from engaging its own forces in local wars. The U.S. self-denial in the Bay of Pigs affair in April 1961, in which the United States had tied its hands both in advance of the venture and on the first day of the invasion, fitted this preconception. Khrushchev almost certainly took the affair as additional evidence that the United States was in general reluctant to employ military force, and he probably concluded too that the President was much concerned about appearing to be the aggressor against a small country.

There had been another development in August 1961 which presumably contributed to Khrushchev's misjudgment of spring 1962. While unwilling to risk a clear test of the President's private and public declarations that the United States would fight if necessary for Allied rights in Berlin, Khrushchev in August had chipped away a piece of Allied rights by building the Berlin Wall, and the

United States had accepted the Wall. This development probably encouraged Khrushchev to believe that the United States would accept an accomplished fact which was not a gross trespass against a precisely defined vital interest, particularly if the allies of the United States were opposed to strong American action. In the same period, the United States had showed itself not disposed to intervene militarily in Laos--another development which could have been taken as evidence of a general reluctance to employ armed force.

Another piece of evidence might have been the character of the American intervention in Vietnam in October 1961. The United States had decided to expand its role in providing military assistance to South Vietnam, but the U.S. role was to be confined to fighting Communists in South Vietnam; it was not to include the carrying of the fight into North Vietnam, nor was the fighting in Laos to be expanded. This might have encouraged a belief that U.S. responses to Communist challenges could be contained.

Khrushchev had probably been encouraged too by the results of the Punta del Este conference in February 1962, in which differences between the United States and the most important Latin American states, with respect to Cuba, were clearly expressed. Khrushchev may well have concluded that the demonstrated opposition of these Latin American states to strong action against Cuba would be an important restraining factor in American thinking in the event of a new challenge from Cuba, just as Allied disunity had contributed to American inaction on the Berlin Wall.

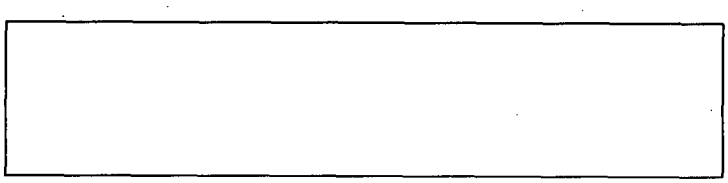
In sum: by early 1962, at which time Khrushchev was considering the chances of success of a missile base venture, the United States--in Khrushchev's presumed view--had shown itself to be in general reluctant to employ armed force, to be vulnerable to pressure from its allies, and

to be disposed both to accept accomplished facts* and to make responses which could be contained. With respect to Cuba in particular, the United States had made only a feeble effort to alter the accomplished fact of Castro's Cuba. It had shown itself to be sensitive about appearing to be an aggressor against Cuba, and it had had and was still having differences with the major Latin American states about Cuba.

There had been a number of statements by President Kennedy in the period from early 1961 to early 1962 which had different implications, and which were presumably considered by Khrushchev and his comrades in surveying the favorable and unfavorable considerations in the missile base venture. For example, the President twice in April 1961 had warned that intervention, penetration, and aggression in the Western hemisphere by a foreign power could reach proportions which would threaten the security of the United States and thus compel American action. In the Vienna talks in June 1961, the President had warned Khrushchev of the dangers of miscalculation (giving a change in the status of Berlin as an example of such miscalculation). Again in July 1961--in speaking of the situation in Berlin--the President had warned against the "dangerous mistake" of assuming that the West was too selfish and soft and divided to fight for its vital interests, and thus again had at least implied to Khrushchev that large Soviet gains would not be tolerated. And in March 1962 he had reaffirmed that the United States might take the initiative in some circumstances in using nuclear weapons against the USSR.

It is self-evident, again, that Khrushchev and his comrades thought that they had reason to discount all of these warnings, to give more weight to the kind of encouraging

*This factor may have been seen as working for the USSR, in a missile base venture, with regard to the American people rather than the U.S. Government; that is, Washington would probably learn of the venture before the program was completed, but the people might not.



evidence cited previously than to discouraging statements of this second kind. We surmise that their reasoning was something like this: the President's April 1961 warnings against intervention, penetration and aggression in the Western hemisphere were in general terms, and were issued after there had already been a good deal of Communist intervention and penetration; the President's warnings in the Vienna talks in June 1961 about the dangers of miscalculation apparently did not include a specific warning about the Soviet use of Cuba; the President's renewed suggestion, in his July 1961 warning about the situation in Berlin, that large Soviet gains would not be tolerated, was not spelled out to include any area beyond Berlin; and the President's March 1962 statement about taking the initiative in the use of nuclear weapons was again put in general terms, with only a Soviet invasion of Western Europe expressly identified as an action which might provoke such an American response. In this connection, it should be noted that in that instance in which the President had repeatedly warned Khrushchev (in the Vienna talks and subsequently) against a specific, clearly-defined action --i.e., signing the kind of peace treaty which would give the East Germans control over Western access to Berlin-- Khrushchev had believed or had come to believe in this warning, and, despite the commitment of his personal prestige to the signing of such a treaty within a given time, had swallowed his pride and backed away. We do not conclude from this that an express warning against deploying strategic weapons in Cuba, if issued before the program was well underway, would necessarily have discouraged Moscow, as Khrushchev may have seen an important difference between the situation in Berlin and the Cuban venture: he may have thought of transfer to the East Germans of control over access to Berlin as an irrevocable step (because it would so damage the concept of "sovereignty" of all bloc states if he tried to take it back), whereas he almost certainly regarded the deployment of missiles in Cuba as an action which could be revoked, one which would permit the USSR to explore U.S. intentions while the venture was underway and would give Moscow an avenue of escape if necessary. Thus, while it seems clear that warnings put in general terms were not taken seriously at any stage, the efficacy of a specific warning at an early stage remains a question for debate.

The Plans for Management

Judging from the actual course of the missile base venture (the only evidence on the planning), the venture as conceived was not to be carried out in clearly-defined phases or stages, in terms of kinds of weapons or levels of risk. The conception did not call for the phased deployment of first defensive and then offensive weapons, but called instead for all parts of the program to be worked on at the same time. The original conception probably called for all components--both defensive and offensive--to become operational about mid-November, although, as it turned out, there was a lag in the IRBM portion of the program so that this portion would be completed only in December or (probably) in January 1963.* Neither, apparently, did the conception envisage significantly different levels of risk at different stages. Since the USSR was evidently unable to recognize a high risk even after the President's warnings of early September, it seems evident too that in its original plans the USSR did not foresee a high risk (of an attack on Cuba or the USSR) at any point in the course of the venture as planned.

*On this view, the IL-28s, which were not to be assembled until 1963, were not a part of the missile base venture, but were part of the program of conventional arms. The IRBMs, however, were an essential part of the venture, and the failure to give this part of the program enough lead time was a serious failure; it meant that for about two months the missile bases would have only half of their planned capability against the United States, i.e. would be unable to reach that half of the U.S. to be covered by the IRBMs. Possible explanations for the lag are (a) a debate as whether the IRBM sites could be successfully camouflaged, (b) debate as to whether to put in the IRBMs at all, if they could not be concealed, (c) a decision that a two-month lag was preferable to starting work on the IRBM sites two months earlier than on the MRBM sites, as the latter course would most expose the venture during its most vulnerable stage.

Some observers have argued that it was imprudent not to complete the installation of the SAM system before beginning to deploy the strategic missiles, as a completed SAM system might have prevented the discovery of the strategic missiles until all of the missiles had been deployed. But this argument assumes that the USSR was willing to take all possible measures to conceal the build-up, including the employment of the SAMs against American aircraft. And this assumption is clearly mistaken. The USSR did not make even a half-hearted attempt to camouflage the missile sites until late October, several weeks after the MRBMs and related equipment had arrived in Cuba and had been transported to the sites. And the Russians did not bring their air defense system into operational status as early as they could have, as early as they would have if they had intended to use it.

It is hard to find a persuasive explanation of the Soviet failure to camouflage the construction and equipment at the actual sites, while at the same time carrying out rigorous security measures in accumulating the personnel and equipment in the USSR and in offloading the equipment at the Cuban ports, and while also undertaking an effort to deceive the United States by misleading statements of Soviet intentions in Cuba. Five possible explanations have been suggested: (a) the Russians had no appreciation of U.S. reconnaissance capabilities; (b) they understood these capabilities, but judged that there was no possibility of reconnaissance; (c) they understood the capabilities and recognized the possibility, but the Soviet commanders in Cuba failed to implement the order to camouflage; (d) they had such high confidence in success that they were indifferent to discovery; or (e) they would have preferred to camouflage the build-up at the sites, but they judged this infeasible.

We believe that the first three possibilities can be dismissed. As for the first, the testimony given in the Powers trial (and printed in Soviet publications) shows that the Russians understood very well the capabilities of the U-2; Khrushchev himself apparently had this understanding, as he had indicated in his comments on the U-2; and in April 1962 Marshal Biryuzov, commander of Soviet Air Defense Forces and perhaps the best-informed person in the

USSR on the U-2's capabilities, was to become commander of Soviet Rocket Forces and thus responsible for the missiles which were to be deployed in Cuba. As for the second, it is not credible that the Russians were so bestially stupid as to think that there was no possibility of U-2 reconnaissance of Cuba. As for the third, it is not credible that all of the Soviet commanders in Cuba, to a man, would ignore their orders from Moscow.

We believe that the right explanation is a combination of the fourth and fifth possibilities suggested above. That is, we believe that the Russians had high confidence, so that the success of the venture (in their view) did not depend on keeping it secret until the program was complete; at the same time, they were not indifferent to discovery, and would have preferred to keep the build-up secret, in order to confront the U.S. with an accomplished fact; but it was judged either not possible, or as more trouble than it was worth, to camouflage the build-up successfully against careful U.S. reconnaissance, the possibility of which was recognized.*

If the Russians so calculated, they may have originally planned to make a virtue of necessity, so that if and

*In arriving at this view, we consulted several specialists in photographic intelligence, and several other persons concerned with the interpretation of the build-up in Cuba in 1962. The majority opinion is as follows: the Russians could have made at least the MRBM portion of the program a lot harder to find, by sending the MRBMs into Cuba all at once, deploying them all in a few days, and camouflaging them; it would have been very difficult, however, to camouflage successfully the IRBM sites, which are much larger and much more complex, and an effort to do so might have seriously interfered with the work on the sites. One observer has suggested that Moscow may have proved to itself in advance that it could not successfully camouflage the IRBM sites, by camouflaging and photographing similar installations in the USSR.

when the United States discovered the build-up the USSR could point to its openness, and to the absence of flat lies in its misleading statements of intention, as evidence that its heart was pure, that the weapons had a defensive purpose. However, during the build-up Khrushchev did make some seriously misleading statements and did introduce the flat lie, so the pose of innocence was not available to him at the time of discovery.

It might be argued that it was stupid of the Russians, given the decision to mislead the United States in public and private statements, not to do what was possible to conceal the build-up at the sites. But this was stupid only if the camouflage effort could have been successful, or would not have seriously impeded the construction; and the Russians seem to have judged that the IRBM portion of the program was the obstacle, on one or both counts.

Thus the rough scheme was as follows. In the spring of 1962, the USSR, after securing the approval of Castro or his successors, would continue to ship conventional military equipment to Cuba, together with bloc personnel for training Cubans in its use, while rapidly assembling the personnel and equipment which were to arrive in Cuba during July and August. In Cuba itself, the necessary Cuban personnel would be told of the character and scope of the venture. The sites for the strategic missiles of all types were to be selected (partly on the basis of earlier Soviet investigations), and Cubans living there were to be moved out. While the United States even in this early period of the build-up might be alerted by reports from Cuban officials and Cuban refugees, as of mid-1962 the build-up in Cuba would still look defensive, without even such conventional items as bombers and submarines.

In the period of roughly July-August 1962, there was to be a sharp and visible increase in Soviet shipments to Cuba (of the personnel and equipment assembled in May and June). Newer types of conventional material were to arrive, together with some or all of the SAM units, and materials and equipment for the coastal defense missile installations

and the strategic missile sites (but not yet the missiles themselves). Some of the armored forces would come in. Some of the SAM units would be deployed in this period, and might be soon identified by American aerial reconnaissance. Assuming that this was done, while the build-up would still appear defensive and while the majority of U.S. observers might regard the SAM system in particular as a part of these improved defenses, the build-up by this time would be such as certainly to raise questions about its eventual character and scope, and at least some American observers could be expected to put the question (as some indeed did) of whether the primary purpose of the SAM sites was not that of screening the deployment of strategic missiles. (In fact that was not their purpose, as made clear by the failure of the Russians to employ them to that end; but Moscow, as we see it, realized that the question would be asked if reconnaissance had identified the SAMs, and that the signal of official alarm--if any--might be given at that time.) American suspicions of this kind would be additionally stimulated by reports from Cuban sources.

In the period from September to the end of the year the missile base venture was to lie open to the sky.* Early in the period, the USSR and Cuba were to admit that arms and technicians were being sent to Cuba. Thereafter, the remainder of the armored forces would be brought in and deployed in encampments,** there was to be the rapid deployment of SAM units and construction of MRBM and IRBM sites,

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*The United States, if it discovered the build-up, was not necessarily expected to reveal it. Khrushchev may have believed there was a good chance that President Kennedy, with an election coming up, would not reveal it, especially since, in Khrushchev's calculations, the President would be unwilling to take military action against the missile bases and therefore would have no effective plan for dealing with the revealed threat.

**Some of the armored forces apparently arrived as early as August, some as late as mid-October.

the shipping in of the strategic missiles, the installation of the remainder of the SAMs and the deployment of the strategic missiles, and the establishment of direct command links between Moscow and Soviet forces. As suggested earlier, it seems likely that in the original conception all components of the program were to become operational at about the same time, in November, although as it turned out there was a lag in the IREM portion of the program.

As noted previously, there was to be no effort to conceal the build-up at the sites. On the contrary, the missile-related equipment and the missiles themselves were to be visible at the sites from the time of their arrival; and some of the strategic missiles were to be deployed, so that they could hardly be missed by American reconnaissance, if any. During this period, the Russians were publicly and privately to describe the weapons being deployed in Cuba as having a defensive purpose, a description which seems to have been designed to serve two purposes. If it served to help to deceive the United States and to deter the U.S. from conducting the systematic reconnaissance which would discover the missile bases, so much the better. But if it did not do this, and if the United States seemed about to discover the strategic missiles, the formula could serve as the form of an invitation to the U.S. to acquiesce in the entire venture.* In this final period of the build-up, while waiting for the United States to discover it, the USSR was to claim to be taking measures of military preparedness, in order to reinforce the American desire for peace,

*As it happened, the U.S. did undertake systematic reconnaissance, and the USSR in September, probably well aware of this, was emphasizing in its public statements the second suggested use of the formula of defensive purpose--its use as the form of an invitation to acquiesce. However, the USSR issued no clear invitation; it did not consistently use this formula, and there were some quite misleading elements in some of these statements. Moreover, the Soviet ambassador in the same period transmitted privately a seriously misleading statement of Soviet intentions in Cuba.

and was to encourage the view that a conciliatory U.S. line on Cuba would be met with a conciliatory Soviet line on disputed issues. If all went well, Khrushchev was to appear at the UN in November or December to conduct both the political defense of the missile bases and the new political offensive which the missile bases were to support.

The USSR, while having high confidence in success, almost certainly recognized the possibility that the United States, at some point in the course of the build-up, rather than meekly tolerating the build-up would send a signal to Moscow that a further build-up was unacceptable--or even, if the discovery of the venture did not come until later, that some elements of the build-up would have to be removed. How did the USSR intend to manage matters if this were to happen?

If the United States were to threaten to use force to halt or reverse the missile base venture, the first task would of course be that of preventing the U.S. from striking either the USSR or Cuba. This was to be done by making clear at the outset that the USSR wished primarily to avoid war, and would be receptive to other means of settling the dispute. The risk of an American attack on the USSR was seen by the Soviets as very small, and of an attack even on Cuba as small.

In the Soviet calculations of early 1962 (as indicated by Soviet spokesmen later), the United States, if it took any military action at all against the missile base venture, was most likely to impose a blockade. If the blockade were to come at any time before the end of the year, it could block the completion of the program. The USSR was to attempt to prevent this by warning the United States in advance against such an action, and by threatening to run any blockade. If the United States were nevertheless to impose the blockade or threaten other action, the USSR could probably succeed in involving the U.S. in negotiations.

This was to be done by throwing the affair into the United Nations Security Council (in the anticipation of considerable support for the 'reasonable' Soviet position), and by calling at the same time for bilateral Soviet -

American talks (a proposal which would also find much support), in particular for a summit meeting. The immediate objectives, in negotiations, would be those of deterring the United States from raising the level (beyond the blockade) of its military response and of inducing the United States to end the blockade. If the blockade were ended, the program could be completed, and the bases in Cuba would be established as a fact of life. The bases themselves would increase greatly the deterrent to action against them; as time went on, the military problem of destroying the bases would increase, and the political problems involved in making the necessary military effort to destroy the bases would proportionally increase; as the course of the Korean War had shown, with the passage of time the United States and its allies (and governments they wished to influence) would be increasingly reluctant to take strong action.

The alternative (or fallback) objective was to be that of using the bases--prior to their completion--to gain some large concession from the United States, relating, for example, to Germany and Berlin, overseas bases, or disarmament. As noted previously, negotiations on such matters, in response to a Soviet threat, would further the aim of undermining confidence in the United States as an ally.

If the USSR were to be finally convinced of U.S. willingness to resort to force--against Cuba and if necessary against the USSR itself--the USSR would have to give up the Cuban bases. Such a withdrawal might be followed by U.S. military action against Cuba to verify the withdrawal and to keep the problem from arising again, but this was seen as quite improbable.

Differences Among Soviet Leaders

It was easy for Soviet leaders to agree among themselves that there would be great advantages in a successful missile base venture. There might have been differences as to whether there would be six or five or four major advantages, or whether this or that advantage would be the greater, or as to just how to exploit the success

--but there could hardly be any doubt that the establishment of the bases would be a great coup. Neither could there be serious disagreement as to whether there were some indications--some of the developments cited above in the period between April 1961 and March 1962--that the venture might be successful. But there were certainly two ways of reading the ambiguous evidence as to the chances for success, and it is not credible that all of the Soviet leaders involved in the venture genuinely read the evidence in the same way. So it is necessary at this point to consider the question of differences of opinion among them.

There is no doubt that Khrushchev was intimately associated with the missile base venture from its conception (although he may not have conceived it). In addition to the fact that he was the leader of the party and government, he had been the principal Soviet spokesman on every one of the problems which the missile base venture was apparently designed to solve, and he was to be the principal spokesman on the venture through all of its public phases, both advancing and retreating. The other Soviet leaders who were probably associated with the venture from the early stages --judging from their speeches on various subjects, their involvement in Cuban matters, and the fact that they were the four leaders in addition to Khrushchev who appeared to be concerned with the full range of Soviet affairs--are Kozlov,* Brezhnev, Mikoyan and Kosygin. The evidence on Suslov is less persuasive. There is little or no evidence on the other full members of the Presidium, Kuusinen, Kirilenko, Voronov, Shvernik, Polyansky, and Podgorny. It seems likely that all of the full members were consulted at some point in the venture, however, and the candidate members may also have been. Also, Malinovsky and a few other military leaders who would be professionally concerned

*As the second-ranking secretary, Kozlov might be expected to have a large interest in something as important as the rocket forces; there is some other evidence of such an interest on his part, e.g., he gave the principal eulogy at the funeral of rocket force commander Nedelin in 1960.

with the venture were probably asked for studies on aspects of the venture and were probably brought into the deliberations.

There has been very little reporting on the attitudes of individual leaders toward the missile base venture, either in the advancing or in the retreating phase. Most of the speculation on differences--not in reports, but in articles by journalists and studies by other observers--has been in terms of (a) Khrushchev (the bull) versus the military (the bears), or (b) Khrushchev and one wing of the military (the bulls) versus another wing of the military (the bears), or (c) the military (the bulls) versus Khrushchev (the bear). There is one report known to us which supports either the first or the second of these conjectures--to the effect that two Soviet marshals, Moskalenko and Golikov, opposed the venture in the early 1962 discussions and were demoted (as they were) as a result; the source of this report said further that Khrushchev made the decision to go ahead with the venture and that it "definitely" was not imposed on him. And there are two reports which support the opposite conjecture--to the effect that the military urged the venture on a reluctant Khrushchev (we would not be surprised if he said this, as he would have no pride of authorship after the failure). Finally, there are two reports that Malinovsky opposed the withdrawal of the missiles, but this would not necessarily mean that he favored deploying them in Cuba in the first place.*

We think that either the first or the second--probably the second--conjecture is correct, provided that it is recognized that Khrushchev would have had the support (whether honest or not) of many other political leaders as well. We think this on the basis of developments both

*Malinovsky (and others) might have taken privately the same position that the Chinese Communists have taken at the tops of their voices publicly: that it was a mistake of "adventurism" to put the missiles in, but a mistake of "capitulationism" to take them out.

before and after the venture. For one thing, classified Soviet military documents of dates prior to the venture strongly suggested that military leaders generally were more conservative than Khrushchev, less confident of the Soviet deterrent, less confident of Soviet preparedness, less willing to take serious risks. (There was also some reporting to this effect.) For another thing, if the military had pushed the venture through against a reluctant Khrushchev, the spectacular and humiliating failure of the venture would almost certainly have caused some heads to roll among Soviet military leaders since last October; and this has not happened, with one possible exception attributable to other causes.

Finally, we think that the venture had Khrushchev's personal stamp.** Another observer has suggested that the venture had the look of some of Khrushchev's earlier initiatives--deStalinization, the New Lands program, the "Spirit of Camp David," the two reconciliations with Tito, and the inflation of Soviet rocket successes into the Missile

*A British intelligence analyst speculates that a lower-level Soviet military figure was made the scapegoat for the failure of the missile base venture. His candidate is Col. Gen. S. P. Ivanov, who, he believes, was concerned with the question of foreign military capabilities, and was a likely man to answer such questions as that of the form and speed of an American military response. Ivanov, the source says, was removed from that post in November 1962. Ivanov would seem to us an unsatisfactory scapegoat, because the basic error was not a technical one but the judgment that the United States would be unwilling to use military force.

**We cannot guess where the idea of the venture originated; if not with Khrushchev himself, then with another political leader, or with one of the 'progressive' military figures, or with the Cubans (as at least one report asserts); our point is simply that, wherever the idea originated, Khrushchev made it his own and was its foremost advocate.

Gap Hoax; we would add, the deadline for a German treaty, and the surprise attacks on the Chinese at party conferences. The features cited by that observer were: that it was bold (in the sense of imaginative), that it promised quick results at small cost, and that it was not thought through; we would add, that it had a large element of surprise, and that it was saturated with wishful thinking. We mean the term "wishful thinking" to apply to Khrushchev's assessment of the chances of success, and we mean the term "not thought through" to apply to his failure to consider carefully the consequences of failure.

If Khrushchev was the principal sponsor of the venture, why then did its failure not cause his head to roll? There is, indeed, some evidence that Khrushchev's position did weaken, from about November 1962 to March 1963, and it seems certain that the failure of the missile base venture was a factor. But since March 1963 he has reasserted his pre-eminence; there had apparently not developed any coalition of leaders so strategically placed in the party, police and military apparatuses as to be capable of forcing him out, even if the Cuban venture--following his other failures--gave them good reason to try. Moreover, the plans for the missile base venture were probably adopted with only a few dissents. On this view, while there were probably several leaders--both political and military--who were privately bearish and others who may well have politely expressed their reservations, only a few Soviet leaders (perhaps Moskalenko and Golikov) tried hard to dissuade Khrushchev. Acquiescence would have been politically the prudent course: if the venture succeeded, those who acquiesced would have a share in the credit; if it failed, they would be in the best possible company.

The Net Assessment

To recapitulate: Khrushchev, probably without widespread opposition from other political and military leaders, calculated that the risks were low at each stage of the missile base venture; that, with luck, the build-up would be an accomplished fact before discovery; that the

United States, at whatever time it discovered the missiles, would probably acquiesce; that even if it did not acquiesce, the United States would be unwilling to take military action beyond a possible blockade (even if the USSR persisted in the build-up despite U.S. expressions of alarm), and could probably be tied up in negotiations which might permit the completion of the program or in which Moscow could gain important concessions; and finally, in the worst case, that, if these calculations were mistaken and the USSR were forced to withdraw the missiles, Cuba itself could very probably be saved.

Khrushchev was, of course, mistaken in his basic estimate, as the United States proved to be willing to use whatever degree of military force was necessary to effect the withdrawal of the strategic missiles, and proved to be unwilling to let itself be tied up in negotiations or to give him substantial concessions. He was right, however, in thinking that, if things went wrong, he would be given time to withdraw the missiles and could maintain the Soviet position in Cuba.

There are various factors which may have contributed to Khrushchev's miscalculation. The Soviet diplomatic and intelligence services may have contributed to it: they may, for example, have reported conversations that encouraged a faulty assessment; they may have misread the American press (things can always be found in the press to support any opinion one cares to support); or, in view of the heavy Soviet reliance on stolen documents, they may have got hold of some misleading document (it need not have been an American document; it could have been a report to a Western government on a conversation, or even a faulty intelligence assessment by a Western government of U.S. intentions in a hypothetical situation).

Further, we suggested earlier that Khrushchev, in discussing the missile base venture with other leaders, had the problem that many leaders have--namely, that his subordinates tend to agree with him. We suspect that several of those consulted by him exaggerated their favor for the venture, and others who did not favor it failed to state their disfavor frankly.

Further, we have previously described the missile base venture as having been saturated in wishful thinking; and we regard this factor as the most important in Khrushchev's miscalculation.* While we do not agree with those observers who have described Khrushchev's misjudgment as "incredible" and who have said that the President "could not" have acted in any other way than he did, we disagree more strongly with those who regard the venture as having been entirely rational, indeed as almost inevitable. The most important factor in the venture was Khrushchev's reading of the record of U.S. actions and statements with respect to Communist challenges: while it seems to us true that the American record as of early 1962 suggested a possibility of success for a missile base venture, that possibility was marginal. We submit that it was wishful thinking that converted a marginal possibility of success into an estimate of probable success. It was wishful thinking that failed to consider that, if the Soviet gains from a successful missile base venture were to be so great, it was probable that the United States would recognize what was at stake and therefore probable that the United States would do whatever was necessary to deny such gains to its principal antagonist. On at least three occasions prior to early 1962--in April 1961, June 1961, and July 1961--the President had warned Khrushchev against attempting to make gains of this character; but, perhaps because the President had not warned against the specific venture of deploying strategic missiles in Cuba, Khrushchev in considering the venture had chosen not to heed those warnings.

Moreover, in addition to Khrushchev's miscalculation which converted a possibility into a probability, the venturn was not thought through, in that the consequences of a failure were not fully weighed. Failure would mean a

*Some of our colleagues have objected to the term "wishful thinking." In using this term, we are not moralizing. We mean simply the process of finding reasons--exaggerating the favorable considerations, minimizing the unfavorable ones--to justify what one wants to believe or do.

withdrawal in the face of an American ultimatum, and such a retreat would make most of Khrushchev's problems--that is, the problems he had thought to solve with the missile bases--worse than they were before.

Everyone would then know that the Soviet position in the balance of power was inferior (just as Department of Defense officials had said); there would be important political gains for the United States; there would be even less prospect for substantial Soviet gains in negotiations; the governments and peoples of the underdeveloped countries would be even less inclined to look to the USSR; the Chinese Communist challenge would increase; and most of the USSR's problems with Cuba would be exacerbated.

To have foreseen, in the spring of 1962, the missile base venture as it developed in the next several months, would mean to have foreseen that the above two elements in the problem--Khrushchev's wishful thinking about the chances of success, and his unwillingness to think through the consequences of failure--would be as large as they were.* In other words, we who have engaged in this reconstruction think that the reasonable estimate, as of spring 1962, was what the estimate in fact was--that the USSR might deploy strategic missiles in Cuba but probably would not, as Khrushchev should estimate, and probably would estimate, that the United States would regard Soviet strategic missile bases there as intolerable and would destroy them or force their dismantling.

*Another way of putting it: to have accepted at face value the report of January 1962, that Khrushchev had decided to redress the imbalance of power by the end of 1962, might have led one to conclude that the deployment of strategic missiles in Cuba would represent his best hope of achieving that goal within the time specified; but one would still have had to conclude that Khrushchev would persist in that intention even after considering all the objections to such a venture, i.e., that he would think wishfully and would fail to think it through.

III. The Progress of the Venture, April - August 1962

We take up here the management of the Soviet missile base venture in the spring and summer of 1962, before any of the strategic missiles were sent into Cuba. We discuss the Soviet negotiations with Castro, the clandestine introduction into Cuba of elements of the program, the effort to deceive the United States about Soviet intentions in Cuba, the mixed evidence as to these intentions, aspects of Soviet foreign policy related to the venture, and the Soviet assessment of American intentions with respect to intervening in Cuba.

The First Stage, April - June

Soviet Negotiations with Castro: As detailed in the Appendix to this paper, by mid-March the Cuban Communist effort--encouraged by Moscow--to take power from Castro had clearly failed, but the Soviet effort to deceive Castro into believing that an American invasion was being planned, and that a deterrent was urgently needed, had been a complete success. It was apparently between mid-March and mid-April that the Russians additionally persuaded Castro that the deployment of strategic missiles in Cuba, rather than a formal Soviet commitment to defend Cuba, was the answer to his problem. As Castro put it in his November 1963 account of these negotiations:

> We thought of a proclamation, an alliance, conventional military aid. The Russians explained to us that their concern was twofold: first, they wanted to save the Cuban revolution..., and at the same time they wished to avoid a world conflict. They reasoned that if conventional military aid was the extent of their assistance, the United States might not hesitate to instigate an invasion...

Although Castro's account of the negotiations does not precisely date the time, after mid-March, that agreement

on the missile base venture was reached, it was probably no later than 11 April, on which date the Soviet press for the first time referred to Castro as "comrade"; this Pravda article also endorsed Castro's organizational measures (designed to prevent any repetition of the attempt to take his power from him), his domestic policies, and his purge of Escalante; and on 15 April Moscow placed its greetings to Cuba, in the Soviet May Day slogans, at the end of the Soviet greetings to the bloc countries and ahead of the greeting to Yugoslavia.

An additional reason for believing that agreement on the missile base venture had been reached by mid-April is an eyewitness report, from the former assistant director of the Torrens School (a few miles south of Havana), that on 17 April Raul Castro visited the school and took away blueprints of the buildings and grounds, and that within a week much new construction was underway on the 770-acre property. Soviet personnel took over this area within two or three months, and it apparently became the main headquarters for Soviet military missions in Cuba. The judgment as to mid-April is also supported by the opinion of planning specialists that agreement on the venture probably had to be reached no later than April, if the USSR wished to have time to accomplish smoothly all the things that had to be done.

Although a Soviet-Cuban trade pact for 1962 had been signed only in December, fresh negotiations were undertaken throughout April. On 2 May the USSR and Cuba concluded a new technical assistance agreement for the development of Cuban chemical and fertilizer industries, and Moscow apparently extended another credit of $100 million. There were indications that the USSR had decided to make available to the Cubans whatever they needed, including consumer goods in short supply. In late May, yet another Soviet economic delegation arrived, this one headed by candidate member of the politburo, Rashidov; and on the next day Havana

(rather than Moscow) announced the recall of Soviet Ambassador Kudryavstev, who had apparently been offered and accepted as a scapegoat.*

On 3 June, Khrushchev, speaking in Moscow to a thousand young Cubans who had spent a year in the USSR, praised Castro in strong terms, observed that "We are helping Cuba with weapons and other things," and promised continued aid. Possibly reflecting a promise that the Cubans would eventually be given control of the strategic missiles to be deployed in Cuba, he noted also that "Even help with weapons is of use only when these weapons are held firmly in the hands of those to whom they are given..." On 12 June, a new Soviet ambassador (Alekseyev) was named, and on 13 June Pravda reprinted an article by Roca on the Escalante case which accepted Castro's version of it. In the same period, there continued to be reports from Communist sources about Soviet concern over Castro's relations with the Communists, the regime's disorganization and inefficiency, its dangerously provocative attitude toward the United States, and its excessive encouragement of armed insurrection in Latin America. These reports, while probably true, may have been thought to contribute to deceiving the United States about Soviet intentions.**

Related Problems: The USSR in the spring of 1962 seemed to be vacillating on East-West issues while hardening its attitude toward the underdeveloped countries and toward the Chinese.

In his speeches in the latter half of May--in Bulgaria and in reporting in Moscow on his Bulgarian trip--Khrushchev

*Prior to his recall, Kudryavtsev in private conversations in effect admitted that he had been involved in the Cuban Communist effort to take power from Castro; he commented despondently on the difficulties of helping the Communists without antagonizing the Castroites.

**These reports had reached an impressive volume as early as March, when the Russians were setting up the Cubans for the missile base venture.

appeared to be a man who had been brooding heavily on the strategic situation.* After speaking at length of this matter in speeches of 15, 16, 18 and 19 May, on 25 May Khrushchev reiterated his complaint that the West would not give him what he wanted. The Western powers, he said,

> have not understood or do not want to understand the changes in the balance of power which have taken place in the international arena in recent years, and are still trying to carry on their policy from positions of strength. The author of this insane doctrine...has died, but the doctrine lives on; and the leaders of the Western powers...are completely unwilling to abandon it...

Khrushchev was well aware that there had not been a change in the balance of power which would permit the USSR to get

*He had been given additional cause to brood, in a speech by Deputy Secretary Gilpatric in Monterey on 2 May. Mr. Gilpatric had spoken in these terms of the anticipated balance of power in 1965:

> ...we now have in our planning, at least as far as 1965, a pretty definite force structure. We will have nearly 950 bombers... We will have some 1500 ICBMs operational, including Atlases, Titans, Minutemen, and Polarises. We will have more than double the number of alert weapons that we have today... Those warheads will be carrying a yield, a megatonnage, of more than twice the striking power by 1965 that we have [as of June 1962]... That is why we feel that no matter what the Soviets can do,...we will maintain the margin of superiority that we possess today.

what it wanted; indeed, the most significant development of the previous year had been the West's discovery of just that, that the balance of power remained considerably in its favor. And the Cuban missile base venture was to aim precisely at altering that balance.*

Khrushchev and Gromyko in April, perhaps on the basis of their reading of Secretary Rusk's proposals to Gromyko in Geneva the month before, both professed to see hope for a Berlin agreement. They may actually have had optimistic expectations. They were in any case disappointed, and perhaps furious, when Adenauer promptly attacked certain key features of the Secretary's proposals and when the Secretary himself, seconded by General Clay, publicly contradicted the hopeful appraisals of Khrushchev and Gromyko. By late May, the Soviet press was indicating no expectation of progress on Berlin. (One close observer believes that the decision to go ahead with the missile base venture in Cuba was not made firm until May, when Moscow recognized that its hope for a Berlin settlement was groundless; while this is possible, for various reasons cited previously we prefer an earlier date.)

Following the U.S. decision to resume nuclear testing, and the Soviet decision on the missile base venture, Khrushchev and other Soviet spokesmen in April were openly pessimistic (perhaps they had always been privately pessimistic) about the chance of success for the disarmament

*We have been asked how Khrushchev, who in this 25 May speech and other speeches showed his recognition of the ability of the West to act from "positions of strength" and therefore his recognition of the importance of really altering the balance of power, could have gone on to conclude that the missile base venture was one of low risk. We stand on our earlier answer: that it was wishful thinking to estimate that the U.S. would acquiesce and that, if not, there was only a small chance that the U.S. would strike either Cuba or the USSR. He was right, however, in thinking that he would be given an avenue of escape.

talks. In late May, Khrushchev, reporting on his Bulgarian trip, declared that present Western leaders were not serious about disarmament. And a few days later the Soviet delegate at Geneva reversed the Soviet position and rejected an agreed draft declaration against war propaganda. The USSR's Geneva delegation had apparently been overruled by Moscow, presumably because the danger of Western aggression was to be the rationale for the imminent increase in meat and butter prices. Before and after the mid-June recess (for a month) of the disarmament conference in Geneva, Soviet spokesmen (including Khrushchev) spoke of the prospects for disarmament as poor.

In May, pro-Communist forces in Laos--violating the cease-fire agreement and Communist promises--extended their control over much of northwestern Laos, which was soon followed by the dispatch of U.S. and other SEATO forces to Thailand. In the same month, the USSR and Indonesia concluded a new and unique military aid agreement. This provided for the rapid delivery of some $90 million worth of Soviet military equipment, including aircraft, submarines, and SAMs. The submarines and bombers were to have Soviet crews--the first time that units had ever been detached from the Soviet O/B to go out into the world--and thus could be used at once in an invasion of West New Guinea, as Moscow reportedly hoped they would be. While the USSR had apparently decided some months earlier to emphasize military rather than economic aid to the underdeveloped countries, this was another leap forward in Soviet thinking on the underdeveloped areas--the same state of mind that had been expressed in the decision to go ahead with the Cuban missile base venture; the two decisions may have been made at

about the same time.* In June, while hailing the settlement in Laos as an example to East and West in their approach to other problems, the USSR moved quickly to supply this complex military equipment (with crews) to the Indonesians; and a Soviet military leader who visited Indonesia in June reportedly urged the Indonesians to attack West New Guinea.

Khrushchev in his 19 May speech in Sofia expressed in unusually strong terms his disappointment with the results of his earlier policy toward the underdeveloped countries. Observing that the truths of Marxism-Leninism were "not always acceptable to many leaders of the national liberation movement," Khrushchev spoke of the tendency of such leaders to reach an "agreement with reaction." Citing assertions that "socialism is being built" in newly-independent Asian and African countries, he asked sarcastically, "What type of socialism do they mean?" He went on to assert that "only" through the Soviet model could "victory be achieved and correct solutions found." Those leaders who did not understand this, he concluded, would be succeeded by those who could understand.

Moscow also hardened toward the Chinese in this period. In mid-April, the Sino-Soviet economic (trade and technical) talks resumed, and the Soviets soon made clear that the financial and technical assistance urgently needed by the Chinese economy would not be forthcoming; moreover, the USSR was unwilling to provide even a token new credit to China. In late April, Moscow and Peiping resumed their polemics on issues in dispute (including the issue of whether the

*There has been speculation that the USSR at the time was contemplating a missile base venture in Indonesia as well as in Cuba. However, such bases in Indonesia would obviously not have the advantages of bases in Cuba. If the Indonesian venture was related at all to the Cuban venture, it seems more likely that the former was designed to divert attention from the latter, or (we think) to be a final test of Western intentions prior to the sending of strategic missiles into Cuba.

USSR was sufficiently aggressive toward the West), although these were not as bitter as the exchanges two years earlier. In late May, another Soviet letter to Peiping rejected the Chinese request for another conference of all the parties. And in June, the USSR gave institutional expression to the split in the bloc by reorganizing CEMA to include all of the bloc states loyal to Moscow and to leave outside the Chinese and their supporters. The USSR, having failed to silence the Chinese, was again trying to weaken and discredit Peiping, while moving ahead with the missile base venture which it hoped would cut the ground from under the Chinese case.

Assessment of U.S. Intentions: Throughout the spring of 1962 Soviet spokesmen expressed concern that the United States intended to take military action against Cuba, but such statements did not suggest an immediate concern.* Khrushchev himself expressed emphatically in May what seemed to be his real concern at the time--concern over the President's statements (of March) that the United States might take the initiative in some circumstances with regard to employing nuclear weapons. As Khrushchev put it on 19 May:

> ...the imperialists put their stake on violence... The President of the United States himself...stated that the forces of the Western states and of the countries of socialism are now equal... Later, unfortunately, President Kennedy...embarked on the

*There was perhaps some ground for concern in the establishment in Miami, in March 1962, of an interrogation center for Cuban refugees, in which they were questioned about O/B and other matters of interest to an invading force. In any case, the Russians probably saw the interrogation center as strengthening the possibility that the U.S. would discover the build-up in Cuba, i.e., the refugees were probably expected to provide reports which might well stimulate reconnaissance.

dangerous path of his predecessors, resorting to threats against the Soviet Union. He even went so far as to say that under certain circumstances the United States will possibly take 'the initiative in a nuclear conflict with the Soviet Union' --that is,...will be the first to strike a blow...

As previously noted, Khrushchev had almost certainly calculated that the United States would not be willing to strike either the USSR or Cuba in order to disrupt the missile base venture. In this speech and in others in May, he may have been reflecting some second thoughts on this question.

One development which may have encouraged him again came in late May, when, following fresh operations of pro-Communist forces in Laos in violation of the cease-fire agreement (operations which gained them much additional ground), about 5,000 U.S. troops plus token forces from other SEATO countries were sent to Thailand to stabilize the situation. The Soviets probably had not encouraged the Pathet Lao violation, and may even have discouraged these pro-Communist forces from making further advances. However, the American action could be read (and was read, in some quarters) as drawing a line in Thailand but accepting another accomplished fact (the new Communist gains) in Laos, a fact accomplished contrary to existing agreements and promises. The Russians of course knew that the situation in Laos was unfavorable for U.S. involvement, as the Laotians were virtually worthless as allies and the logistics problem would be enormous; but the fact remained, as it had remained after the building of the Berlin Wall, that the Communists had been able to get away with something. The Russians may have taken this as another piece of evidence for the proposition that the United States would accept an accomplished fact if the fact did not conflict sharply with a clearly-defined vital interest.

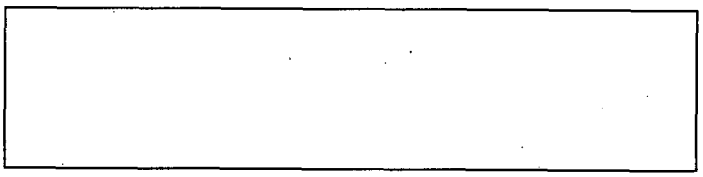
Khrushchev reiterated his concern about the circumstances in which the United States might use nuclear weapons in letters of 10 and 12 June to the Japanese premier

and British Laborites. He asserted in both letters that President Kennedy had advocated initiating a nuclear attack on the USSR. He was talking about this again in a 19 June speech in Rumania. Observing that the "American imperialists would like to change the balance of power in the world in their favor" by inducing the bloc "to reduce expenditures on defense," Khrushchev went on to explain why this reduction could not be made. He referred to the "boastful speeches" of American and West German generals, and again cited the President's remarks of March. In Khrushchev's words in the 19 June speech, "The President of the United States himself...has said that under certain circumstances the United States may be the first to take the initiative and start a nuclear war against our country."

So far as we know, there was no direct reply to Khrushchev's overtures of this kind in May and June for clarification and reassurance on the matter of American use of nuclear weapons. On 16 June, however, Secretary McNamara, in a speech at Ann Arbor, made some remarks which may have been to some degree reassuring. (Khrushchev had apparently not read--or at least had not studied--Mr. McNamara's 16 June speech at the time of his 19 June speech cited above.)

Speaking of American strategy in a general nuclear war, Mr. McNamara said:

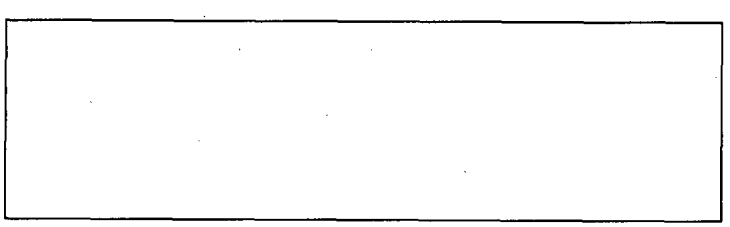
> The U.S. has come to the conclusion that, to the extent feasible, basic military strategy in a possible general nuclear war should be approached in much the same way that more conventional military operations have been regarded in the past. That is to say, principal military objectives, in the event of a nuclear war stemming from a major attack on the alliance, should be the destruction of the enemy's military forces, not of his civilian population. The very strength and nature of the alliance forces make it possible for us to retain, even in the face of a massive surprise attack, sufficient reserve striking power to destroy an enemy society if driven to it...



Such a counterforce strategy, as both American and Soviet military writers soon noted, would be most effective if nuclear weapons were used in a first strike; in a retaliatory strike, most of the targets would no longer be there.* However, the implication of the speech was that American nuclear weapons would be used only in retaliation against "a massive surprise attack."

We do not suggest that Mr. McNamara's speech encouraged Khrushchev to think that he could stand firm behind the venture if the missile bases should be discovered (even after the program was completed) if the United States should credibly threaten to strike the USSR if the missiles were not withdrawn; that is, American military superiority would still be such that Khrushchev would have to back down. However, in an ironic role for Mr. McNamara (whose previous speeches had made him for Khrushchev a figure in a nightmare), this speech seemed to reduce the force of President Kennedy's warnings of March 1962. Khrushchev had seemed to be concerned, after the President's remarks, that the United States might take the initiative in using nuclear weapons to repel a challenge expressed in some other form than that of a massive surprise attack; and the President had not offered to spare the cities. Moscow was not happy about the 'no-cities' doctrine either--Soviet commentators soon rejected it as "cynical" and "deliberately misleading"--but the new doctrine clearly did not cause the Russians as much concern as had the President's statements of March.

*Soviet writers were also quick to note that a counterforce doctrine requires excellent intelligence on enemy missile sites, and that adherents of this doctrine would of course seek inspection of armaments under the guise of disarmament.



The Second Stage, July - August

The First Elements of the Program: Raul Castro arrived in Moscow on 2 July, at the invitation of the Ministry of Defense, on a mission which is still obscure. We surmise, however, that his mission had something to do with the administration of the missile base venture--perhaps the conclusion of a status-of-forces agreement.* He may also have attempted again, as one source has reported, to have Cuba taken into the Warsaw Pact, and, if so, he failed again. An Indian Communist leader has referred to Raul's conclusion of some kind of "treaty" with the USSR during this July visit, and it is possible that Raul was given yet another worthless promise that the USSR would indeed defend Cuba if necessary. Whatever the form of the Soviet assurance, Raul during his trip found occasion to boast that his negotiations with the Russians had changed the balance of power in the world--a remark which precisely described the aim of the missile base venture. After Raul's departure in mid-July, without the customary communique, shipments of unidentifiable material to Cuba increased sharply.

There were 15 Soviet dry cargo shipments to Cuba in July, and offloading of unidentified equipment began in the Banes area in July. These shipments probably included some of the equipment for the coastal defense missile sites and may have included some of the equipment for the SAM sites.

Soviet dry cargo shipments (including some passenger ships) jumped to 43 in August. Several ports in addition to Banes were restricted at various times during August while Soviet ships were offloading; Soviet personnel handled the offloadings. At Mariel, the most secure port, a concrete wall at least ten feet high was built in mid-August, probably looking forward to the offloading of MRBMs. There

*Fidel Castro told the French journalist Jean Daniel in November 1963 that Raul's visit of July 1962 was "to discuss ways and means of installing the missiles." However, most of the arrangements must have been made prior to Raul's trip, because shipments of missile-related equipment began so soon afterward.

were reports throughout August of the offloading and movement through Cuba of large numbers of Soviet personnel (more than 3,000 were believed to be present by the end of August),* and many reports of the offloading of unspecified types of missiles.

SAM equipment began to arrive, or continued to arrive, in the first half of August. Following a gap in the photography between 5 and 29 August, additional photographs of 29 August showed the deployment of SAMs in western Cuba--a development not in itself surprising, as the USSR had been engaged in similar programs in Indonesia, Iraq, and Egypt in the previous nine months. Some MIG-21s were probably delivered in August, along with more complex radar equipment; and the cruise missiles and the missile-carrying Komar patrol boats were first observed in August.

It was later reported that farmers were evacuated in late August from areas which became MRBM sites, and the estimated initiation date for one of the IRBM sites was late August. Further, it is estimated that the materials and equipment necessary to construct the MRBM and IRBM launch positions (but not the missiles themselves) probably arrived in Cuba in the latter half of August.** However, photography of late August and early September which covered all six of the MRBM site areas showed no activity identifiable as associated with the preparation of MRBM sites; and there was not even an isolated report of preparations for IRBMs.

*It is not known whether these included units later deployed with the armored groups.

**The USSR did not get started soon enough on the IRBM component; even if the program had not been interrupted, it would have been impossible to complete construction of the 12 IRBM launch positions until the end of the year, more than a month after all other weapons systems were to become operational. If a fourth IRBM site was planned, as seems likely, this would not have been completed until early 1963.

In late August, when the Western press was carrying stories of the arrival of large numbers of Soviet personnel and of the secret unloading of Soviet ships, Soviet broadcasts about Soviet shipping to Cuba emphasized the economic nature of the cargoes, without going so far as to deny that military equipment was included. Also serving the interest of deception were Cuban feelers for an improvement in Cuban-American relations.

Soviet Behavior: Soviet behavior on other matters in this July-August period continued to be mixed, throwing little light on Soviet intentions in Cuba.

On 2 July, at a time of Chinese Communist concern over the possibility of an American-supported Chinese Nationalist attack on the mainland, Khrushchev encouraged a belief in his continued caution by making only a vague statement of support for Peiping. This statement came after the United States had disavowed support for any Nationalist invasion, and was much weaker than his 1958 statement.

On 4 July, Khrushchev stated publicly that there had been "progress" in Soviet-American talks. On the next day, a TASS account of one of President Kennedy's press conferences gave the Soviet audience an impression of an American desire to find a peaceful solution to all East-West problems.

During July, however, Mikoyan, visiting Indonesia, is reported to have urged the Indonesians again to attack West New Guinea, using the new Soviet weapons and Soviet bomber and submarine crews provided earlier in the summer. As previously noted, it seems possible that the USSR hoped for hostilities in the area as a final test of Western intentions, before strategic missiles were sent into Cuba. If so, this hope was soon disappointed by the negotiations encouraged by the United States.

In late July, the USSR announced its intention to resume nuclear testing (it resumed on 1 August). Also, Khrushchev began to say privately that he was thinking of bringing the Berlin problem to the United Nations in the autumn before signing a treaty.

By early August, Khrushchev had persuaded important Western diplomats in Moscow that he did indeed plan to sign a separate treaty if there were no early progress on Berlin. In the last two weeks of August, Khrushchev continued to speak privately of plans to go to the UN in November, and of his confidence that the United States would not "fight for Berlin." As Moscow's 11 September statement was to show, the USSR planned to exploit Western fears about Berlin in its effort to gain American acquiescence in the build-up in Cuba--mainly by offering to be conciliatory about Berlin if the United States were to be conciliatory about Cuba.

Concurrently, following up private talks which had gone on for some months, Gromyko sent to Secretary Rusk a draft agreement on the non-proliferation of nuclear weapons. Immediately thereafter, the Chinese Communists --who were told on 25 August of the Soviet-American discussions on non-proliferation and were incensed by this-- opened an offensive against "subversion" (clearly, Soviet subversion) in the Chinese party. It is conceivable that the Chinese also learned of the Cuban missile base venture at that time, and that their fresh attacks on Soviet policies in part reflected their anger both that the USSR was discussing a non-proliferation agreement with the United States and that advanced weapons were going to Cuba but not to China, in a venture which if successful would greatly improve the Soviet position in the Sino-Soviet dispute.

Assessment of U.S. Intentions: Khrushchev in July may still have been seeking clarification and reassurance on the matter of American use of nuclear weapons. In May, in first commenting on the President's statements (of March) that the United States might in some circumstances take the initiative in employing nuclear weapons, Khrushchev had said that the President had made this threat despite his (the President's) estimate that the military strength of the bloc was equal to that of the West. In a speech of 10 July, at the World Conference on General Disarmament and Peace, Khrushchev took note of the changes--which had in fact been evident since the previous autumn--in Western estimates of Soviet strength. Whereas the President once believed, Khrushchev said, that Soviet military strength

was equal to American strength, the President now believed that the "balance of forces has changed to the advantage of the United States." The American belief that the United States could "win a war" was dangerous, Khrushchev continued, and Mr. McNamara's 'no cities' concept set forth in the 16 June speech at Ann Arbor was "monstrous" in that it sought to set up rules for nuclear warfare. "Certain responsible statesmen," Khrushchev went on (without naming the President), "even declare openly their readiness to take...the initiative in a nuclear conflict with the Soviet Union." Suggesting that Mr. McNamara's Ann Arbor speech had not removed (although it may have reduced) his anxiety on this point, Khrushchev went on to say that it would be better to recognize that the consequences of war would be "catastrophic" no matter which side began it. This was the position which was in fact to govern him during the crisis in October.

Just as in his speeches in May, Khrushchev in this July speech may have been reflecting some doubts as to whether he had correctly assessed the risks of the Cuban missile base venture. However, Khrushchev might be expected to emphasize the threat of American nuclear weapons in a speech to a disarmament conference and also just prior to the Soviet resumption of nuclear testing. If he were really reflecting doubts as to his calculations on Cuba, he apparently found reassurances in short order. It was soon after this speech that there was a marked increase in Soviet shipments to Cuba.

On the 26 July Cuban holiday, both Fidel Castro and Frol Kozlov charged again that the United States was preparing to attack Cuba. Kozlov remarked that the "old warnings addressed to the imperialists are still in effect." Inasmuch as the "old warnings" had been non-specific, the Cubans still did not have assurances of Soviet military support against U.S. military action.

Khrushchev later said privately that he had come to believe, in August, that the United States was indeed preparing to attack Cuba; and Moscow renewed its public charges to this effect in late August. Both of the U-2 flights in August were illuminated by radars which appeared to be

tracking them, and the Russians may have surmised, at the end of August, that the United States had just got photographic evidence of the deployment of SAMs in Cuba. Soviet commentaries at the time, however, suggested an estimate that the United States did not intend to attack, while they expressed concern over a possible change in this intention. This line came through clearly in those commentaries which took note that some U.S. leaders were frankly advocating an attack on Cuba and which went on to contend that President Kennedy, who on 29 August had stated his belief that it would be a "mistake" to invade Cuba, might be brought to change his mind. Moscow at this time renewed its cautious expressions of Soviet support for Cuba in the event of another "dangerous adventure" by the United States.

Recapitulation

By mid-March, the Cuban Communist effort to take power from Castro--an effort aimed at creating a secure political base for the missile base venture--had clearly failed, but the Soviet effort to persuade Castro that an American invasion of Cuba was being planned, and that a deterrent was urgently needed, had proved successful. By mid-April, the USSR also succeeded in persuading him that the deployment of strategic missiles in Cuba was the answer. The agreement on the missile bases was followed by new economic agreements, by the recall of the disfavored Soviet ambassador, and by Khrushchev's public promises of continued aid.

In the same period of spring 1962, developments outside Cuba confirmed Khrushchev's judgment that he needed the Cuban missile bases. American spokesmen continued to express confidence that the balance of power favored and would continue to favor the United States, and Khrushchev reiterated his complaint that the West was continuing to act from "positions of strength" and would not give him what he wanted. The Soviet hope or even expectation of a Berlin settlement was disappointed, and there was no progress on disarmament. Khrushchev in this period expressed in strong terms his disappointment with the results of his earlier policy toward the underdeveloped countries, and Moscow's recent decision to emphasize military rather than

economic aid to such countries was expressed spectacularly in a new military aid agreement with Indonesia, which provided equipment and Soviet crews which could be used for an invasion of West New Guinea. And the Sino-Soviet relationship continued to deteriorate.

Throughout the spring of 1962 Soviet spokesmen expressed concern that the United States intended to take military action against Cuba, but Khrushchev's real concern seemed to be over the President's statements (of March) that the United States might in some circumstances take the initiative in using nuclear weapons. Khrushchev may have been having some second thoughts on the question of whether the risks were low in the Cuban venture. If so, he may have been encouraged again by the U.S. response to fresh operations by pro-Communist forces in Laos, a response which could be read as acceptance of another accomplished fact. Also, his concern over the President's remarks of March may have been reduced somewhat by Mr. McNamara's presentation of an American counter-force strategy. Khrushchev at this time admitted that "weapons" were being sent to Cuba, but Soviet complaints about the Cubans tended to serve the interest of deception.

Raul Castro's trip to Moscow in the early summer of 1962 was presumably related to the administration of the venture, and he may again have tried and failed to get a formal Soviet commitment to Cuba's defense. Khrushchev at the same time reiterated his concern about American readiness to employ nuclear weapons, and the reported Soviet incitement of the Indonesians to use Soviet weapons and crews against West New Guinea may have reflected a wish to test American intentions in this area before going ahead with the build-up in Cuba. In any case, and despite his probable knowledge by July that American U-2s were overflying Cuba, Khrushchev went ahead with it; shipments of unidentifiable material to Cuba soon increased sharply.

By the end of August, SAMs were deployed in Western Cuba, about 3,000 Soviet personnel were believed to be in Cuba, farmers had been evacuated from areas which became

MRBM sites, and materials and equipment necessary to construct the MRBM and IRBM launch positions (but not the missiles) had probably arrived. Soviet broadcasts at this time were giving misleading descriptions of Soviet shipments to Cuba, and the Cubans did their part by sending out feelers for an improvement in American-Cuban relations. Reconnaissance at the time revealed no activity identifiable as associated with the preparation of sites for strategic missiles.

While the build-up was underway in late July and August, and particularly in late August, after additional U-2 flights over Cuba had apparently been tracked, Soviet spokesmen renewed charges that the United States was preparing to attack Cuba, and Moscow renewed its cautious expressions of support for Cuba in such an event. Moscow did not seem really to believe, however, as of late August, that the U.S. was about to attack Cuba.

IV. The Change in Expectations, September - October 1962

We take up here the management of the Soviet missile base venture in the period of 1 September to mid-October 1962, in which some of the strategic missiles were first deployed, in which (we believe) Khrushchev changed his mind about the probable American response to discovery of the venture, and in which, as a result of this change, Khrushchev attempted to transmit to the President first a seriously misleading statement and then a flat lie about Soviet intentions.

Soviet and American Positions, Early September

On 2 September, the USSR stopped encouraging the view that its cargoes to Cuba included no significant military equipment. (As noted, the Russians may have surmised that reconnaissance of late August had identified the work on the SAM sites.) A joint communique at the end of the Moscow visit of Guevara and Aragones publicly acknowledged that the USSR was sending "armaments" and "technical specialists" to Cuba.* Approximating the formula of defensive purpose, the communique asserted that Cuba had "every justification for taking measures necessary to ensure its security."

Soviet propaganda, at the same time, while denying that the USSR was establishing a "military base" in Cuba, no longer explicitly denied the truth of charges--such as Senator Keating's of 31 August--that the USSR had put or was about to put strategic missiles into Cuba. While asserting that Soviet activity in Cuba was in contrast to American activity in Turkey, such commentaries also drew parallels between Cuba and Turkey by pointing out that the

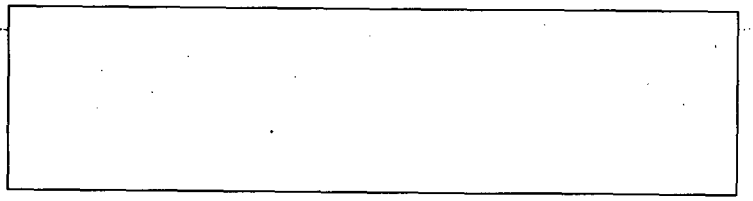
*Khrushchev in June had admitted that "weapons" were being sent; Soviet spokesmen had then ceased to speak of it.

USSR did not threaten to invade Turkey and arguing that the United States should follow this same policy of "peaceful coexistence" toward Cuba. Thus echoing a line taken privately by a Soviet official months earlier, such commentaries prefigured an important element of the Soviet line of defense in late October: that the USSR had accepted American missiles in Turkey and elsewhere, so the United States should accept Soviet missiles in Cuba.

The President's 4 September Statement: In a statement of 4 September, President Kennedy confirmed that the United States had learned of the existence of parts of the build-up in Cuba--but had not learned of the plans for strategic missiles.*

> Information has reached this Government...which establishes without doubt that the Soviets have provided the Cuban government with a number of anti-aircraft defensive missiles with a slant range of 25 miles...
>
> We can also confirm the presence of several Soviet-made motor torpedo boats carrying ship-to-ship guided missiles having a range of 15 miles.
>
> The number of Soviet military technicians now known to be in Cuba or en route--approximately 3,500--is consistent with assistance in setting up and learning to use this equipment...

*If the USSR still did not know, by early September, that American U-2s were regularly overflying Cuba, the President's 4 September statement must have made this clear. Information of the scope and precision of that in the President's statement would almost certainly be thought to come from photographs.



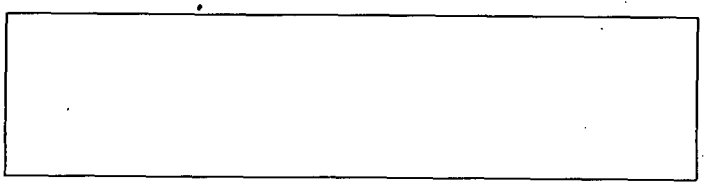
> There is no evidence of any organized combat force in Cuba from any Soviet bloc country; of military bases provided to Russia;...of the presence of offensive ground-to-ground missiles; or of other significant offensive capability either in Cuban hands or under Soviet direction or guidance...

"Were it to be otherwise," the President went on to say, "the gravest issues would arise." The President stated that the Castro regime would "not be allowed to export its aggressive purposes by force or the threat of force," and would "be prevented by whatever means may be necessary from taking action against any part of the Western Hemisphere."

The missile bases, on some of which work had just begun, would of course establish a "significant offensive capability."* Moreover, the United States soon might discover the bases, and a showdown might be imminent--in the sense that the United States would send signals of either acquiescence or alarm.

Another observer has put the question of whether the entire venture could have been abandoned at that point, without letting the President discover that his remarks had caused the Soviet retreat. As for the physical progress of the venture, probably the venture could have been successfully (i.e., secretly) abandoned. The next overflight, on 5 September (which was also apparently tracked), turned up nothing interesting, apart from evidence of a second group of SAM sites. Although, according to subsequent evidence, work might have been far enough along on one of the IRBM sites by 5 September to permit the

*The Russians surely understood the President's use of the concept of offensive and defensive capability. The authoritative Soviet work, Military Strategy, published some months earlier, remarked that "The operations of the Missile Forces will always be of a decisive, rather than defensive, nature..."



identification of the activity if that particular site had been overflown on the 5 September mission, the Soviets probably knew (from the tracking) that it had not been overflown, and it is probable that such construction, if it had begun at all, was not too far along. Moreover, the Soviets would have been able to give the area, even if overflown, some other appearance before the United States could confirm the nature of the activity. On the other hand, it was probably not politically possible to abort the venture successfully (secretly)--that is, the USSR had committed itself to the Cubans, and an attempt by Moscow to withdraw from the venture would probably be revealed and protested by the Cubans (as they did in fact protest in late October).

In any case, we doubt that the Russians would have abandoned the venture if they could have. After all, they expected it to succeed, because, as they saw it, the U.S. would very probably be unwilling to go to the level of military action necessary to prevent it from succeeding.*

Nevertheless, we think that the first shift in Khrushchev's calculations came at about this time, at the end of August or in early September, a shift probably stirred by the agitation in the American press in late August and confirmed by the President's statement of 4 September. Whereas the USSR, up to late August or the first few days of September, had had high confidence that the United States would acquiesce in the missile base venture, Moscow at this time, we think, lost some of its confidence, and now saw an increased possibility that the U.S. would not acquiesce, and therefore an increased possibility of a U.S. blockade aimed at preventing the completion of the program. While Khrushchev, as previously suggested, expected to succeed even in the face of a blockade, the blockade seemed enough of a threat to justify some new Soviet action.

*A few days later (9 September), Khrushchev reportedly told Robert Frost that "modern liberals" in the United States were "too liberal to fight." On 11 September, in a private conversation, he made a similar remark.

We previously noted our belief that the Russians would have preferred from the start to keep the build-up secret until the program was complete, but had judged either that it was impossible to camouflage successfully or that the effort to do so would interfere excessively with the work on the bases. We argued further that the Russians recognized the possibility of U.S. reconnaissance and therefore chose to describe their weapons in Cuba both in terms aimed at deceiving the United States and in terms (sometimes the same terms) which, if deception failed, could serve as the form of an invitation to the U.S. to acquiesce in the build-up. This was definitely the case (we now know) in late August and early September: the Soviet ambassador at this time made a seriously misleading statement about Soviet intentions, while in the most important public statements of early September the USSR employed the concept of the defensive purpose of the weapons in Cuba.

The Soviet ambassador's seriously misleading statement about Soviet intentions was made to an American official on 6 September. The ambassador insisted that all of the weapons sent to Cuba were "defensive" in character. While this was not a flat lie (owing to the special Soviet definition of "defensive" action), this description was offered just two days after the President had publicly made a distinction between weapons of defensive and offensive capabilities, and the strong implication was that Dobrynin was employing the President's distinction.

Khrushchev apparently did not yet judge his situation to be serious enough to justify the use of a flat lie. He now saw only an increased possibility of American non-acquiescence, enough to justify the use of seriously misleading statements and thus prejudice his future credibility but not yet enough of a possibility (or probability) to justify a flat lie and thus destroy his future credibility. When his expectation changed (we think), after 13 September, to the probability of American non-acquiescence, he raised the level of deception to a flat lie.

It is necessary to explain the failure of the USSR in this period of early September to do what it might have

done along other lines to discourage the United States from continuing the U-2 flights over Cuba which might soon discover the missile bases. For one thing, it failed to exploit fully the opportunity presented by two incidents involving U-2s, one over the USSR and the other over Communist China (the first involving an American pilot, the second a Chinese Nationalist), in a period of 11 days in late August and early September. On 30 August, an American U-2 unintentionally violated Soviet airspace over Sakhalin; the U.S. acknowledged this. The USSR on 4 September sent a harsh note recalling American "perfidy" in spring 1960 (the Powers case) and President Kennedy's statement of January 1961 that U-2 flights over the USSR would not be resumed, citing previous Soviet warnings and asserting that such warnings remained in force; this note, however, did not, as it might have done, speak of flights over Cuba. Similarly, following the 9 September incident over Communist China, Moscow confined itself to rebroadcasting the Chinese protest and Chinese and other foreign commentaries holding the United States responsible. And, as will be seen, the USSR in its statement of 11 September did not emphasize the U-2 incidents and did not relate them to Cuba. Further, the USSR failed to create an incident of this kind over Cuba. Some of the SAM installations were operational, or could have been made operational, in September and early October, but the SAMs were not used. While the failure to use the SAMs can be explained simply in terms of prudence, the shootdown of a single plane would not have seriously risked an American attack on Cuba, and a single incident would have been enough to make the point.

It seems to us likely that the Russians judged that to make an issue--either verbally or by a shootdown--of the U.S. overflights of Cuba would be counter-productive, in that it would only confirm the American determination to conduct the flights. As witness, even later in the month, when the USSR was deciding to use a flat lie in order to discourage U.S. reconnaissance of Cuba, and when the UN General Assembly was in session, the USSR did not get the Cubans to draw up a case, about U.S. violations of Cuban airspace, to present to the UNGA.

We think that Khrushchev should have recognized, from the President's statement of 4 September, that the U.S. would continue the reconnaissance regardless of what Khrushchev said about his intentions, and that it was therefore stupid to prejudice his future credibility with the kind of statement made by the Soviet ambassador on 6 September. This was a piece of stupidity which was to be repeated, on a larger scale, in the weeks ahead.

The Soviet Statement of 11 September: On 11 September the Soviet Government issued a statement introducing the polite euphemism of defensive purpose, under which the United States was invited to acquiesce, a statement designed also to deter the United States from imposing a naval blockade if the U.S. did not acquiesce, and designed also to deter the United States from attacking Cuba if the U.S. were tempted to take any military action against Cuba beyond a blockade. The 11 September statement had most of the elements of the Soviet position as it developed in the critical week of 22-28 October.

The statement took note that "bellicose-minded reactionary elements" were calling for an attack on Cuba and for an "attack" on Soviet ships supplying Cuba, "in one word, calling for war." Citing the President's request to call up 150,000 reservists in connection with developments in Cuba, the statement described the President's action as being of the type which would aggravate tension and could create a situation in which the "disaster of world thermonuclear war can be sparked by some accident."*

The statement went on to say that "heroic little Cuba," menaced by the United States, was being given fraternal aid by the USSR, and that the weapons included in this aid were "exclusively for defensive purposes." This specification of defensive purpose rather than

*Soviet commentaries noted that 150,000 reservists could be used for an invasion of Cuba, or to free other U.S. forces for an invasion.

capability was the model for most subsequent descriptions of the weapons sent to Cuba. However, in reiterating in several formulations that the weapons were means of "defense," the statement made an aside which was quite misleading. In a curious wording, the Soviet Government, rather than speaking in its own person, "authorized TASS to state" that--

> there is no need for the Soviet Union to shift its weapons for the repulsion of aggression, for a retaliatory blow, to any other country--for instance, Cuba.../I.e.,/ ...the Soviet Union has the capability to extend assistance from its own territory to any peace-loving state...*

The statement went on to assert--in a formulation which was far from a commitment to Cuba--that an American attack on Cuba would be the "beginning of the unleashing of war."

The statement then discussed the matter of U.S. overseas bases. Citing several countries in which U.S. weapons were deployed (in three instances, strategic missiles), the statement noted that American weapons in those countries (it did not specify that these included strategic missiles) were regarded by the U.S. as being there "lawfully, by right," whereas "to others the United States does not grant this right even for defense..." But, the statement then asserted, "Equal rights and equal opportunities must be recognized for all countries of the world." In this passage, contrary to the misleading passage cited above to the effect that the USSR had "no need" to deploy strategic

*The first part of this passage could be construed as follows: the USSR has ICBMs on its own soil for retaliation against a blow at the USSR; weapons in Cuba are for retaliation against a blow at Cuba. However, the latter part of the passage in effect denies this possible construction, in asserting that the USSR's friends can be defended from the USSR. The passage as a whole is seriously misleading.

missiles in other countries, Moscow seems again to have been inviting; or half-inviting, the United States to recognize what was going on in Cuba and to go along with it.

After some embroidery of this theme of equality, the statement devoted one paragraph to the U-2 incident over the USSR on 30 August. "In the light of the latest events," the statement said, the USSR now "assesses differently" the 30 August incident. The statement went on to imply that these flights were a part of preparations for war, but it said not a word about U-2 flights in relation to Cuba. We assume, as noted earlier, that Moscow judged that it would be counter-productive to draw attention to this matter.

Turning then to the topic of the prospects for war, and asserting that "if the aggressors unleash war"--but notspecifying that an attack on Cuba would qualify as this--"our armed forces must be ready to strike a crushing retaliatory blow," the statement appealed to the United States "to display common sense, not to lose self-control..." It went on, in sweet reasonableness, to recommend that the United States establish diplomatic and trade relations with Cuba, and in this connection it vaguely foreshadowed Khrushchev's final fallback position of late October, the withdrawal of the missiles in exchange for a no-invasion pledge:

> If normal diplomatic and trade relations were established between the United States of America and Cuba, there would be no need for Cuba to strengthen its defenses, its armed forces...

The statement went on to declare that the USSR was "stretching out the hand of friendship" to the United States.

Finally, the statement took a conciliatory line on the issue of Germany and Berlin. The statement said that Moscow would take into account the fact that it was "difficult" for the U.S. to negotiate when it was preoccupied with the U.S. elections coming up in November, and Moscow

thus (it implied) would not take further action on a German peace treaty until after the elections. The United States was thus being invited to believe that, if it would go along with the Cuban missile base venture (whenever discovered) the USSR would be reasonable about Germany and Berlin. (This would have been true, of course, only until the build-up in Cuba was complete and could be used as a weapon.)

The Soviet military press at about this time began to say that Soviet forces were being brought to a condition of "highest combat readiness." Another observer has compiled indications of exercises, redeployments and alert measures in this period.* It does not appear, however, that Soviet forces were being brought to the condition claimed.

Several Soviet commentaries on the 11 September statement underlined the point that weapons were given Cuba solely for the purpose of defense. A few, however, employed the misleading formulation about the absence of "need" for military bases in Cuba, and at least two implied that the weapons in Cuba had only defensive capabilities.

The Big Change in Expectations

There was another and larger change in Khrushchev's expectations, we think, following President Kennedy's second warning in his remarks of 13 September.

The President's Remarks of 13 September: That the United States continued to be unaware of the character and scope of the missile base venture was made evident to Moscow in the President's news conference of 13 September, which he opened with a statement on Cuba. Noting the

*See the study prepared by the National Indications Center, "The Soviet Bloc Armed Forces and the Cuban Crisis: A Discussion of Readiness Measures," 15 July 1963.

recent increase in the movement of Soviet personnel and equipment into Cuba, the President said that this development was "under our most careful surveillance." He then stated:

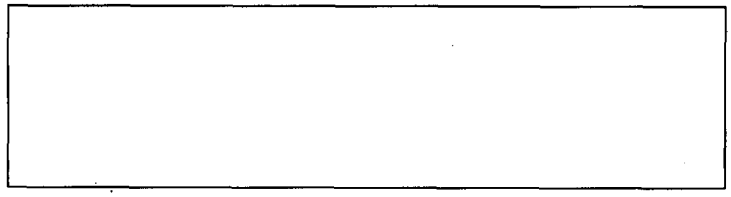
> But I will repeat the conclusion that I reported last week, that these shipments do not constitute a serious threat to any other part of this hemisphere.

Thus, as of 13 September, the United States was still ignorant: understandably so, since there was still no hard evidence. One large-hatch ship which could have been carrying MRBMs had docked before 13 September, but no MRBMs had yet appeared at the sites.*

President Kennedy's remarks at this 13 September press conference went on, however, to give Moscow good reason for concern about the American response in the event of discovery of the scope of the venture:

> /At present,/ unilateral military intervention on the part of the United States cannot...be either required or justified... But let me make this clear once again: If at any time the Communist build-up in Cuba were to endanger or to interfere with our security in any way... /such as to/ become an offensive military base of significant capacity for the Soviet Union, then this country will do whatever must be done to protect its own security and that of its allies...

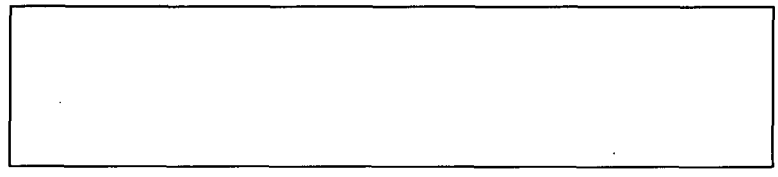
*Several Soviet commentaries on the President's 4 September statement had emphasized that the President had spoken of the "defensive" capability of the weapons known to be in Cuba; several commentaries after 13 September asserted that the President regarded the build-up as defensive in character, thus implying his agreement with the formula of defensive purpose.



The President, in reply to questions, made this warning even more explicit: "The presence of offensive military missile capacity," or a Cuban capability "to carry out offensive action against the United States" would cause the United States to act. In reply to another question, the President stated explicitly that Soviet threats of intervention would not deter the United States from whatever action the situation might require.

In these remarks of 13 September, the President defined precisely the action which the United States would regard as intolerable, and he thus gave Khrushchev a warning of the same type which--after the warning had been delivered several times--had deterred Khrushchev from concluding a German treaty which would give the East Germans control over Allied access to Berlin. It is possible that a warning put in these terms, if delivered some months earlier and reiterated, would have caused the USSR to decide against the missile base venture, i.e. to rest content with a modest defensive system in Cuba. As noted earlier, however, Khrushchev saw an avenue of escape in the Cuban venture which he may not have seen (at least to the same degree) in Berlin. The promised American response to the discovery of missiles--to "do whatever must be done"--did not change Khrushchev's impression that he still had this avenue of escape. It is clear from his subsequent conduct--sending in the missiles and deploying them--that he did not yet believe that it was dangerous to proceed.

Nevertheless, we think that at this point there was another and larger change in the character of Khrushchev's expectations. Whereas in late August and early September Khrushchev had lost his high confidence (we think) in American acquiescence and recognized a good possibility of non-acquiescence, after 13 September (we think), Khrushchev made yet another estimate and now judged it positively probable that the United States would not acquiesce. We surmise this in part from Khrushchev's earlier response to a specific warning of this type (the warnings about Berlin), from his soon-expressed fear of an American blockade of Cuba and his threats to use military force to enforce the right of passage and to retaliate elsewhere as well, and, especially, from his soon-to-be-taken decision to introduce



a flat lie about Soviet intentions in Cuba. From this point, we think, Khrushchev expected his second-best case: American non-acquiescence, probably expressed as willingness to impose a blockade--but unwillingness to take military action beyond a blockade, along with willingness to undertake negotiations, so that the venture could still be managed to the USSR's profit.

Following the President's 13 September press conference, Soviet commentaries noted that the President had made a number of "realistic" statements in that conference; they noted with "satisfaction" the President's statement that military intervention would not be justified at the present time. They also expressed regret at the President's statement that such action might be justified later.

Continuation of the Build-up: During September, the USSR moved steadily ahead with the missile base venture. Soviet dry cargo shipments to Cuba increased to 50 in September, and through September there continued to be reports of the offloading of large numbers of Soviet personnel, of large amounts of Soviet equipment, and of missiles of uncertain types. The great majority, if not all, of the MRBMs came into Cuba after 13 September.

Reconnaissance flights, which were essentially peripheral, were resumed on 17 September; there were missions on 17, 25, 26, and 29 September. These were not on the pattern of August and early September, when the planes flew the length of inland Cuba. The flights after 5 September were coastal flights which occasionally passed over portions of Cuba near the coast; one of them (29 September) flew over the eastern portion of the island near Guantamano.

Peripheral flights provided knowledge by late September that additional SAM units were being deployed, that more MIG-21's had been delivered, that about a dozen missile-carrying patrol boats had been delivered, and that some coastal defense missile sites were operational. There was a report of IL-28 deliveries, and Soviet ships photographed in late September turned out (in photographs available on 10 October) to be carrying crates containing unassembled IL-28s. Later intelligence indicated that work on the MRBM sites was proceeding through September, that

the MRBMs probably began to arrive no later than mid-September (a few days after the President's warning), that one or two of the MRBM sites may have achieved some degree of operational capability during September, and that work had begun on three IRBM sites by mid-September. However, the reconnaissance flights through 5 September had turned up nothing by that date, and the different pattern of flights undertaken from 17 September had missed the areas in northwestern Cuba where the missiles were being deployed; there were some reports after 20 September that pointed to the possibility that MRBMs were being brought into Cuba,* but there was no reporting related to IRBMs.

In the last two weeks of September, Moscow took additional measures to prepare for the day of American discovery of the missile base venture.

From mid-September, in the light of his changed expectations, Khrushchev apparently feared an early blockade of Cuba. He told a visitor on 17 September that the United States intended to take such action, which would be an act of war; he indicated (as Soviet spokesmen were to say openly in the last week of October, as the quarantine was being imposed) that Soviet ships had instructions to proceed even if fired on; and he said that the USSR would use submarines and rockets to enforce the right of passage. He also hinted that U.S. intervention in Cuba would produce a Soviet reaction in Berlin, although he went on to say that he thought that common sense would prevail and that there would be no war.**

*These reports, making clear the need for good coverage of inland Cuba, set off the process which led to the collection of photographic evidence on 14 October.

**Khrushchev was apparently careful, at all stages of the venture, not to make a strong threat of retaliation in Berlin. He did not do so even during the week of the crisis in late October, when the Western press was speaking of American fear of such action. It is clear that the Russians themselves were more fearful than they believed the U.S. to be.

Gromyko's opening speech to the UN General Assembly on 21 September attacked the President's 13 September statements, on the grounds that the "gross threats" in that statement negated the President's official dissociation from the militant circles urging immediate "aggression" against Cuba. Gromyko recalled the Soviet statement of 11 September to the effect that an attack on Cuba would be the "beginning of the unleashing of war," and pointed to Soviet military strength. (Other Soviet spokesmen at this time said privately that the USSR was determined to resist U.S. military action against Cuba.)

Gromyko in this speech failed to employ the formula of the defensive purpose of the weapons in Cuba. He made this point only indirectly, denying that the strengthening of Cuban military forces was a threat to the United States or other countries, and speaking of Soviet aid as a contribution to Cuba's "independence." This failure to underline the formula, in an important speech which would be closely read, may mean that Khrushchev had already decided to introduce the flat lie, in a further effort to delay the discovery of the missile bases. (Some subsequent commentaries did state explicitly the formula of defensive purpose; these perhaps lagged.)

Gromyko in this speech offered an innovation in his discussion of disarmament, a proposal that an exception be made, in the first stage of general disarmament, for a limited number of strategic and other missiles which would remain "at the disposal of the USSR and the U.S. only." This line too may have been related to the missile base venture. For one thing, if the USSR was at all serious about this latest disarmament proposal, Moscow may have calculated that the missile bases in Cuba would improve the chances of American acceptance of such a proposal, in giving Washington an added interest in reducing the number of missiles targeted on the United States. Of more immediate importance, the proposal would encourage the United States to believe, when the missile bases in Cuba were discovered, that the USSR would retain control over the missiles, which would strengthen the probability of U.S. restraint.

There were other conflicting signals in the latter half of September. Pointing away from the build-up in Cuba was the Soviet comment on the Iranian agreement not to permit any foreign state to have rocket bases on its territory, a pledge which Moscow described as having great importance on a "broader international scale" and went so far as to present as a model for Cuban-American relations. Pointing toward the build-up was a roundtable discussion in which parallels were again drawn between Cuba and Turkey, with the argument offered that the USSR would not invade Turkey, therefore the United States should not invade Cuba.*

The Use of the Flat Lie

At the end of September or the beginning of October, Khrushchev apparently made an important decision, and a remarkably stupid one: the decision to introduce the flat lie--about Soviet intentions in Cuba--into the management of the missile base venture. This was a decision which could not be made light-heartedly, because, when the lie was exposed, as it was sure to be sooner or later, this would destroy in advance the credibility of future Soviet assurances on any matter.

We submit that the use of the flat lie is incomprehensible unless--as we have argued--Khrushchev had changed his estimate and now thought it probable that the United States would not acquiesce in the build-up. He had to see his situation as now serious enough to justify the use of the most extreme form of deception. We do not mean that

*Secretary Rusk on 30 September rejected in advance any Cuba-for-Turkey proposition. Asked in a TV interview whether the U.S. foresaw an approach "with a deal to shut down some of our bases overseas in return for which Russia would close down her base in Cuba," the Secretary said flatly, "This is not a negotiable point," and reiterated that the U.S. would not use its commitments for barter.

he had lost his confidence that the United States would not take any military action against Cuba beyond a blockade. We believe that the USSR did not lose this part of its confidence until 22 October, the date of the President's speech. It was only after 22 October that the Russians in Cuba took any action designed to protect the missile sites against attack; after that date, they camouflaged the sites in such a way as to make more difficult the task of the pilots of attacking bombers. We speak of Khrushchev's situation after 13 September as serious in the sense that an estimate of probable American non-acquiescence meant that U.S. discovery of the bases would probably lead to a blockade which, if imposed soon, could prevent completion of the program.

We once thought that there was another change in his situation, apparent to him by the end of September, which might have returned him at that time to his expectation of American acquiescence. We thought that this might be the change in the pattern of the U.S. reconnaissance of Cuba. On this reading, Khrushchev might have concluded that the President, after stating that developments in Cuba were "under our most careful surveillance," had in fact decided to alter the pattern of surveillance in such a way as not to keep himself well informed: in other words, just as the United States had been indirectly invited to accept the build-up under the formula of defensive purpose, the United States might now be indirectly replying that it would acquiesce in the build-up by declining to discover the character and scope of it.* Another possibility, similarly

*As it is not clear whether all four of the peripheral flights in September were tracked, Khrushchev perhaps could not be sure that the planes had not overflown the missile bases in northwestern Cuba and that the U.S. had not discovered the bases. However, Secretary Rusk, in his 30 September TV interview, reiterating that "the configuration of the military forces in Cuba is a configuration of defensive capability," emphasized that the U.S. was keeping a "very close watch" for the development of offensive capabilities. In any case, Khrushchev's use of the flat lie presupposes an estimate of probable American ignorance.

serving to encourage Khrushchev, was that the change in the pattern of reconnaissance was an indication that the United States had been made so sensitive by the two U-2 incidents of late August and early September that it was not willing to risk a third over Cuba; if this were the case--if the United States were more concerned about a possible embarrassment than about discovering whether its principal adversary was about to deploy strategic missiles just off its shores--then the risk of going ahead with the venture was low indeed, a Washington which did not want even a little trouble would surely not want big trouble.

That view seems to us now to have been over-stated. Khrushchev could not have concluded, even if he had available a complete tracking of the flights, that the new pattern would persist; he could not have any assurance that the next flight would not carry the cameras over the missile bases. Yet, we think, he surmised that there might be something in it for him, that the change in the pattern might have a meaning which could be exploited. He must have calculated both that the United States was still ignorant and that the change in the pattern of the flights might be to some degree a retreat from a confrontation, a retreat which could be encouraged to take another step, specifically the step of halting the aerial reconnaissance altogether. Unless the United States were still ignorant, a Soviet assertion that no strategic missiles would be sent to Cuba could only be counter-productive, as it would present the character and scope of the venture in the form of an offensive and provocative flat lie. And unless he saw a good possibility of halting the reconnaissance, he would soon be exposed as a liar and would have offered an additional provocation before the missile bases were an accomplished fact.*

*A partial answer--to the problem of U.S. anger about being lied to--was to transmit the flat lie through a channel which could later be disavowed or ignored; Khrushchev would not have directly delivered the lie and could not be known to be its sponsor. (In the event, Khrushchev chose to ignore the U.S. charges.) However, Khrushchev greatly underrated the importance of this factor--American anger about being lied to.

Thus he decided, toward the end of September, to use the flat lie.* If it were successful, if the reconnaissance were halted, the blockade would not be imposed, and he could get into Cuba the remaining elements of his program (the IRBMs, and the warheads if not already there) and present the U.S. with the accomplished fact. Even if the U.S. were to threaten military action against the bases, he could very probably involve the U.S. in negotiations, in which he would be able to keep the bases or to get a maximum price for dismantling them.

Even given this reasoning, the use of the flat lie was very stupid, another instance of the wishful thinking that went into the original conception of the missile base venture, and an instance too of failure to act logically even in terms of his own estimate (if he indeed made the estimate we attribute to him). If, as we think, Khrushchev had taken the President's remarks of 13 September as a clear signal that the United States would not acquiesce in the deployment of strategic missiles in Cuba, then it was unreasonable to conclude that the President could be deterred from using all available means to discover whether the missiles were in fact being deployed.**

It might also be thought unreasonable, given the decision to use the flat lie, not to camouflage the sites in Cuba as well as possible, to the same end of delaying U.S. discovery. (The only security measure known to us that was taken in Cuba itself in late September and early

*It might be asked why, if his expectation had changed as of mid-September, he waited until the end of September to make this change in managing the venture. We suppose that he needed some time to think, and to find the right channel for delivery of the lie.

**Recognition of this could explain the continued Cuban failure to protest the flights, at the UN. But Khrushchev did not recognize it; we cannot think of any credible purpose, of the flat lie, other than that of discouraging the reconnaissance.

October was the action taken on 25 September to confine newsmen to the Havana area.) However, by this time the IRBM sites were almost certainly too far along to be camouflaged quickly, and an effort to camouflage them would presumably interfere with the work on them, even if the USSR had at hand the materials to do any significant amount of camouflaging. Barring the wild possibility that the Russians in Cuba made an effort to camouflage the build-up in early October and then removed all the camouflage by mid-October, no camouflage effort was made until the week following President Kennedy's speech of 22 October. This latter effort did not appreciably interfere with the photography, and seems to have been aimed at confusing the pilots of any aircraft which might attack the bases.

In late September and early October, while Khrushchev was arranging for the lie to be transmitted,* Soviet spokesmen continued to charge the United States with plans to take military action against Cuba. Soviet presidium member Kosygin, speaking on 1 October, observed that "today the attention of all peace-loving mankind is rivetted on Cuba." The United States was plotting against Cuba, Kosygin said, "threatening to carry out reprisals." The bloc, he went on, was "ready to slap the hands" of the imperialists if they were to start a war over any issue, including Cuba.

In the same period, Moscow showed mixed feelings about the results of a conference of OAS foreign ministers in Washington in early October. Some commentaries took the line that the U.S. had not improved on the results of

*At just this time, the United States was making the decision to resume the photographic coverage of inland Cuba. Before the decision was carried out, there were two more peripheral flights, on 5 and 7 October; again they failed to discover the strategic missiles. Oddly, Dorticos in the UNGA on 8 October hinted at the true character of the weapons in Cuba: "We have sufficient means to defend ourselves;...weapons which we would have preferred not to acquire and which we do not wish to employ."

the Punta del Este conference in January 1962; other commentaries observed that the United States had got a communique which could serve as the "political basis for the military gambles against Cuba planned by Washington."

The flat lie about Soviet intentions was entrusted by Khrushchev to a junior Soviet official stationed in Washington.* This official returned to Washington from the USSR in early October, bearing a message to the effect that Khrushchev on 1 October had summoned him for an interview and, employing the criterion used by the President himself on 13 September, had told him that the President might rest assured that the USSR would never send to Cuba any weapons "capable of reaching American targets." The Soviet official told American officials, during October, that Khrushchev and Mikoyan (who had been present) had asked that this message be transmitted to the President.**

On 13 October, Soviet Ambassador Dobrynin commented on the weapons in Cuba in a way which was again--like his statement of 6 September--definitely misleading, and even more so. Dobrynin, in a talk with an American official, again insisted that the weapons in Cuba were "defensive." This time, in response to a remark by the American noting President Kennedy's distinction between offensive and defensive capabilities, Dobrynin went on to say that the USSR was not shipping offensive weapons to Cuba and well understood the dangers of doing so. In the context, there was an even stronger implication than on 6 September that Dobrynin was employing the President's distinction, and this was seriously misleading.

*This account is drawn from Mr. Joseph Alsop's column of 5 November 1962.

**We are uncertain as to the date of actual transmission of this message to American officials. There is no reason to doubt, however, that Khrushchev meant to have this message transmitted in the first week of October.

Preparations for Imminent Discovery: In possible contrast to Dobrynin, Gromyko may have been preparing for American discovery of the missile bases,* in statements made on the same date; in a press conference, he emphasized the USSR's devotion to "peaceful coexistence" and to the principle of settlement of disputes through negotiations.

As late as 14 October, an important spokesman for the Administration stated publicly the dominant American view that the USSR would be unlikely to "attempt to install a major offensive capability in Cuba." On that date, however, flights over inland Cuba were resumed, and these and subsequent flights were illuminated steadily and for long periods by radars and were very probably tracked. Within a few days, Khrushchev almost certainly was able to judge that the United States had discovered or was about to discover the missile bases.**

Immediately after the resumption of these flights, Soviet spokesmen made additional preparations for discovery. Khrushchev himself, in private conversations in the next few days, was much interested in the question of an American blockade of Cuba, which he may have thought imminent. He

*The Cubans may also have been. On 9 October, at the UN, Dorticos again vaguely foreshadowed Khrushchev's final fallback position, as had the USSR's 11 September statement; he said, in a formulation noted in several Soviet commentaries, that Cuba would jettison all of its arms if the United States would guarantee its security.

**By this time, the USSR had apparently decided to offer as non-provocative a background as possible for the statements it would soon have to make about Cuba. As the National Indications Center study puts it: "There was..., as of mid-October, very little sign of any exceptional activity to support the constant claims in the Soviet press that troops were being maintained at 'highest combat readiness.'"

is said to have expressed doubts as to whether a blockade would be effective, but to have gone on to make clear that he feared it would indeed be effective. Following roughly the lines of the Soviet Government statement of 11 September on the prospect of an American "attack" on Cuba, and anticipating some of the positions to be taken in the Soviet Government statement of 23 October (the day after the President announced the imminent quarantine), he is said to have stated that the U.S. had no right to impose a blockade, to have pointed to the Soviet military strength that could be brought to bear against those who arrogated to themselves such rights, to have appealed for a more "responsible" attitude on the part of the United States, and to have held out the prospect of a conciliatory Soviet attitude on Berlin. Khrushchev did not admit, in either conversation, that Soviet missiles were deployed in Cuba.

Within a few days after the 14 October resumption of the U.S. flights over Cuba--before the Gromyko interview of 18 October--the general design of the Soviet missile base venture, if not all the detail of it, was clear. There were now 24 SAM sites, part of an air defense complex covering the entire island. Soviet armored groups (later estimated at 5,000 men) were now observed in encampments. And of greatest importance, it was apparent that the USSR had deployed MRBMs at several sites--some of which, if nuclear warheads were present, could have been combat-ready--and that work was underway on three IRBM sites. The IRBMs themselves were never seen, and were later surmised to have been en route in Soviet ships turned back on 23 October. Similarly, it has not been established whether nuclear warheads for the strategic missiles were present; it is possible that those for the MRBMs were, that they had come in as an integral part of the MRBM system; and there was evidence of the presence of equipment associated with the storage and transportation of warheads for both MRBMs and IRBMs.

Gromyko took the initiative to get an interview with the President on 18 October, the same day on which the

American press carried a report of a build-up of U.S. airpower in the Southeastern United States. We cannot judge whether the Soviet aim in this interview was deceptive, as we do not know whether Khrushchev had the information, prior to this interview, to reach the judgment that the U.S. already knew or would very soon know the facts about the missiles. Gromyko in this interview said that military aid to Cuba was meant solely for the purpose of contributing to the defensive capabilities of Cuba, and said further that the training of Cubans in the handling of "defensive armaments" was "by no means offensive." Gromyko in this interview may have thought of himself as extending a final invitation to the President to acquiesce in the build-up under the formula of defensive purpose. If so, Gromyko got the message: No.

The weekend press in Washington pointed to the imminence of some dramatic development, probably related to either Berlin or Cuba. Moscow had reason to believe that it would be Cuba.

Recapitulation

As this stage of the missile base venture began, the stage in which some of the strategic missiles were to be deployed, the USSR admitted that its cargoes to Cuba included military equipment and technicians, meant for the "security" of Cuba. Soviet propaganda at the time both asserted differences and drew parallels between the American position in Turkey and the Soviet position in Cuba.

With the President's statement of 4 September, Khrushchev lost some of his confidence, we think, and now recognized a good possibility that the United States would not acquiesce in the build-up in Cuba. At this time, in the interest both of delaying American discovery of the missile sites and of encouraging U.S. acceptance of them whenever discovered, Khrushchev's ambassador on 6 September made a seriously misleading statement (still short of a flat lie) about Soviet intentions, preparing for the public introduction of the concept of the defensive purpose

of the weapons--a formulation which was to serve, if deception failed, as the form of the Soviet invitation to the United States to acquiesce.

On 11 September, the USSR issued an elaborate statement publicly introducing the formula of defensive purpose, and including some more misleading formulations. The statement was designed also to deter the United States from imposing a blockade if the U.S. did not acquiesce in the build-up, and designed also to deter the United States from attacking Cuba if the U.S. were tempted to take any military action against Cuba beyond a blockade; in this connection, the statement vaguely foreshadowed Khrushchev's final fall-back position of a withdrawal for a no-invasion pledge. It also invited the United States to believe that a conciliatory American line on Cuba would be met with a conciliatory Soviet line on Germany and Berlin. Several Soviet commentaries on the 11 September statement underlined the point about defensive purpose, but some were misleading.

That the United States continued to be unaware of the character and scope of the missile base venture was made evident by President Kennedy on 13 September. The President warned the USSR in strong terms, however, against deploying strategic missiles in Cuba or establishing there any capability to take action against the United States. This warning, we think, caused another and larger change in Khrushchev's expectations: he now judged it probable that the U.S. would not acquiesce. (We judge this from his earlier response to a specific warning of this type on Berlin, from his soon-expressed fear of an American blockade of Cuba, and his soon-to-be-taken decision to tell a flat lie about his intentions in Cuba.) From this point, he expected only his second-best case: American non-acquiescence, probably expressed as willingness to impose a blockade, but unwillingness to take military action beyond a blockade, along with willingness to undertake negotiations, so that the venture could still be managed to the USSR's profit.

During September, the USSR moved steadily ahead with the build-up. Additional SAM units were deployed, work on the MRBM sites proceeded, MRBMs began to arrive (all or

almost all after 13 September), one or two of the MRBM sites may have achieved some degree of operational capability, and work continued or began on three IRBM sites. The peripheral flights conducted in this period observed nothing of this except the SAMs.

In the last two weeks of September, Moscow took additional political measures to prepare for the day of discovery. Khrushchev, apparently fearing an early blockade of Cuba, threatened privately to use military force to enforce the right of passage and to retaliate elsewhere. Gromyko pointed publicly to militant features of earlier Soviet statements on Cuba, and also made a new disarmament proposal which, Moscow may have thought, would be attractive to Washington later in the light of the Cuban bases or at least would strengthen the probability of U.S. restraint. Gromyko at this time (21 September) failed to reiterate the formula of the defensive purpose of the weapons in Cuba; perhaps Khrushchev had already decided to employ the flat lie in order to delay the discovery of the missile bases.

By the end of September or the beginning of October, at the latest, Khrushchev had made this decision, a decision which is comprehensible only on the assumption that he had indeed changed his estimate--as argued above--and now judged it positively probable that the United States would not acquiesce in the build-up, and therefore probable that U.S. discovery of the bases would lead to a blockade. Yet he apparently saw the change in the pattern of U.S. reconnaissance of Cuba as indicating a possible retreat from a confrontation, a possible willingness to halt reconnaissance if assured--as the flat lie was to promise--that the USSR would not send weapons to Cuba capable of reaching targets in the United States. This seems to have been the same kind of wishful thinking that went into the original conception of the missile base venture, and to have been an instance too of failure to act logically even in terms of his own estimate.

While the date of transmission of the flat lie is uncertain, Khrushchev meant it to be delivered in the first week of October. On 13 October, the Soviet ambassador again

commented on the weapons in Cuba in terms which were seriously misleading. On the other hand, Gromyko and the Cubans may have been preparing for American discovery of the missile bases.

The flights over inland Cuba were resumed on 14 October, and within a few days Khrushchev was almost certainly able to judge that the U.S. had discovered or was about to discover the missile bases. In two conversations in mid-October, Khrushchev discussed the possibility of an American blockade and appealed for a "responsible" attitude.

Within a few days, the general design of the build-up was clear. There were now 24 SAM sites, Soviet armored groups were in encampments, and, of greatest importance, MRBMs had been deployed at several sites and work was underway on three IRBM sites. In talking with the President on 18 October, Gromyko may or may not have been attempting to deceive the President, depending on how much Khrushchev knew at that time about the resumed flights over inland Cuba. It seems possible that Gromyko thought of himself as extending a final invitation to the United States to acquiesce; if so, he got the message: No.

V. The Week of the Crisis, 22-28 October

This final portion of the paper traces developments in the week of the crisis, 22-28 October 1962, a week described by some observers as the worst week for the USSR since the Nazi invasion of June 1941.

The President's Speech and the First Response

It was announced at noon on 22 October that President Kennedy would make an important speech at seven that evening. Soviet Ambassador Dobrynin was summoned from New York and was given by Secretary Rusk, an hour before the President's speech, the text of the speech.

The 22 October Speech: The President in his 22 October speech began with a summary of the facts. There was "unmistakable evidence," he said, of the presence of "a series of offensive missile sites" in Cuba. "Several" of them were designed for MRBMs. Additional sites, not yet completed, seemed designed for IRBMs. Further, jet bombers capable of carrying nuclear weapons were being uncrated and assembled.

This "urgent transformation" of Cuba into an important strategic base, the President continued, was in defiance of his own "public warnings" to the USSR on 4 September and 13 September. Further, the build-up contradicted the "repeated assurances of Soviet spokesmen, both publicly and privately delivered, that the arms build-up in Cuba would retain its original defensive character, and that the Soviet Union had no need or desire to station strategic missiles on the territory of any other nation." The President cited the Soviet Government statement of 11 September and Gromyko's statements of 18 October in this connection.

The President went on to describe the swift and secret build-up in Cuba as a "deliberately provocative and unjustified change in the status quo which cannot be accepted by this country if our courage and commitments are ever to be trusted again, by either friend or foe."

The President was in effect reminding Khrushchev of his warnings in the Vienna talks and subsequently, the essential point of which had been that the United States would strongly resist efforts to change the balance of power.

The President went on to say that "we will not prematurely or unnecessarily risk the costs of world-wide nuclear war"--in which, as he had said in February 1962, there could not be a meaningful victory--"but neither will we shrink from that risk at any time it must be faced." The President specified that he had ordered a "strict quarantine on all offensive military equipment under shipment to Cuba"*; that he had ordered an increased close surveillance of Cuba, that in the event of a continued build-up of offensive systems "further action will be justified," and that in this connection he had ordered the armed forces to prepare for "any" eventuality; that any missile launched from Cuba against any nation in the Western Hemisphere would be regarded as an attack by the USSR on the United States and as such would provoke a "full retaliatory response" upon the USSR; that the Guantanamo base had been reinforced, and that additional military units were standing by; that the United States was calling for an immediate meeting of the consultative organ of the OAS; and that the U.S. was also calling for an emergency meeting of the UN Security Council and would there introduce a resolution calling for the dismantling and withdrawal of "all offensive weapons" under UN supervision as a condition for lifting the quarantine. The President followed these points by calling upon Khrushchev personally to withdraw the missiles, to refrain from any action which would make the crisis worse, and to take part in a "search for peaceful and permanent solutions."

*On the next day, the OAS gave its approval, 19-0 (with one abstention), to an American resolution authorizing the use of force to enforce a quarantine, and President Kennedy signed the order for the naval quarantine to go into effect.

The President went on to state that the "latest Soviet threat" (the missile bases)--"or any other threat which is made either independently or in response to our actions this week--must and will be met with determination." Further, "any hostile move anywhere in the world against the safety and freedom of peoples to whom we are committed --including in particular the brave people of West Berlin-- will be met by whatever action is needed." The President concluded by describing the effort ahead as "difficult and dangerous," one in which no one could know "what costs or casualties will be incurred."*

The Soviet Statement of 23 October: In the Soviet Government statement of 23 October, Moscow took the position which, we have argued, it had planned from the start to adopt at the time of American discovery of the scope of the missile base venture. The statement sought to put the United States on the defensive, in a poor position to take further military action, so that the USSR could gain time for the purpose of involving the United States in negotiations aimed at gaining yet more time or some large concession.

*The Soviet press in May 1963 stated that Oleg Penkovsky, the senior Soviet official who was in the service of British and American intelligence in the years 1960-62, was arrested on the very day, 22 October 1962, of the President's speech. If Penkovsky was indeed arrested on or before this date, the case gave Khrushchev another factor to consider in determining his response to the President's speech. Khrushchev already knew, or had to consider the strong possibility, that Penkovsky had given the West information which would weaken the Soviet position in a confrontation with the West, in the sense of improving Western knowledge of Soviet capabilities and of targets in the USSR. The Penkovsky case presumably strengthened Khrushchev's conclusion, reached long before, that he would have to back down if the United States were willing to fight.

The Soviet statement took note that the United States had "in effect" established a "naval blockade" of Cuba, described as a "step along the road of unleashing a thermonuclear world war."

Presenting the matter as a dispute between the United States and Cuba, the statement protested American interference in Cuba's "internal affairs," and it gave a "serious warning" to the United States. It reiterated the Soviet position that "only madmen" would base their policy on "'positions of strength,'" in the light of the fact (which Moscow knew not to be a fact) that Soviet military strength was as great as American strength.

Turning to the heart of the matter, without either admitting or explicitly denying that Soviet strategic missiles were deployed in Cuba, the statement offered again the Soviet contention that the Soviet weapons were for the defense of Cuba. This illustrated the "hypocrisy" of President Kennedy's warning of an American "retaliatory blow." (The statement failed to mention that the President had specified that such a blow would fall upon the USSR.)

The statement at this point seemed to imply that the weapons in Cuba were controlled by Soviet forces and that the United States therefore need not worry about their use. "Nuclear weapons which have been created by the Soviet people and are in the hands of the people will never be used for the purposes of aggression." The statement then promised a "very powerful retaliatory blow" against aggression.

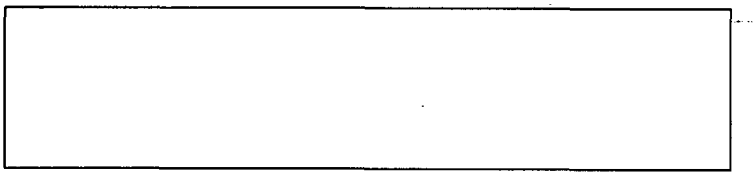
The statement returned to the theme that the United States was bullying Cuba, that little Cuba could not threaten the United States, that Washington had rejected Cuban overtures for negotiations, and that Soviet aid was aimed entirely at strengthening the defenses of Cuba. The statement, at this point blurring the question of control over the strategic weapons, then asserted that the American demand for the removal of weapons which "Cuba needs for self-defense" was a demand which "naturally no state which values its independence can meet."

The statement then took up, as had the 11 September statement, the Soviet grievance about U.S. overseas bases and the threat of Polaris missiles. In this light, the statement said, the American profession of seeking peace was obviously false.

Recapitulating, the statement asserted that the United States "arrogates the right to demand that states report to it on how they organize their defense and what they carry in their ships...," and that the Soviet government "resolutely rejects such claims." The "arrogant" American actions could lead to "disastrous consequences to all mankind..."

Adding that Moscow had instructed its UN representatives to introduce in the Security Council the question of "the violation of the UN charter and the threat to peace on the part of the United States," the statement concluded with a call for all governments to join in protest and with a promise that the USSR would try to keep the peace while taking measures to keep itself "from being taken unawares...."

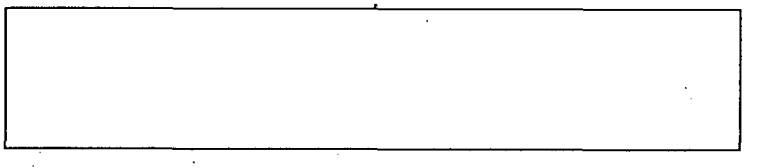
In sum, the USSR, in its first public response to the President's 22 October speech, dealt with the various elements of the speech as follows: (a) as for the question of a dispute between the United States and the USSR, the statement presented the dispute as being really between the U.S. and little Cuba; (b) as for the question of the deployment of strategic missiles in Cuba, the statement neither admitted nor explicitly denied the presence of such weapons, and adhered to the formula of defensive purpose; (c) as for the U.S. position that ventures of this kind were unacceptable, the statement denied any American right to know what other countries were doing in this respect; (d) as for the American willingness to risk war, the Soviet statement made no comparable assertion, but warned the United States against interfering in Cuba's affairs; (e) as for the quarantine order, the statement described it as a step toward war; (f) as for the U.S. position that a further build-up in Cuba would justify further action, the statement said that "arrogant" American actions could have dangerous consequences; (g) as for the threat of full retaliation on the USSR for the firing of any missile from Cuba,



the statement took no note of the threat to the USSR, blurred the question of Soviet control of the missiles and warned the United States that Soviet military strength was as great as American strength; (h) as for the American resolution in the UN, and the personal appeal to Khrushchev, both calling for the withdrawal of the offensive weapons, the statement noted that the USSR would introduce a resolution on the American threat to peace and that the demand for the removal of weapons needed by Cuba could not be met by Cuba, and at the same time pointed to American overseas bases; and (i) as for the appeal not to take action exacerbating the crisis, and the warning that hostile moves elsewhere would be met vigorously, the statement observed that the USSR would try to keep the peace while looking to its military preparedness.

Other Soviet Responses: Soviet spokesmen for some weeks had been predicting (and warning against) the American imposition of a blockade of Cuba. Khrushchev apparently recognized at once that the President in his 22 October speech was serious about imposing the quarantine. On the same morning that Moscow issued the official statement (discussed above) implying that its ships would run the blockade, and while its officials were declaring publicly and privately that the vessels would certainly run the blockade, the USSR sent out orders to the contrary. Around noon on 23 October (early evening, Moscow time), several of the Soviet vessels en route to Cuba (those suspected of carrying military equipment) changed their courses, in response to urgent messages from Moscow. (The course changes did not become generally known until the next day.)

This Soviet decision came several hours before the OAS' 19-0 vote to support the quarantine and to effect the dismantling of the missile bases. The immediate and overwhelming approval of the American course by the Latin American governments, and by the NATO powers as well, was probably a most unpleasant surprise for the Russians, who may have been counting on a serious split in both Latin America and Western Europe. But the point here is that the Russians were not willing to wait to find out about that; once convinced that the United States was serious, they refused to gamble on the possibility that American determination would be affected by splits in the Western camp.



Moscow had probably not concluded, this early in the week, that the United States would be willing soon to go beyond the blockade to whatever action was necessary to get the strategic missilesout of Cuba. But the USSR from the start took care not to give the United States any reason to employ against the USSR itself the SAC forces which--as the USSR certainly knew by 23 October, when this was publicly stated by a SAC spokesman--had been put on a high level of alert by the time of the President's speech. The 23 October statement did not threaten nuclear war against the "blockade," did not make a firm commitment to Cuba's defense, and did emphasize the USSR's devotion to peace.*

It was not, of course, clear as early as 23 October that the USSR would take no serious risks. This was not clear until 28 October, and even then there was room for doubt as to whether the USSR would keep its promise. But the moderate nature of the 23 October statement was a favorable early indicator, and the order to the ships to change their courses was even more so.

The Cuban Response: The indicators from Cuba itself was less favorable, but also less important.. The armed forces had been put on the "highest degree of alert" (according to Castro later) an hour before President Kennedy's speech of 22 October, and the regime apparently regarded itself as mobilized for general war on the same day. On

*Moscow announced on 23 October that Defense Minister Malinovsky had reported on measures to increase the readiness of Soviet forces. As previously noted, in mid-October Soviet forces had not appeared to be, as asserted by Moscow in a condition of "highest combat readiness." The state of readiness may have been raised after 22 October, and some forces may actually have been brought to their highest condition of readiness (as claimed), but there is little information on the state of readiness of the most important Soviet forces, the strategic rocket (missile) forces, the submarine missile forces, and the long-range air forces.

23 October, Castro spoke on the crisis. He reviewed American offenses against Cuba and Latin America, read passages from President Kennedy's speech, and jeered at the President's warnings. He said that Cuba had taken measures to "repel" an American attack, and in the same passage he rejected absolutely "any attempt at inspection" of Cuba, thus answering the President and rejecting in advance the proposal that Khrushchev was soon to make. He then rejected any policy which calls for disarming us in the face of the aggressors," and described this policy--a policy which Khrushchev was soon to carry out--as "stupid.., ridiculous.., idiocy...": here and elsewhere Castro, like the Russians at this time, blurred the question of whether Soviets or Cubans had control of the strategic missiles. He also professed confidence in Cuba's ability to "resist a complete blockade."*

Near the end of his interview, Castro described the Soviet statement of 23 October (broadcast earlier in the day) as a "real lesson to imperialism: firm, calm, full of arguments..." As he went on to say, however, the Soviet position was that of "defenders of peace"--a much less militant position than his own.

In the speech of the Cuban delegate in the UN Security Council debate of 23 October, there was another reference to Dorticos' 9 October statement, which in turn had reflected the 11 September Soviet statement, that there would be no need for weapons in Cuba if the United States were to pledge itself not to attack Cuba. In the next three days, there were to be some less vague hints to this effect by Cuban officials.

*We do not know whether this latter phrase meant that he expected the USSR to resist for Cuba, or that he already knew that the USSR would not resist the quarantine.

Soviet Maneuvers and Khrushchev's Anxiety

In the three days following the issuance of the Soviet government public statement and Moscow's unpublicized order to the ships to change course--that is, on 24, 25 and 26 October--Khrushchev worked busily along several lines. He made additional statements designed to placate the United States sufficiently to deter further military action; he took additional steps to avoid a confrontation of Soviet and American ships in the Caribbean; he publicly denied, while again privately admitting, the deployment of strategic missiles in Cuba, and he continued the work on the bases there; he made efforts to involve the United States in negotiations; he conducted probes on a particular plan for a negotiated settlement, a mutual dismantling of the Soviet bases in Cuba and the American bases in Turkey; and he made preparations for a fast backdown if necessary, a backdown in the form of a proposal for a withdrawal of offensive weapons from Cuba in exchange for a no-invasion pledge from the United States. On or about the evening of 26 October Moscow time, Khrushchev was impelled to abandon --temporarily--all of his fallback positions except the last one.

The Need to Prevent War: There were a few militant remarks in Soviet publications and radio broadcasts in this period, mostly on 24 October. For example, Izvestiya on 24 October: "Little Cuba has powerful friends, who have everything necessary...to put the unbridled imperialists into their place and to make them lose taste for poking their noses into the internal affairs of a country." Or Malinovsky, quoted in Red Star the next day: "At the first signal, the entire might of our armed forces must be immediately brought to bear against the enemy, his military-strategic, economic, and political centers, and his main groupings of troops." Or a 24 October broadcast to various types of people in various parts of America: "the flames of war may sweep in from the Caribbean and engulf your home too."

Khrushchev set the dominant line, however, in his 24 October reply to Bertrand Russell. The note said at one

point that a war would at once become "thermonuclear and world war," and at another point that "so long as rocket nuclear weapons are not put into action, there is still an opportunity to avert war." The latter formulation seems to have been a simple tautology, rather than a formulation meant to leave open the possibility of military action--with conventional weapons--which need not be regarded as a war; there was no indication at any time that the USSR was tempted to try to defend Cuba with conventional weapons. The heart of the statement, in any case, was Khrushchev's assurance that the Soviet government "will not make any reckless decisions, will not permit itself to be provoked," and "will do everything in our power to prevent war from breaking out."* In a private interview (at his initiative) with an American industrialist the same day, Khrushchev seemed to be bluffing at one point, saying that he would not fire the Cuban-based missiles except in defense of Cuba or the USSR, but at another point he said that he would not be the first to fire nuclear weapons;** and in any case he emphasized the dreadful consequences for everyone of a war over Cuba. Khrushchev reiterated his devotion to peace in his reply of 25 or 26 October to U Thant's second appeal, and neither Khrushchev nor any other Soviet spokesman in this period threatened to take action in places (e.g. Berlin) outside the Caribbean.

*This line was exemplified the next afternoon by a TASS correspondent in Washington. According to an eyewitness account, the TASS man visited the Press Club on the afternoon of 24 October and was drawn into a quarrel about Cuba with an American newsman; when the American threatened to hit the Russian with a bottle, the Russian ran out of the Club, crying that he would not be provoked.

**Again Khrushchev's formulations were confusing: if the first formulation were to govern, he would fire the missiles in defense of Cuba against an attack even by conventional weapons; if the second were to govern, he would not attempt seriously to defend Cuba against an attack by conventional weapons.

The "Piratical" Quarantine: The U.S. quarantine of Cuba went into effect at 1000 on 24 October. In the 24 October reply to Russell, Khrushchev apparently meant to include the quarantine in the concept of "piratic actions" planned by the United States. The USSR could not "agree" with such actions, Khrushchev said, and, if such actions were carried out, the USSR would have to "resort to means of defense against the aggressors." Similarly, and more sharply, in the private interview (cited above) of the same date, Khrushchev described the quarantine as "piracy," and said that, while the United States might stop Soviet ships outside Cuba one or two or three times, sooner or later he could give the order to sink an American blockader. It will be observed that Khrushchev took this tough line after he had ordered some of the ships en route to Cuba to turn around. During the afternoon and evening of 24 October it became publicly known that most of those ships en route to Cuba had altered course and were returning to Soviet ports, and it was generally assumed that those which continued toward Cuba were carrying inoffensive cargoes.

On 25 October, Khrushchev stated his agreement with a proposal from U Thant--who apparently either did not recognize or did not care that the USSR had lied about the question of its shipments to Cuba--that the USSR suspend weapons shipments to Cuba and the United States suspend the quarantine, both for two or three weeks. President Kennedy in his reply to U Thant did not agree to lift the quarantine, and reiterated that the problem was to secure the removal of the offensive weapons. On 26 October, U Thant made public the replies of Khrushchev and the President to a new appeal: Khrushchev agreed to keep Soviet vessels out of the area of interception on a "purely temporary basis, and the President agreed that if the ships did indeed stay out of the area, U.S. vessles would try to avoid a confrontation.

The Missile Bases: Throughout this period of 24-26 October, Soviet spokesmen continued publicly to impugn the veracity of the President's "allegations" about the deployment of strategic missiles in Cuba, usually without clearly and explicitly denying that such weapons were present. For

example, Zorin at the UN asserted that "no such facts exist," that the photographs were "fabrications"; Moscow radio also spoke of "faked photographs," of a "big lie" to justify aggression; the Soviet ambassador in Mexico publicly denied that there was an "arsenal of Soviet arms" in Cuba; a Soviet commentator spoke of the "allegations, false from beginning to end, about Soviet offensive rockets in Cuba"; and many broadcasts referred to the lack of any need for missile sites abroad. In two commentaries for foreign audiences, Moscow Radio went so far as to say that "there are no...long-range rockets" in Cuba.*

The Soviet public position on the missile bases was rapidly breaking down under scrutiny at the UN, however, and in his private remarks Khrushchev, while willing to let Zorin go on making a fool of himself, did not attempt to deny the presence of the missiles. In the private interview of 24 October (cited above), Khrushchev admitted that the missiles were there, said that the United States would have to learn to live with them, said further that there were nuclear warheads in Cuba for the missiles, and assured his American listener that the missiles were entirely under Soviet control and that the order to fire them must come from him, while also saying (as noted above) that he would fire them in defense of Cuba or the USSR but would not be the first to use nuclear weapons.

Work on the missile sites throughout this period of 24-26 October moved ahead rapidly, with an effort made to camouflage some of the sites (against attacking aircraft, rather than reconnaissance, apparently) by moving equipment

*This formulation is not quite a flat lie, such as the earlier flat lie that no weapons capable of reaching the U.S. would be sent to Cuba. Moscow could contend that by "long-range rockets" it meant ICBMs. However, in the Soviet usage the term "long-range rockets" had generally if not invariably been used for IRBMs and MRBMs, while ICBMs were called "super long-range rockets." Thus the formulation in the Moscow broadcasts was very close to a flat lie.

under trees or covering it with canvas. Throughout this period, statements by American leaders made clear that the United States had no doubt at all as to the facts about the missile bases and that the presence of these bases was the issue.

Efforts to Get Negotiations: On 24 October, there were bulletins from Moscow to the effect that Khrushchev had proposed a summit meeting. This turned out to be Khrushchev's statement, in his 24 October reply to Russell, that the 'question of war and peace is so vital that we should consider useful a top-level meeting in order to discuss all the problems which have arisen..." In his private interview (cited twice above) of the same day, Khrushchev spoke of another meeting with President Kennedy as both desirable and necessary; he said that such a meeting could take place in Moscow or Washington or at sea.

On the evening of 24 October, U Thant in the UN Security Council made a statement to the effect that the current situation was so grave that it was necessary to hold "urgent negotiations between the parties directly involved." He stated further that he had sent messages to the USSR and the United States which, among other things, proposed to allow time "to enable the parties concerned to get together with a view to resolving the present crisis peacefully..." This was, of course, just what Khrushchev wanted--to gain time, and to get negotiations to gain either more time or a large concession. He replied immediately that he "agreed" with U Thant's proposal (presumably, with all parts of the proposal), and, specifically, that he too regarded the situation as "calling for immediate intervention by the United Nations." The emphasis in President Kennedy's reply (previously cited in the discussion of the quarantine) was very different. While informing U Thant that Ambassador Stevenson would take up with him the matter of "preliminary talks" to discuss measures to remove the existing threat, the President stated: "As we made clear in the Security Council, the existing threat was created by the secret introduction of offensive weapons into Cuba, and the answer lies in the removal of such weapons."

In this same period, a few Soviet commentaries reiterated Khrushchev's view that the question of war and peace was of such importance as to warrant a "summit" meeting. At least one broadcast spoke of there being an "honorable and reasonable alternative to the present policy: it is talks."

On 25 October, two Soviet officials in Vienna approached a friend of the Austrian Foreign Minister with the suggestion that the latter offer Vienna as a site for an immediate summit meeting. The same day, a Soviet official in London made a similar proposal, with London to be the site (this was perhaps not made explicit until the following day). On the same day, U Thant sent a second message to the President, informing him that he (U Thant) had sent a second message to Khrushchev stating his concern lest a confrontation of ships "destroy any possibility of the discussions that I have suggested as a prelude to negotiations on a peaceful settlement," and asking (as noted above) that a confrontation be avoided. Khrushchev's reply, released on 26 October, agreed that a confrontation would certainly "seriously complicate the endeavors to initiate contacts in order to put an end, on the basis of negotiation, to the crisis situation..." Khrushchev concluded this reply with a statement professing the USSR's consistent favor for settling disputes "not through war but through negotiations." President Kennedy in his reply to this second message again kept the focus on the missile sites, reminding U Thant that work continued on the sites and that the need was to "proceed urgently" to effect the withdrawal of the offensive weapons.

It seems clear that Khrushchev, throughout this period, was making a serious effort to tie up the United States in negotiations. President Kennedy's replies to U Thant's two appeals should have made clear to Khrushchev, and other indicators did make clear to Khrushchev, that the President would not permit himself to be tied up for long in negotiations.

The Cuba-For-Turkey Proposition: At the same time that Khrushchev was seeking negotiations in general, Moscow

was trying out a second fallback position,* one aimed, like negotiations in general, at gaining time, but which offered a specific proposition, namely the withdrawal of Soviet strategic missiles from Cuba in exchange for the withdrawal of American missiles from Turkey. A round-table discussion broadcast by the domestic service on 23 October had included the observation--attributed to the Manchester Guardian--that the USSR would be within its rights to counter the U.S. blockade of Cuba with a blockade of Western bases, "for example, of Turkey." On 24 October, Khrushchev in a private interview (the one cited three times above) reportedly defended the Soviet base in Cuba in terms of American bases in Turkey and elsewhere, and asked specifically about the rationale of the base in Turkey. And on 25 October, the Soviet ambassador in Ankara had a two-hour discussion with the Turkish foreign minister in which he equated the bases in Cuba and Turkey and sought assurances that the bases in Turkey would not be used. The ambassador in this talk apparently stopped just short of seeking Turkish acquiescence in the proposition--the mutual dismantling of bases in Cuba and Turkey--which Khrushchev was to put forward in his 27 October letter.**

*Some observers have contended that this was not a fallback position but the true aim of the entire venture. This contention strikes us as very weak. As others have noted, if this had been the original Soviet aim, a much smaller Soviet program in Cuba would have been sufficient to support the base-trading proposal.

**Moscow may have genuinely regarded a withdrawal of U.S. missiles from Turkey as a concession acceptable to the United States: the U.S. had been discussing with some of its allies for several months the possibility of replacing the missiles in Turkey and elsewhere with a defensive system based mainly on Polaris submarines; and the New York Times had reported on 24 October that "some /Washington/ sources said that...it was conceivable that the United States might be willing to dismantle one of the obsolescent American bases near Soviet territory."

Preparations for a Fast Backdown: While continuing the work on the missile sites and trying to get negotiations either to gain time or to get some large concession, and concurrently testing the specific fallback proposal of a Cuba-for-Turkey trade, Moscow in this 24-26 October period tried out another and much less favorable fallback position, amounting to a virtual surrender, to which the USSR could retreat swiftly if the indicators became ominous.

Beginning on 24 October, Soviet officials abroad began putting out feelers to judge whether the United States might agree to renounce an invasion of Cuba in return for the withdrawal of Soviet offensive weapons. Cuban officials supported such Soviet overtures. The Cubans were suggesting privately that Havana would be receptive to UN mediation, with the implication that Cuba would consent to the withdrawal of the strategic missiles in exchange for an American guarantee not to attack Cuba and an American lifting of the quarantine.*

Just as Khrushchev had ordered the ships en route to Cuba to change course without waiting to see whether the OAS would be badly split on the question of action against Cuba, so Khrushchev again did not wait for authoritative responses to these approaches on the proposition of a withdrawal for a no-invasion pledge. Just as he had moved quickly when persuaded that the United States was serious about the blockade, he again moved quickly because he was, if not convinced, at least very much afraid, that the United States would soon carry out a bombing or invasion of Cuba.

*Just as some observers contend that Khrushchev's original aim in the missile base venture was to get a Cuba-for-Turkey trade, some even contend that the aim was a no-invasion pledge. This contention seems to us even weaker than the other. As others have noted, it is impossible to believe that the USSR would have made such a political and economic investment in Cuba simply to gain an enemy's promise. Khrushchev of course has to present a no-invasion pledge as having been his aim all along, as he has nothing else to show for the venture.

The Implied Retreat, 26 October: In his 12 December report to the Supreme Soviet, Khrushchev explained his rapid retreat to his final fallback position*--a pledge of withdrawal of the offensive weapons in exchange for a no-invasion pledge--in terms of a "signal of utmost alarm." Khrushchev put it this way:

> American militarist forces pushed events so as to carry out an attack on Cuba. On the morning of 27 October we received information from our Cuban comrades and other sources which directly stated that this attack would be carried out within the next two or three days. We regarded the telegrams received as a signal of utmost alarm, and this alarm was justified. Immediate actions were required in order to prevent an attack against Cuba and preserve peace.
>
> A message was sent to the U.S. President which suggested mutually acceptable solutions...We stated that if the United States pledged not to invade Cuba and also to restrain their allies from aggression against Cuba, then the Soviet Union would be ready to remove

*We speak of this position as "final" in the sense that it was the last position he was forced to occupy. We surmise that he had yet another position in reserve, namely, that of withdrawing the missiles even without a no-invasion pledge if forced to do so; as previously suggested, we believe that Khrushchev would not regard a no-invasion pledge as having much value--not enough, we think, to justify a delay in withdrawing until he got it, a delay which might well have resulted in the destruction of the island the pledge was to cover. In any case, the USSR did not comply with the terms of verification which would make the pledge operable.

from Cuba all of the weapons which the United States described as offensive weapons...

Khrushchev's account is confusing, however, as to the dates, and seems deliberately obfuscatory, in the interest of giving no further publicity to erratic features of his behavior in the period of 26-28 October. Khrushchev states in the 12 December account that the critical information was received on the morning of 27 October Moscow time. But the action which he says he took in response was taken no later than the afternoon of 26 October Moscow time--the writing of the letter which contained the implicit proposal of a withdrawal for a no-invasion pledge.

Khrushchev's account speaks of the "signal" not as a single message but as the sum of several messages, added up by him on 27 October:

> Events developed at a quick pace. The U.S. command brought into full military preparedness all its armed forces, including the troops present in Europe, as well as its Sixth Fleet in the Mediterranean and its Seventh Fleet based in the Taiwan area. Several paratroop, infantry, tank, and armored divisions--numbering about 100,000 servicemen--were detailed for an attack on Cuba alone. Apart from this, 183 ships with 85,000 sailors abroad were moved toward the shores of Cuba. The landing on Cuba was to be covered by several thousand military aircraft. About 20 percent of all aircraft of the Strategic Air Command were in the air round the clock,

carrying atomic and hydrogen bombs...*
Reservists were called up.**

The forces of America's NATO allies in Europe, too, were brought up to full battle preparedness. A joint command of the United States and the Latin American countries was created...

Some of the details of the "full military preparedness" cited by Khrushchev seem to have been drawn from a Department of Defense news release of 29 November 1962 (two weeks prior to this speech). However, whatever the figures available to Khrushchev at the time, it was apparent from the massing of forces and from public statements that the United States was preparing to move to a higher level of military action against Cuba in the near future. While the possibilities included an extension of the quarantine (to cut off oil, or all shipments into Cuba), it was clearly an air strike against the bases or a full-scale invasion of Cuba which Khrushchev feared.

Why did these indicators, as of 26 October, point to such early action that Khrushchev suggested his final fallback position on that day? We cannot be sure, but we

*SAC had been ordered into Defense Condition Three on 22 October, with increased airborne alert and dispersal; and SAC had gone into Defense Condition Two, which included the cancelling of leaves, on 24 October: Khrushchev did not specify in his 12 December speech, but may have known in late October, as revealed in the 29 November release, that SAC had "upgraded individual missile alerts to a maximum." As previously noted, the state of readiness of Soviet forces after 22 October is in question. However, almost all observers agree that the USSR wished to avoid a provocative appearance at this time.

**The (air) reservists were not called up until 27 October.

think that these indicators were read in the light of frantic messages from the Cubans just prior to 26 October. Khrushchev himself (see above) attributes the "signal of utmost alarm" to his "Cuban comrades" among others; the Cubans are the only sources he identifies. While we have not seen any Cuban messages of this kind and of this time, there is other evidence that the Cubans had concluded by 26 October that an attack was indeed imminent. For example, two ambassadors in Havana reported in messages that Dorticos had said on 26 October that Havana expected an attack very soon, possibly or even probably on the night of 26 October. If Dorticos was saying this to non-bloc diplomats on 26 October, the Cubans almost certainly had informed Moscow of their fears no later than the previous night, which would have been the morning of 26 October, Moscow time, some hours before the composition of Khrushchev's 26 October letter.

We cannot judge the identity of the unspecified "other sources" cited by Khrushchev. There were several developments on 26 October which could have reinforced the presumed Cuban messages of alarm and could have contributed to his own state of alarm reflected in the 26 October letter if they had been known to Khrushchev before the time of composition of that letter, but they were not. The 26 October developments to be cited later--rumors of an imminent invasion of Cuba available to Moscow through the Press Club in Washington and possibly through the British, and public statements by American and other officials suggesting the possibility of early action--came later in the day than the time that Khrushchev wrote his letter, and thus were part of the large body of material which later returned Khrushchev to his 26 October position but which did not contribute to his implicit retreat of 26 October.

In any case, Khrushchev on 26 October, adding up the various military and political indicators available through the night of 25-26 October Washington time, wrote a letter which seems to us to have been designed to head off any attack on Cuba that may have been planned for the night of 26 October or the morning of 27 October.

The Long Weekend

Khrushchev's 26 October letter came into Washington during the evening of Friday, 26 October, Washington time, beginning at about 1800. Another Khrushchev letter was broadcast by Moscow on Saturday morning, 27 October, Washington time. The President's replies to the two letters were made at different times on 27 October. Khrushchev's reply, accepting the position which the President had made explicit and had attributed to Khrushchev, was made on Sunday morning, 28 October, Washington time. This period from Friday night through Sunday morning, culminating in Khrushchev's explicit agreement to retreat, is the final stage of the Cuban crisis as examined in this paper, although the actual retreat was spread over a period of several weeks after 28 October.

Khrushchev's 26 October Letter: Khrushchev's 26 October letter has not been published, but the essentials of it were immediately made apparent in the President's reply of 27 October and were confirmed by Khrushchev in his 12 December speech cited above. The letter has been described as long, rambling, vague, troubled, and conciliatory, and as clearly from the hand of Khrushchev himself. The point of the letter, in Khrushchev's words of 12 December, was as follows:

> We stated /In that letter/ that if the United States pledged not to invade Cuba and also to restrain its allies from aggression against Cuba, then the Soviet Union would be prepared to remove from Cuba all of the weapons which the United States described as offensive weapons...

Khrushchev's 27 October Letter: Another Khrushchev letter, containing the Cuba-for-Turkey proposal, began to be broadcast by Moscow Radio on the morning of 27 October, just as the reply to the Khrushchev letter of 26 October was reportedly being drafted. This second letter was apparently written during the night of 26 October Moscow time (it seems to have been originally dated 26 October) or in

the morning of 27 October, several hours after the composition of the first letter. It was probably written before the time--the morning of 27 October, Moscow time--at which Khrushchev fixes the "signal of utmost alarm" which caused his retreat, but it was certainly broadcast after that time, and was clearly not a letter in response to such a "signal"; on the contrary, it is a letter appropriate to a lull, and provides additional reason for believing that Khrushchev has misdated the time or times of his greatest "alarm."

The letter began by expressing "great satisfaction" with the President's reply to U Thant's appeal to avoid a confrontation of Soviet and American ships. The President's "sensible step" was taken as showing his "solicitude for the preservation of peace." Following a statement on the importance of peaceful economic competition, Khrushchev's letter spoke of the non-confrontation agreement as a "first step," and declared that the "main thing is to normalize and stabilize the situation in the world between states and between peoples."

Stating his understanding of the President's concern for the security of the United States, Khrushchev noted his own concern for Soviet security and pointed to American military bases--with rocket weapons--surrounding the USSR and its allies. Khrushchev specified the existence of such weapons in Turkey, and then asked:

> Do you believe that you have the right to demand security for your country and the removal of such weapons /from Cuba/.., while not recognizing this right for us? ... How then does recognition of our equal military possibilities tally with such unequal relations between our great states?

(It will be recalled that Khrushchev since autumn 1961 had periodically attributed to the President, on the basis of the Vienna talks of July 1961, a belief that Soviet military strength was the equal of American military strength, and

he had often asked that American policy be made consonant with such a belief, in the sense of allowing the USSR "equal rights" of all kinds. He had also on occasion stated his true calculation that U.S. estimates of American military superiority made the United States feel that it did not have to give him what he wanted.)

After expressing optimism over the results of "talks" between Soviet and American representatives under the auspices of U Thant, Khrushchev's letter made its practical proposal:

> We agree to withdraw those weapons from Cuba which you regard as offensive weapons. We agree to do this and to state this commitment in the United Nations. Your representative will make a statement to the effect that the United States, bearing in mind the anxiety and concern of the Soviet state, will withdraw its analogous weapons from Turkey.

Representatives of the UN Security Council, the letter continued, "could control on-the-spot fulfillment of these commitments."

The letter further stated that the USSR would give a pledge not to invade Turkey or to harass Turkey in other ways, in exchange for an American pledge not to invade or harass Cuba. The letter suggested a month as the outside limit for the implementation of the proposal.

Khrushchev's letter at this point stated for the first time publicly, as Khrushchev had said in a private talk two days earlier, that the weapons in Cuba which "alarm you" were entirely "in the hands of Soviet officers." These weapons would not "threaten" anyone if there were no attack on the USSR or invasion of Cuba. The letter concluded that an agreement could lead to other agreements.

This 27 October letter came as a surprise even to Moscow; the issue of Izvestiya which carried it on page one had on page two a commentary denouncing in advance any

such proposal. Nevertheless, this second letter, in contrast to the disorderly and apparently hastily-written letter of 26 October was a coherent statement which had evidently been kept on hand for use at the proper time. Why was this thought to be the proper time?

It seemed, indeed, a very poor time for such a proposal. The ground had already been cut from under any such proposal by Khrushchev's letter of 26 October, in which he had made the much more attractive proposal of a dismantling of the missile bases in Cuba in exchange for a no-invasion pledge. As noted, the 27 October proposal was broadcast after Khrushchev, according to his later account, had added up his information to a "signal of utmost alarm." While it seems apparent, both from the tone of this 27 October letter and from other developments which will be discussed later, that Khrushchev misdated the time of his "utmost alarm" (it was not really the morning of 27 October, as he said, but rather the 12 to 18 hours immediately prior to his explicit capitulation on the afternoon of 28 October Moscow time), nevertheless as of 26 October he had been in a state of some alarm, and there had been indicators since that time which, one would think, would have increased his alarm.

For example, three Soviet officials were intermittently present at the Press Club in Washington during the afternoon of 26 October, at which time American newsmen there were freely offering the opinion, based on conversations with Administration officials, that an invasion of Cuba was set for the following day; one or another of the Soviet officials was observed to leave the Club periodically, and it seems almost certain that they transmitted this information to Moscow that afternoon (the night of 26-27 October, Moscow time). Moreover, the British consul in Miami is reliably reported to have concluded, on the afternoon of 26 October, that everything was in readiness for an invasion of Cuba the following day; this conclusion, or the information on which it was based, may also have got to Moscow on that night.

Similarly, at noon of 26 October (Washington time) Mr. Lincoln White gave a press briefing in which he called

attention to the sentence in the President's 22 October speech to the effect that further action would be justified if the build-up in Cuba continued. Later in the day a White House statement noted that the USSR had shown no intention to dismantle or to discontinue work on the strategic missie sites, that work on the sites was proceeding "rapidly," and that such activity was directed at "achieving a full operational capability as soon as possible." Further, on the same day Jose Mora, Secretary-General of the OAS, stated publicly that the missile bases "cannot be negotiable" and that any measures taken by the United States to dismantle the bases would be justifiable on the basis of the 23 October resolution of the OAS and would be supported by almost all Latin American states.*

Finally, British officials in Washington are reliably reported to have concluded on that day (26 October), on the basis of conversations with American officials, that the United States would take additional action against the missile bases within 48 hours if dismantling had not begun within that time. Although we think that this conclusion was passed to Moscow, if at all, only after the time of the Cuba-for-Turkey proposal, it could have reached Moscow on the night of 26-27 October.

Thus, how was Khrushchev's 27 October letter to be read? Was the letter serious? If so, had Khrushchev decided that his earlier attitude had been excessively conciliatory? Had the first letter been written by him personally and in haste, and had it now been displaced by a proposal representing his considered opinion after a day of discussion with other leaders? (The different styles of the two letters gave some support to such a view, and there was also some subsequent reporting to this effect.) Or had Khrushchev himself been displaced by a group with a tougher attitude? In connection with this question of a tougher attitude--whether Khrushchev's or that of others--the news came to hand while the letter was being studied that a U-2 plane

*Both the White House statement and Dr. Mora's remarks were presented by TASS on 27 October as evidence that "armed intervention" was imminent.

was missing on a mission over Cuba that had begun about the time the letter was being broadcast.*

Or was the letter less serious than the 26 October letter? Did Khrushchev regard his first letter as having averted an attack on Cuba and as having eased the situation generally, so that he was now free to try, at least briefly, for a better exchange, contending that his first vague letter had been misinterpreted and that this was the official version of that letter? Or was the second letter simply a means of warning that if the proposal in the first letter were rejected, the price could only go up? Or was the second letter simply putting the Cuba-for-Turkey proposal on the record, in order to return to the question of U.S. bases overseas after the crisis in Cuba had been resolved by a Soviet withdrawal on the basis of the first letter?

The questions as to the origins and motivation of the 27 October letter cannot be answered with confidence,

*It is still not certain, but seems probable, that the plane was brought down by a SAM installation near Banes. Khrushchev at this time was preparing to promise (as he did the next day) to withdraw the offensive weapons, and a shootdown at this time may conceivably have been part of a hastily-contrived plan for preventing verification of his promise. A better possibility, as two sources have asserted, is that Castro himself persuaded the Soviet commander of a SAM detachment or emplacement to shoot down the U-2. Soviet discipline would be expected to be better than that, but the situation had been confused by Castro's public statement earlier in the day that invading aircraft would "risk" defensive fire, a statement which might have been taken by a SAM commander as a change of signals from Moscow. In any case, the action seems to have been an aberration. On the same day, Castro in a letter to U Thant stated his willingness to negotiate a settlement. On 28 October, the Cuban Ministry of Armed Forces in messages to anti-aircraft forces reiterated the instructions, apparently in effect since 23 October, not to open fire unless attacked.

and some observers regard these questions as the principal opacity of the week of the crisis. We are fairly well satisfied, however, with a simple explanation, namely: Khrushchev may well have been under pressure from others, but he remained in command throughout the crisis; as of 27 October Moscow time, the attack on Cuba reportedly planned for the night of 26-27 October had not taken place (whether owing to his letter or not), and the situation was indeed eased; he did indeed judge, possibly on the basis of evidence not available to us, that he had a little more time (perhaps two or three days, the figure he later gave), enough for one more effort; and he wrote a letter designed to play one or two of the three roles suggested in the foregoing paragraph, depending on the American response. As it turned out, the letter may or may not have played the second role (encouraging the United States to accept the implied proposal in the 26 October letter), while it clearly played the third role (putting the proposal on the record).*

The White House publicly parried the 27 October letter--the Cuba-for-Turkey letter--early in the day of 27 October, in such a way as not to deprive Moscow of hope of negotiations on other matters (including U.S. bases) after the Cuban crisis was resolved. A White House statement (not signed by the President) noted that this most recent proposal was inconsistent with positions taken less than 24 hours earlier, refused to make an agreement at the expanse of an ally--the kind of agreement that Khrushchev was soon to make--and kept the focus on the need for early action on the missile bases in Cuba.

*It will be recalled that Khrushchev in a private talk of 24 October, after he had ordered his ships to turn back, had warned that Soviet ships would resist with armed force. In this light, the letter of 27 October, proposing a bargain he had already undercut with a better offer, is not so surprising: on 24 October and again on 27 October, Khrushchev had a hope that the American position could be changed, he did what he safely could do to try to change it, and, this failing, he at least got the Soviet position on the record.

> The proposal broadcast this morning involves the security of nations outside the Western Hemisphere. But it is the Western Hemisphere countries and they alone that are subject to the threat that has produced the current crisis...
>
> Work on these offensive weapons is still proceeding at a rapid pace. The first imperative must be to deal with this immediate threat, under which no sensible negotiations can proceed.
>
> It is therefore the position of the United States that as an urgent preliminary to consideration of any proposals, work on the Cuban bases must stop; offensive weapons must be rendered inoperable; and further shipment of offensive weapons to Cuba must cease--all under effective international verification...

Moscow did not publish the White House statement.

The President's Letter of 27 October: President Kennedy's letter of 27 October was received in Moscow during the evening of 27 October Washington time, and was probably in Khrushchev's hand by 0600 on 28 October Moscow time. In this letter the President, virtually ignoring the Khrushchev message of 27 October (the Cuba-for-Turkey proposal), opened with the statement that he (the President) had read Khrushchev's letter of 26 October with care and welcomed the statement of Khrushchev's "desire to seek a prompt solution to the problem," and then reiterated the central point of the White House comment on the Cuba-for-Turkey proposal earlier in the day:

> The first thing that needs to be done, however, is for work to cease on offensive missile bases in Cuba and for all weapons systems in Cuba capable of offensive use to be rendered inoperable, under effective United Nations arrangements.

(Work on the missile sites in Cuba was in fact continuing on 27 October, by which time some missiles almost certainly could have been launched at the U.S. from each of the MRBM sites, although, as noted, it is not known whether warheads were there; moreover, a command link between Moscow and Cuba, apparently activated hurriedly during the week, became operational at just about this time.)

On the assumption that the work were stopped, the letter continued, the President's representatives in New York would work out with Khrushchev's representatives and with U Thant an arrangement for a "permanent solution to the Cuban problem along the lines suggested in your letter of October 26th." At this point in his letter, the President made explicit the proposal implicit in Khrushchev's letter of 26 October and attributed it to Khrushchev:

> As I read your letter, the key elements of your proposal--which seem generally acceptable as I understand them--are as follows:
>
> (1) You would agree to remove these /above-cited/ weapons systems from Cuba under appropriate United Nations observation and supervision; and undertake, with suitable safeguards, to halt the further introduction of such weapons systems into Cuba.
>
> (2) We, on our part, would agree --upon the establishment of adequate arrangements through the United Nations to insure the carrying out and continuation of these commitments--(a) to remove the quarantine measures now in effect and (b) to give assurances against an invasion of Cuba...

The President then stated in his letter that if Khrushchev would give similar instructions to his representatives, "there is no reason why we should not be able to complete these arrangements...within a couple of days."

[redacted]

Although the letter imposed no deadline for an agreement, the "couple of days" could have been read as the deadline for both the agreement and the implementation of it.

The President's letter emphasized the urgency in its concluding paragraphs. While the United States was willing to discuss "other armaments" and a "detente," the letter said, "the first ingredient, let me emphasize, is cessation of work on missile sites in Cuba and measures to render such weapons inoperable..." Further,

> The continuation of this threat, or a prolonging of this discussion concerning Cuba by linking these problems to the broader questions..., would surely lead to an intensification of the Cuban crisis and a grave risk to the peace of the world. For this reason I hope we can quickly agree along the lines outlined in this letter and in your letter of October 26th.

Khrushchev's Capitulation, the 28 October Letter: Khrushchev's 28 October letter, in which he accepted as his own the positions which President Kennedy attributed to him in the President's 27 October letter, was broadcast by Moscow Radio at about 0900 Washington time on 28 October, about 24 hours after the broadcasting of Khrushchev's 27 October letter, and about 10 hours after the receipt of the President's 27 October letter.

There are reports of an earnest discussion or even a "struggle" among Soviet leaders prior to the dispatch of the 28 October letter, and one source has attributed to a Soviet leader the statement (later) that war had been "very close." However, on the basis of Soviet conduct throughout the venture, we do not believe that the dominant leaders (notably Khrushchev) came close to deciding to take military action, and the reported remark seems a part of the continuing Soviet effort to impress the United States with the dangers of the crisis in order to dissuade the United States from taking a hard line again. We think it likely that the Soviet leaders made the decision to capitulate in the same way that they had made the decision to undertake the venture

in the first place--with Khrushchev leading the way, and with only a few vocal and determined dissenters.

Throughout the day and night of 27 October Moscow time, Khrushchev had been given indications that his time was running out.

One such indicator was an action taken by Secretary McNamara, in ordering 24 troop carrier squadrons, comprising about 14,000 air reservists, to active duty. Shortly thereafter, Assistant Secretary Sylvester issued a warning--closely following the shootdown of the U-2 near Banes--that the United States would retaliate in the event of interference with American air reconnaissance of Cuba.

Another such indicator was a warning--which may have come through two or more channels at about the same time--that the United States had imposed a deadline of 28 or 29 October for a Soviet agreement to dismantle the bases or for the dismantling to begin. As noted previously, British officials in Washington had concluded on 26 October, on the basis of conversations with American officials, that 28 October was the deadline, and this conclusion may have been passed to Moscow. As also noted, this may have reached Moscow as early as the night of 26-27 October; however, it is known that the question of the deadline was being discussed in London by various offices of the British Government--in terms of a briefing given the British by U.S. officials in Washington the previous day--on the morning of 27 October; and it seems to us likely that this information was passed to Moscow, if passed at all, sometime in the next 24 hours, the period just prior to Khrushchev's capitulation in his 28 October letter.

In any case, essentially the same information was stated publicly by a Latin American diplomat in Washington on 27 October. A Washington radio station on the afternoon of 27 October quoted this diplomat as having learned that the Russians were being given only 48 hours to agree to dismantle the bases.* The implication in this report was

*This is our recollection of the radio report; we do not have a text.

that the diplomat had been briefed to this effect during the previous 24 hours. This report--which was almost certainly transmitted at once to Moscow--must have had some impact on Khrushchev even if it were the only such report, and must have had a much greater impact if it followed or coincided with information from the British and/or others to the same effect, i.e. that diplomats were being told that 28 or 29 October was the deadline.

Further, in the early afternoon of 27 October Washington time, or about 1930 Moscow time, there was what has been described as an "uncannily well-timed" intrusion of an American U-2 into Soviet arctic airspace. This was an accident which could have been taken instead as an indicator of American preparations for a strategic attack.

Another indicator may have come from Soviet officials visiting the Press Club in Washington on that evening. During the evening, a report was circulating in the Club that Secretary McNamara had told several leading newsmen to come to the Pentagon at 0700 the next morning (28 October) for a briefing on a matter of great importance. The matter was presumed by the newsmen at the Press Club to be an announcement that an air strike against Cuba was just then being made or was about to be made.

Finally, as previously noted, there were those passages in the President's letter of 27 October which specified a "couple of days" as sufficient for implementation of the proposal the President attributed to Khrushchev and which emphasized the urgency of an early agreement. The "couple of days" could reasonably have been read as the deadline for both agreement and implementation, and the letter in any case was consistent with all of Khrushchev's information to the effect that he had only a short time in which to act. Khrushchev may have given more weight to this letter than to any other single indicator in the 24 hours immediately prior to the Soviet capitulation, as this indicator came directly from the man who would order the action to be taken.

It seems clear, in any case, that the period immediately prior to the dispatch of Khrushchev's 28 October letter was in truth his time of "utmost alarm." The only

question for debate seems to be that of whether the "signal of utmost alarm" was a single signal such as a warning of a 48-hour deadline reaching Khrushchev through public and/or private channels, or the passages in the President's 27 October letter emphasizing urgency, or (as we believe) a signal compounded of such elements.

Just as Khrushchev had ordered his ships to turn back as soon as he was persuaded that the United States was serious about the quarantine, and just as he had written his 26 October letter when informed that an attack on Cuba might be imminent, so he accepted as his own the proposal attributed to him by the President as soon as he was brought to believe that his time was indeed up. Kommunist, in an article of December 1962, commented that in the Cuban crisis the Soviet party and government "soberly weighed the balance of power" and made their decision accordingly. (This seems a half-truth: as we see it, the Russians had weighed the "balance of power" long before the crisis; in the crisis itself they were concerned with estimating whether the United States was willing to use its local and strategic superiority.) Soviet and Cuban sources agree that Castro was not consulted in the process of making and publicizing this decision.

Khrushchev's 28 October letter got quickly to the point. After expressing satisfaction and gratitude for the "sense of proportion" and "realization of responsibility" displayed in the President's 27 October letter, as well as Khrushchev's "great understanding" of American concern over "the weapons you describe as offensive," Khrushchev in this letter then asserted that the Soviet Government,

> in addition to earlier instructions on the discontinuance of further work on weapons construction sites, has given a new order to dismantle the arms which you describe as offensive, and to crate and return them to the Soviet Union.

The letter then reiterated, for the record, the Soviet contention that arms had been given Cuba because the island was under the "continuous threat of an invasion," and that such arms were entirely for purposes of "defense" of Cuba.

The letter continued:

> I regard with respect and trust the statement made in your message of 27 October 1962 that there would be no attack, no invasion of Cuba, not only on the part of the United States, but also on the part of other nations of the Western Hemisphere...

For this reason, the letter went on, the orders had gone out to discontinue construction and to dismantle the sites.* Further, "As I informed you" in the letter of 27 October,

> we are prepared to reach agreement to enable UN representatives to verify the dismantling of these means...

(This was not quite what Khrushchev had said in that letter; he had said that, if there was an agreement on the mutual dismantling of missile bases in Cuba and Turkey, UN representatives could "control on-the-spot fulfillment." Now, with an agreement much less favorable to him, he was apparently unwilling to commit himself to on-the-spot supervision.)

Khrushchev's 28 October letter then expressed a hope that Soviet and American leaders, and "other people of good will," once having improved the present "tense atmosphere," could ensure that no other "dangerous conflicts" would arise. (This was apparently meant to suggest a desire to undertake negotiations on broader issues.)

The letter then expressed the hope that the Cuban people would "be certain that we are with them and are not

*These orders apparently did not go out until later in the day, perhaps not until the President's agreement had been received.

absolving ourselves of responsibility for rendering assistance to the Cuban people." In this connection, the letter protested the "violation of Cuban airspace by American planes,"* action which could lead to "dangerous consequences." (This seems to have been an empty gesture of support for the Cubans, but it is conceivable that Khrushchev here was expressing a last-ditch hope of inducing the United States to suspend the overflights before ascertaining by these and other means that Khrushchev had made good on his agreement, in which case Khrushchev could reconsider whether to make good.)

Having just backed down, Khrushchev then reiterated, for the record, the Soviet determination not to "falter in the face of any test," the Soviet determination not to be provoked but to retaliate against those who would "unleash a war," and the Soviet confidence that peace could be maintained.

President Kennedy commented immediately on the broadcast text of Khrushchev's 28 October letter. The President's statement, directed to Moscow over Voice of America in the early afternoon, welcomed Khrushchev's decision to back down as a "constructive contribution to peace." Later in the afternoon the President replied to the letter, stating that he considered his letter of 27 October and Khrushchev's letter of 28 October to represent "firm pledges...which ought to be rapidly implemented." As the President put it, "we are receding from danger"; the Cuban problem remained, but the Cuban crisis, or at least the Cuban crisis of 1962, was over.

*This followed a lengthy passage about American U-2 violations of Soviet airspace, including the U-2 incident over the Chukhotsk Peninsula the previous evening.

Recapitulation

On 22 October, the President revealed his knowledge that, contrary to the burden of several Soviet statements, strategic missiles were being deployed in Cuba. He reminded Moscow of his warnings against ventures of this kind and against this particular venture, announced an imminent quarantine of Cuba, stated that further action would be taken if the build-up continued, threatened retaliation against the USSR if missiles were launched from Cuba, called on Khrushchev to withdraw "all offensive weapons," and warned the USSR against hostile action elsewhere.

The USSR replied on 23 October with a public statement designed to put the United States on the defensive so that the USSR could gain time for the purpose of involving the United States in negotiations aimed at gaining yet more time or some large concession. In this statement, the USSR neither admitted nor explicitly denied the deployment in Cuba of strategic missiles, adhered to the formula of defensive purpose, and presented the dispute as being really between the United States and Cuba. The statement denied the right of the U.S. to forbid a military build-up in Cuba (or elsewhere) or to impose a quarantine, warned of the dangerous consequences of American actions, took no note of the threat to the USSR, and asserted that the USSR would try to keep the peace while looking to its military readiness. On the same day, Khrushchev ordered his ships carrying military cargoes to Cuba to turn back.

In the next three days, Khrushchev worked along several lines. He made further statements designed to reassure the United States about the possibility of general war and also to deter the U.S. from attacking Cuba. He threatened to run the quarantine, but only after ordering the course changes, and in fact he took additional steps to avoid a confrontation of Soviet and American ships in the Caribbean. He privately admitted the deployment of strategic missiles in Cuba, and he continued the work on the bases there. He tried hard to involve the U.S. in negotiations. He conducted probes on a particular proposition, the mutual dismantling of bases in Cuba and Turkey. And he made preparations for a fast backdown if necessary,

a proposal for the withdrawal of offensive weapons in exchange for a no-invasion pledge.

By 26 October, the President had made clear to Khrushchev that the United States would not permit itself to be tied up for long in negotiations. Moreover, it was apparent from the massing of forces and from public statements that the U.S. was preparing to move to a higher level of military action against Cuba in the near future. Because the Cubans are known to have expected an attack on or soon after the night of 26 October, it seems likely that Khrushchev's sense of urgency was heightened by frantic messages from Havana. Thus Khrushchev's letter of 26 October, in which he implied his willingness to withdraw offensive weapong from Cuba in exchange for American assurances against an invasion of Cuba, seems to have been designed to head off any imminent attack on Cuba.

Without waiting for a reply, Khrushchev in a 26 October letter failed to reaffirm that position and instead proposed a settlement more favorable to the USSR, namely the mutual dismantling of bases in Cuba and Turkey. This letter apparently reflected a fresh calculation of his position. The attack on Cuba which he had feared on the previous day had not taken place; and he now estimated that he still had a little time--perhaps as he said, two or three days--in which to work; and his 27 October letter, like the earlier threat to defy the quarantine, was a last effort to induce the United States to change its mind, which, this failing, simply served to put the Soviet position on the record.

On the evening of 27 October, the President made explicit the proposal implicit in Khrushchev's 26 October letter and attributed it to Khrushchev. Within about 10 hours, Khrushchev capitulated. He was almost certainly helped to this decision--reached by the early afternoon of 28 October Moscow time--by additional indicators received on 27 October and on the morning of 28 October that the deadline might be either 28 October or 29 October, and by those passages in the President's 27 October letter (received in the morning of 28 October) which suggested the possibility of a 29 October deadline and which in any case emphasized the urgency of an early agreement. Just as Khrushchev had ordered his ships to turn back as soon as he was persuaded that the United States was serious

about the quarantine, and just as he had written his 26 October letter when he first feared an attack on Cuba, so he accepted as his own the proposal attributed to him by the President as soon as he was brought to believe that his time was indeed up.

At least in the short run, Khrushchev had lost heavily. He had been shown up as a liar (even if a half-hearted and clumsy liar), as being willing to sacrifice an ally (and without even consulting that ally), and as a much less cool and capable man in a crisis than his principal adversary. Most of the problems which he had thought to solve with the missile base venture were now worse than they had been before. He had not changed the balance of power, and the inferior Soviet position in this balance was now plain for all to see. He had now no hope of getting something for nothing in negotiations, and had weakened his position in any negotiations. He had lost ground with the underdeveloped countries. He had exposed himself to Chinese ridicule and had strengthened the Chinese case against his leadership. He had exacerbated his problems in attempting to control Castro. He had broken even in only one respect: he still had his "socialist" Cuba, his foothold in the Western Hemisphere; and even here it was made clear that this foothold could be maintained only on American sufferance. Thus, from an American point of view, if the Bay of Pigs misadventure in April 1961 had been properly described as a "perfect failure," then the week of 22-28 October 1962 could properly be regarded as a dazzling success.

How much Khrushchev would lose in the long run was another question. Some observers, seeing the failure of the venture as the extinction of Khrushchev's last hope of attaining a position from which he could make rapid advances, have expected a new era, in which Khrushchev would learn to live comfortably with the unfavorable balance of power, would provoke fewer and less serious crises, and in negotiations with the United States would aim less at taking profit from crises which he himself had provoked and more at reaching mutually beneficial agreements. Even if this conclusion is sound, it is still open to Khrushchev to attempt to change the balance of power by less spectacular means: to try to achieve a recognized military parity, for example,

by agreements on limited measures of arms control, together with a greater effort in research on advanced weapons. In this connection, he may regard the test-ban agreement itself as evidence that he can still get more out of negotiations than the West can (i.e., it may be his judgment that the test-ban will damage American more than Soviet military development). With respect to the related problems which he had sought to answer with the missile base venture, he may still hope to reduce his Chinese problem through changes in the Chinese leadership combined with fresh Soviet inducements; he may expect to gain much from American troubles with the underdeveloped countries; and he may believe that Cuba's situation can be stabilized by Cuban efforts to reduce tensions, exploiting an American reluctance to intervene.

In sum: Khrushchev's immediate losses were great; his long-term losses, beyond the loss of time, remain uncertain.