

COLD WAR CRISES

POLAND, 1956

Khrushchev, Gomulka, and the "Polish October"

by L.W. Gluchowski

Eastern Europe was central to Soviet foreign and defence policy throughout the Cold War. After World War II, and especially from 1947 onward, the Soviet military and security forces, together with local communist elites, constructed the most integrated alliance system of the Cold War period. Soviet state institutions of control also helped to reconstruct the military and security forces of states devastated by World War II. Their aim was to secure communist regimes in postwar Eastern Europe dedicated to defend the Soviet Union's western frontier. To ensure loyalty, uniformity, and quality, Soviet military and security officers were recruited to staff or to advise the East European military and security forces.¹ This pattern applied in particular to

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SUDOPLATOV RESPONDS:
The Authors of *Special Tasks*
Reply to Critics— see page 155

KOREA, 1949-50

To Attack, or Not to Attack?

Stalin, Kim Il Sung,
and the Prelude to War

by Kathryn Weathersby

The historical record of the Korean War has recently been greatly enriched by Russian President Boris Yeltsin's presentation to President Kim Young-Sam of South Korea, during the latter's visit to Moscow in June 1994, of 216 previously classified high level Soviet documents on the war from Russian archives. The collection totals 548 pages and includes documents from the period 1949-1953. Most of the documents are ciphered telegrams between

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POLAND, 1980-81

Soviet Policy During the Polish Crisis

by Mark Kramer

The prolonged crisis in Poland in 1980-81 was one of the most intriguing episodes of the Cold War, but until very recently almost no primary sources relating to the crisis were available. That problem has greatly diminished over the past few years. This article will draw on new archival materials and memoirs from Russia,

Poland, Germany, and Czechoslovakia to provide a reassessment of the Soviet Union's role in the Polish crisis. The article will begin with a brief review of some of the most important new sources, and will then analyze the decision-making calculus in Moscow in 1980-81. The third part will take up the controversial question of whether, and under what circumstances, the Soviet Union and its Warsaw Pact allies might have invaded Poland in December 1981.

The discussion here is based in part on a longer chapter about the Polish crisis in my forthcoming book on Soviet policy in Eastern Europe, 1945-1991. Further coverage of the

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HUNGARY AND POLAND, 1956

Khrushchev's CPSU CC Presidium Meeting
on East European Crises, 24 October 1956

Introduction, Translation, and Annotation
by Mark Kramer

The document below has been translated from a 19-page Czech manuscript entitled "Zprava o jednani na UV KSSS 24. rijna 1956 k situaci v Polsku a Mad'arsku" ("Account of a Meeting at the CPSU CC, 24 October 1956, on the Situation in Poland and Hungary"). The manuscript, which is stored in Fond 07/16, Svazek 3, at the Central State Archive in Prague (Statni ustredni archiv, or SUA), is one of many items in the Czech archives that shed valuable new light on the Soviet Union's response to the crises in Poland and Hungary in

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CUBA, 1962

The Crisis and Cuban-Soviet Relations:
Fidel Castro's Secret 1968 Speech

by Philip Brenner and James G. Blight

On 25 and 26 January 1968, Cuban leader Fidel Castro gave an extraordinary 12-hour speech before the Central Committee of the Cuban Communist Party on the history of Cuba's relationship with the Soviet Union. It is well known that the relationship in the six years after the Cuban Missile Crisis was turbulent. But the disclosure of this speech, kept secret at the time, helps clarify how important the Missile Crisis was in setting the stage for the turbulence.

The Cuban government recently declassified

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CASTRO'S SPEECH

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

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

Cuba's Perspective on the Crisis

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

Early in his speech, Castro asserted that when a Soviet delegation (headed by the Uzbek party chief Sharif Rashidov) proposed the installation of ballistic missiles in Cuba in May 1962,

We saw it as a means of strengthening the socialist community...and if we were proposing that the entire socialist com-

munity be prepared to go to war to defend any socialist country, then we had absolutely no right to raise any questions about something that could represent a potential danger.

Subsequently (and earlier, in his meetings with Mikoyan), the Cuban leader has said that he understood the missiles also could be an immediate deterrent to a U.S. invasion. But here he presented the idea that Cuba would be on the front line of the struggle between East and West.⁴

Prior to 1962, Cuba had sought admission to the Warsaw Pact, but had been rebuffed. Castro's rationale for accepting the missiles provided a formulation that would enable Cuba to claim *de facto* membership in the Pact. It was placing itself in harm's way for the benefit of socialist countries, and so it had the right to expect reciprocal protection from the Pact in the event of an attack.

By May 1962, Cuba expected and feared a U.S. military invasion. Cuban leaders reasoned first that the Kennedy Administration would not be content to accept blithely the outcome of the failed 1961 Bay of Pigs invasion. They viewed Cuba's January 1962 suspension from the Organization of American States as a justification for and prelude to an invasion.⁵ Importantly, their fears were reinforced by the development of a major U.S. covert action, codenamed Operation Mongoose, and other American military preparations.⁶ Approved by President John Kennedy at the end of November 1961, Operation Mongoose became the largest CIA operation until Afghanistan. Though the program was never fully implemented, the United States did train and support thousands of Cuban exiles, many of whom engaged in repeated acts of sabotage on the island, including the destruction of factories, the burning of fields, the contamination of sugar exports, and the re-supply of counter-revolutionaries in the Escambray Mountains.⁷ Cuban intelligence had infiltrated the exile groups and had captured several of the saboteurs. While Cuba was not privy to the closely held Mongoose planning documents, it had a reasonably accurate picture of the extent of the operation.⁸

This was the context in which the Cuban leaders accepted the Soviet proposal to install missiles. Castro acknowledged that he placed great faith in what he perceived to

be the Soviet's sophisticated knowledge of military matters. Still, he quarreled with the Soviet leaders over the political aspects of Operation Anadyr (the Soviet code name for the missile emplacement). He sought a public announcement of the decision prior to the completed installation of missiles for two reasons. First, he judged that such a statement would itself have a deterrent effect against a U.S. invasion, by effectively committing the Soviet Union to Cuba's defense. Second, publication of the Cuban-Soviet agreement would strengthen Cuba's "moral" defense in the United Nations and in the forum of international public opinion. Keeping the operation secret, he argued in 1968, required

the resort to lies which in effect meant to waive a basic right and a principle.... Cuba is a sovereign, independent country, and has a right to own the weapons that it deems necessary, and the USSR to send them there, in the same light that the United States has felt that it has the right to make agreements with dozens of countries and to send them weapons that they see fit, without the Soviet Union ever considering that it had a right to intercede. From the very outset it was a capitulation, an erosion of our sovereignty....⁹

While the world breathed a sigh of relief when Premier Nikita Khrushchev announced on 28 October 1962 that the Soviets would dismantle and remove the missiles in exchange for a U.S. pledge not to invade Cuba, Castro was enraged. "We were profoundly incensed," he reported to the Central Committee in 1968. The basis and acuteness of Cuba's anger are evident in the conversations Castro had with Mikoyan in early November 1962, immediately after Khrushchev's decision.

First, there was the matter of consultation. Cuba learned about the Soviet decision at the same moment the United States did, by hearing Khrushchev's announcement on Radio Moscow on the morning of October 28. Mikoyan argued to Castro on November 3 that there had been no time to consult with the Cuban leader, especially in light of a letter Castro had sent to Khrushchev on October 27 (it was written on October 26, completed in the early hours of October 27, and was received in the Kremlin very late on

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

In 1992, the Cuban leader intimated that this initial confusion hardened into anger during his six-week trip to the Soviet Union, in early 1963, after Khrushchev inadvertently informed Castro that there had been a secret understanding between the United States and Soviet Union for the removal of U.S. missiles from Turkey. This seemed to confirm his suspicion that the protection of Cuba was merely a pretext for the Soviet goal of enhancing its own security.¹⁶ Here were the seeds of true discontent.

The lessons were clear to Castro, and these were what he attempted to convey to the Central Committee in 1968. The Soviet Union, which casually trampled on Cuban sovereignty and negotiated away Cuba's security, could not be trusted to look after Cuba's "national interests." Consequently, Cuba had to be vigilant in protecting itself and in maintaining its independence.

Significance of the January 1968 Speech

Castro's 12-hour speech came at the conclusion of the first meeting of the Central Committee since the Cuban Communist Party was founded in October 1965. The main purpose of the session was to conduct a "trial" of 37 members of the party, who were labelled the "micro-faction." Though the designation "micro" was intended to diminish their importance, there was little doubt that the attack against them was filled with high drama and potentially high stakes for the Cuban revolution.

The meeting began on January 23, and

was presided over by Raoul Castro, the Minister of the Armed Forces and the party's second secretary. All of the proceedings, except Fidel Castro's speech, were prominently reprinted in the Cuban Communist Party newspaper *Granma*.¹⁷

Most prominent among the 37 was Anibal Escalante, who was well known in Cuba. The leader of the Popular Socialist Party (which was the communist party) before 1959, he also headed the Integrated Revolutionary Organizations in 1961, which was the party created to mesh Castro's July 26th Movement, the Revolutionary Directorate, and the Popular Socialist Party into one unit. What made the attack on Escalante and his cohorts especially dramatic was that they were charged with adhering to criticisms of the Cuban Communist Party that had been voiced by Moscow-oriented communist parties in Latin America. Moreover, they were accused of meeting with officials of the Soviet embassy in Havana, of providing these officials (one of whom was allegedly the KGB station chief) with false information about Cuba, and of encouraging the Soviet Union to apply economic sanctions against Cuba. In effect, their purge could be interpreted as a direct rebuff to the Soviet Union.

Why, then, would Fidel Castro's speech

on the history of Cuban-Soviet relations, which was quite critical of the Soviet Union, be kept secret when the micro-faction trial itself had been made so public? (Indeed, despite our repeated requests, the bulk of the speech is still secret, and the only portion that has been declassified is the portion pertaining to the missile crisis.) Recent interviews we conducted in Havana with former officials make clear that there were three motives for keeping the speech from the public.

First, there was a concern that the United States would interpret such direct Cuban criticism of the Soviet Union as a visible sign of rupture between Cuba and its benefactor. Cuban leaders, quite mindful of the 1965 Dominican Republic invasion, did not want to encourage U.S. hawks to attempt military attacks against the island. The micro-faction trial, after all, focused on allegedly errant individuals and avoided implicating the Soviet Union directly.

Cuban leaders were also worried about internal disunity. On the one hand, they did not want to encourage the Cuban public to seize on the speech as a sign that Cuba disavowed all aspects of Soviet socialism. There was considerable cultural ferment in Cuba at the time, and Cuban leaders were feeling besieged by increasing criticism from

the artistic community.¹⁸ This was also a period when Havana was awash in graffiti and juvenile vandalism, which leaders associated with a growing "hippie" movement.

On the other hand, Castro apparently believed he had to "educate" the Central Committee about the errors of the micro-faction, and demonstrate to party leaders that the purge was warranted. He could not be certain how popular Escalante was with the members of the Central Committee, because it was such a nascent and diverse group. He thus sought to avoid party disunity by convincing the leaders that the purge was necessary to protect Cuban nationalism, which was the ultimate source of legitimacy. Castro did this, one former official remarked, by explaining that "the platform of the micro-faction would in fact turn us into a Soviet satellite." This not only would have subverted Cuban national identity, but would have been a grave error, because—as he argues in the section of the speech on the Missile Crisis—the Soviet Union was untrustworthy.

Third, by keeping the speech secret, Castro sent a message to the Soviet Union that while Cuba profoundly disagreed with it over several issues, there was still the possibility of accommodation. Had the Cuban head of state made his criticisms public, it

FIDEL CASTRO, GLASNOST, AND THE CARIBBEAN CRISIS

by Georgy Shakhnazarov

In October 1987, Harvard University hosted a symposium on the Caribbean Crisis (or Cuban Missile Crisis) in which Robert McNamara, McGeorge Bundy, Theodore Sorensen, and other prominent veterans of the Kennedy Administration took part; I was one of three Soviets who also participated, along with Fyodor Burlatsky and Sergo Mikoyan. At the conclusion of that interesting discussion it was agreed to advance a step further the historical study that had been jointly launched.¹

The next "round" of this study was held in Moscow in January 1989.² The Soviet Political Science Association and the Institute of World Economy and International Relations invited U.S. former officials and scholars, and on the Soviet side A. Gromyko, A. Dobrynin, A. Alexeev, O. Troyanovsky,

S. Khrushchev, E. Primakov and many other people who were involved in the events of 1962 to attend the conference.

The Moscow conference turned out to be particularly interesting thanks to the participation of an authoritative Cuban delegation led by Sergio del Valle, a member of the Cuban government who in 1962 had been the Cuban army chief of staff. This article describes how this unprecedented Cuban involvement in an East-West historical investigation became possible, and Fidel Castro's personal role in that decision. On 7 November 1987, only a few weeks after the Harvard discussions, the Soviet Union celebrated the 70th anniversary of the October Socialist Revolution. Foreign delegations were led by the "first persons," and Fidel Castro was among them. At that time I was a deputy chairman of the CPSU Central Committee department responsible for relations with Cuba, and I had an opportunity to talk with the Cuban leader several times in his residence, the mansion at the Leninskie Gory.

During our meetings, I told him about our discussions with the Americans, and asked him if he thought it would be a good idea for the Cubans to join the process in order to present the maximum amount of reliable information about this dramatic episode in Cuban and world history.

Fidel thought for a moment, stroking his beard with a familiar gesture. Then he said: "It is not only a good idea, but it is a necessity. There are so many myths and puzzles about those events. We would be able to help, to give information about the events in which we were immediate participants. But nobody has invited us."

Then I requested an invitation for the Cubans to the Moscow conference. Fidel promised to send a delegation and he delivered on his word. More than that. He positively responded to the idea to hold a "third round" in Cuba, and indeed a conference was held, with Fidel's active participation, in Havana in January 1992.³

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would have been far more difficult to overcome the tensions with the Soviet Union.

These tensions were reaching their peak in January 1968. In a public speech on January 2, the Cuban leader blamed the Soviet Union for an inadequate delivery of fuel that he asserted would require a stricter rationing of gasoline.¹⁹ What the Soviets had done was to increase supplies only modestly from the previous year, and well below what the Cubans needed to pursue their ambitious plan of producing a ten million ton sugar harvest by 1970. This plan was an element in their goal of achieving some independence from the Soviet Union.

The Soviet action came after Premier Alexsei Kosygin visited Cuba in July 1967, on his way back to Moscow from a summit meeting in New Jersey with President Lyndon Johnson. The Castro-Kosygin meeting reportedly was quite tense, in part because Cuba disagreed with Soviet aspirations for a detente with the United States. It is likely, also, that Kosygin approvingly conveyed a U.S. message that Cuba should desist from supporting revolutionary guerrilla movements in Latin America.²⁰

Cuba's support for these movements had been a source of friction between the two countries for most of the period after the Missile Crisis. It raised several problems for the Soviet Union. One was ideological, and in this context it is worth noting that Cuban affairs in the CPSU Central Committee were handled in part by the department responsible for ideology. The Soviet Union believed that socialism could evolve peacefully in Latin America, and would come about through united front alliances spearheaded by the established communist parties. It was critical in their view to appreciate that Latin America was not ripe for revolution, because it had an underdeveloped proletariat. To be sure, there were some differences within the Soviet leadership about whether any support should be given to guerrilla movements, and there were differences even among the Latin American communist parties about the support that should be granted to movements within their respective countries. In the mid-1960s, for example, the Venezuelan Communist Party developed a close alliance with the main guerrilla movement there. The Argentine Party, in contrast, was firmly opposed to support for any guerrilla movements.

Still, Cuba posed a frontal ideological

challenge because it claimed to be the model for developing socialism in Latin America, and the Cuban proletariat was less advanced than that in some other countries. Moreover, the Cuban revolution had succeeded largely without the support of the Popular Socialist Party. To some extent the ideological problem could be obscured by treating Cuba as an exception, especially during the period that it was not ruled by a communist party. But the issue became more critical after October 1965, when the Cuban Communist Party was formally established as the ruling party.

That came three months before a major international meeting of revolutionaries in Havana, the Tricontinental Conference. Until then, Soviets believed they had papered over its differences with Cuba on the matter of armed struggle by resolving at a December 1964 meeting of Latin American communist parties that while armed struggle was a valid means of achieving socialism, the appropriate means were to be assessed by each communist party. Cuba, moreover, agreed to deal only with the established communist parties in Latin America.²¹

Then the Tricontinental Conference upset the fragile peace. While it was fully endorsed by the Soviet Union, which hoped the conference would undermine China's influence with revolutionary movements (and which it apparently did), the Soviets were taken aback by the barely veiled criticisms of its allegedly weak support for North Vietnam. The conference also created a new organization, headquartered in Havana, to support armed revolutionary activity throughout the world, and the organization's executive secretariat had only three representatives from communist parties—Cuba, North Vietnam and North Korea, all of whom were critical of the Soviet Union.²² In a call for armed struggle in every Latin American country, Castro concluded the conference by fervently criticizing the Latin American communist parties:

if there is less of resolutions and possibilities and dilemmas and it is understood once and for all that sooner or later all or almost all people will have to take up arms to liberate themselves, then the hour of liberation for this continent will be advanced.²³

Castro reinforced these views in subse-

quent months, in speeches critical of the Soviet model of socialism and world revolution, and supporting Ché Guevara's November 1966 expedition to Bolivia, which was opposed by the Bolivian Communist Party.²⁴ Guevara had left Cuba in 1965, but he sent a message to the Tricontinental Conference in which he declared that through "liberation struggles" in Latin America, "the Cuban Revolution will today have a task of much greater relevance: creating a Second or a Third Vietnam...."²⁵ In August 1967, at the first meeting of the Organization for Latin American Solidarity—which was created by the Tricontinental Conference—Cuba arranged for nearly all of the delegations to be dominated by non-communist revolutionary movements. Later in the year, it pointedly chose to absent itself from a Soviet-organized preparatory meeting of world communist parties in Budapest.²⁶

The trial of the micro-faction thus came at what seemed to be a critical juncture for Cuba in its relationship with the Soviet Union. In March 1968, Castro focused his revolutionary fervor on Cuba itself, and asserted that the masses had become complacent, believing "that we were defended." But "the only truly revolutionary attitude," he exhorted, "was always to depend on ourselves." He then announced that he was eliminating the private ownership of small businesses: "we did not make a Revolution here to establish the right to trade."²⁷

Was this a prelude to a fundamental break with the Soviet Union? In fact, by May 1968 Cuba had actually begun a rapprochement with the Soviet Union, which was evident in a softer tone in Castro's speeches about international affairs. Then in August, Cuba refused to condemn the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia. While communist parties in many countries roundly criticized the Soviet Union, Castro excoriated the Czech Communist Party for moving its country "toward a counterrevolutionary situation, toward capitalism and into the arms of imperialism."²⁸ Though it came several days after the invasion, and carefully avoided endorsing the invasion, Castro's speech was viewed in Moscow as a welcome contrast to the widespread reproach the Soviet Union was receiving. In 1969, Soviet trade with Cuba began to increase dramatically, and within four years Cuba became a member of the Council of Mutual Economic Assistance (Comecon), the Soviet-domi-

nated trading bloc of socialist countries.

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

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

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

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

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

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

Cuba.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

11. *Revolucion*, 29 October 1962.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

20. Yuri Pavlov, *Soviet-Cuban Alliance: 1959-1991* (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Publishers, 1994), 88.

21. D. Bruce Jackson, *Castro, the Kremlin and Communism in Latin America* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins Press, 1969), 28-29; Jacques Lévesque, *The USSR and the Cuban Revolution: Soviet Ideological and Strategic Perspectives, 1959-77*, trans. Deanna Drendel Leboeuf (New York: Praeger, 1978), 102-104.

22. Lévesque, *The USSR and the Cuban Revolution*, 119-121.

23. U.S. Congress, Senate, Committee on the Judiciary, "The Tricontinental Conference of African, Asian and Latin American Peoples," A Staff Study, 89th Cong., 2nd Sess., 7 June 1966, p. 93.

24. For exemplary speeches, see Martin Kenner and James Petras, eds., *Fidel Castro Speaks* (New York: Grove Press, 1969), 171-213. On Guevara's problems with the Bolivian Communist Party, see *El Diario del Che en Bolivia* (Havana: Editora Política, 1987), esp. the introduction by Fidel Castro, xvii-xviii, and 47, 51, 53, 337.

25. John Gerassi, ed., *Venceremos! The Speeches and Writings of Ernesto Che Guevara* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1968), 420.

26. Lévesque, *The USSR and the Cuban Revolution*, 130-131.

27. Kenner and Petras, eds., *Fidel Castro Speaks*, 233, 277.

28. *Granma* International Edition (English), 25 August 1968.

29. Domínguez, *To Make the World Safe for Revolution*, 75.

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

**MEETING OF THE
CENTRAL COMMITTEE
OF THE COMMUNIST PARTY OF CUBA
PALACE OF THE REVOLUTION
HAVANA
JANUARY 26, 1968
YEAR OF THE HEROIC GUERRILLA**

MORNING SESSION

COMMANDER FIDEL CASTRO: In the early hours of [this] morning we stopped while on the topic of the reply sent to the Soviet Government in response to their letter attempting to find justifications in alleged alarms, and purporting insinuations of a nuclear strike in the sense that we had advised the USSR to attack the United States.¹

These issues were made perfectly clear in that letter. Later there was another long letter containing the same points of view, and though couched in more diplomatic terms, so to speak, answering each of the items in Khrushchev's letter one by one.²

At that time, we also received Mikoyan's visit. Mikoyan's visit was also taken down....No, Mikoyan's visit was not taken down in shorthand; there were notes on Mikoyan's visit. U Thant's visit was the one that was taken down in shorthand. It is a real pity that the discussions with Mikoyan were not taken down in shorthand, because they were bitter; some of the incidents in the meeting were anecdotal.

Initially, after we explained to him our standpoints, we had him clarify what was going to happen with the IL-28 planes, and he vouched that no, the IL-28s would not leave Cuba. Then, if I remember correctly, I asked him, "But what if they demand their withdrawal, what will you do?" He answered, "then to hell with the imperialists, to hell with the imperialists!"

Then some 24, or at most 48 hours later, he arrived at the meeting—those famous meetings at the Palace of the Revolution—Mikoyan arrived bearing the sad news that the IL-28 planes would also have to be returned.³

That was really unpleasant, but the situation was such that, with the missiles withdrawn, we were on the verge of another problem over the planes. It would have made sense to have had it out over the missiles, but not over the IL-28 planes—they were useful planes: it is possible that had we possessed IL-28s, the Central American bases might not have been organized, not because we would have bombed the bases, but of their fear that we might. What we were most concerned about then was avoiding a new impact on public opinion as regards a new blow, a new

concession.

We recall perfectly well how we assumed the always unpleasant initiative of making a statement—at my suggestion—that would create the right atmosphere, trying to justify the action by saying that the planes were obsolete, etc. All of which was done in consideration for public opinion, to protect the people from the trauma of another blow of that nature, since we were seriously concerned—and, in our view, rightly so given those circumstances—over the pernicious effects of a chain of such blows on the confidence and the consciousness of the people. And, I repeat, given that under the circumstances we were profoundly incensed, we saw that action as a mistake, in our opinion there had been a series of mistakes, but the extent of our overall confidence, and that deposited in the Soviet Union and its policies, was still considerable.

So the planes went too. Together with the planes—and that is something that they had requested, the issue of the missiles—they requested the withdrawal of the Soviet mechanized infantry brigades stationed in Cuba. Let me add here, in case anyone is unaware of it, that at the time of the missile issue, there were over 40,000 Soviet troops stationed in Cuba. The imperialists must also have known that, but they never declared the amount, they limited themselves to speculative figures, which revealed their interest in reducing the amount, perhaps due to possible effects on public opinion.

In fact, anyone who reads Kennedy's statements, his demands, will notice that he did not include those divisions, which were not offensive or strategic weapons, or anything of the sort. We must note that the withdrawal of the mechanized brigades was a freely granted concession to top off the concession of the withdrawal of the strategic missiles.

We argued heatedly, firmly, were against this. He said that it would not be carried out immediately but gradually, and we reiterated that we were against it and insisted on our opposition. I am explaining all this for the sake of subsequent issues, so that you can understand how all this fits into the history of our relations with the Soviet Union. We flatly rejected the inspection issue. That was something we would never agree to. We told him what we thought about that gross, insolent arbitrary measure, contrary to all principles, of taking upon themselves the faculty of deciding on matters under our jurisdiction. And when it was remarked that the agreement would fall flat—an agreement that we were completely at odds with—we said that we could not care less and that there would simply be no inspection.

That gave rise to endless arguing and counter-arguing, and they actually found themselves in a very difficult situation. I think that at this point Raul made a joke that caused quite a commotion in the atmosphere of that meeting. I think it was when we were discussing expedients. Do you

remember exactly? Was it the Red Cross thing?

CARLOS RAFAEL RODRIGUEZ: He went to the extreme of proposing that the international vessel be brought to Mariel, saying that because it was an international vessel it would no longer be Cuban territory, and the UN supervisors could be on board the vessel and could supervise the operation. It was then that Raul woke up and said, "Look, why don't you dress them up in sailor suits?" (LAUGHTER), referring to the international supervisors.

COMMANDER RAUL CASTRO: These people think that I said that because I had been dozing; I actually woke up at that point and came out with that, have them bring those people on their vessel, dressed up as Soviet sailors, but leaving us out of the whole mess. It is true that I was falling asleep, but I was not that far gone.

COMMANDER FIDEL CASTRO: That was it.

COMMANDER FIDEL CASTRO: We had problems with the translators and there were occasions when some of the things we said were badly translated and there was even one point when poor Mikoyan got furious. It was over some phrase or other.

Anyway, those deliberations—as well as some of the others—were characterized by total and complete disagreement. Needless to say, we have the highest opinion of Mikoyan as an individual, as a person, and he was always favorably inclined toward Cuba, he was Cuba's friend, and I think he still is a friend of Cuba; I mean, he did quite a bit for us. That is why he always received from us a certain deferential treatment.

It was during those days that it gradually became evident that we were totally correct—as was, unfortunately, so often the case throughout that whole process—about the imperialists' attitude vis-a-vis the concessions. This could be seen as low-flying aircraft increased their constant and unnecessary daily flights over our bases, military facilities, airports, anti-aircraft batteries, more and more frequently; they harbored the hope, after the October [Cuban Missile] Crisis, of demoralizing the Revolution and they fell on us, hammer and tongs, with all their arsenal of propaganda and with everything that might demoralize our people and our army.

We had agreed not to shoot; we agreed to revoke the order to fire on the planes while the talks were under way; but made it clear that we did not consider those talks conclusive at all. I believe we were totally right on that; had we acted differently, we would still have their aircraft flying low over us and—as we would sometimes say—we would not even be able to play baseball here.

The demoralizing effect began to manifest itself in the fact that the anti-aircraft gunners and the crews at the air bases had begun to draw caricatures reflecting their mood and their situa-

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

6. In 1968, Carlos Rafael Rodríguez had ministerial rank and was involved in foreign commerce. He had been an official of the Cuban communist party (which was called the Popular Socialist Party) before the 1959 revolution, and had served in the government of Fulgencio Batista (as part of a popular front) in 1944, and headed the Institute for Agrarian Reform from 1962-64. In the 1970s he became a Vice President of Cuba and a member of the Political Bureau of the Cuban Communist Party.

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CASTRO AND GLASNOST

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

"I Know Something About The Caribbean Crisis"

(Notes from a conversation with Fidel Castro, 5 November 1987)

Some Details and Specifics of the Crisis Situation.

In October [1962] the American planes began low flights above the Soviet launching sites for the nuclear intermediate range missiles and the anti-aircraft launchers. At that time the anti-aircraft missiles had the range of more than 1,000 meters. Paired ground-to-air launchers were used for protection of those anti-aircraft launchers, but they could not provide effective protection. We gave an order to add hundreds of additional anti-aircraft launchers to protect those launchers. Additional launchers were in the Cuban hands. That way we wanted to protect the Soviet nuclear and anti-aircraft missiles that were deployed in Cuba. Low overflights by the American planes represented a real threat of an unexpected attack on those objects. At my meeting with the Commander-in-chief of the Soviet forces in Cuba [Gen. I. A. Pliyev] I raised the question of the serious danger that the American overflights represented. That meeting occurred on the 25th or the 26th. I told him that the Cuban side could not allow the American planes to fly at such low altitudes over the Cuban territory any more. I even sent a letter [dated October 26] to Khrushchev about that. In that letter I told the Soviet leader about my concern with the situation that had developed. I said that we should not allow the Americans to deliver a first strike at the Soviet objects in the Cuban territory, we should not allow the repetition of the events that led to the World War II. At that time the crisis situation already existed.

On the day when the American planes appeared again, we gave orders to all Cuban anti-aircraft batteries to fire. The planes were driven off by the defensive fire. However, not a single plane had been shot down. Later on the same day

[October 27] a spying plane, U-2, appeared in the air above the island. We don't know any details, but it happened so that the plane was shot down by a Soviet anti-aircraft missile over the eastern part of the country.

I don't know in what manner they reported that to Khrushchev and to the General Staff of the Soviet armed forces, however, I doubt that the order to shoot down the plane was given by the Commander-in-Chief of the Soviet troops in Cuba [Pliyev]; that decision was most probably made by the commander of the anti-aircraft missiles, or even by a commander of one of the batteries. Khrushchev, however, accused us of shooting down that plane in his letter.

To be sincere, it was possible that we were to blame since we opened fire at the American planes first, because we were so decisively against the American overflights. But the biggest mistake probably was that you, having installed those missiles, still allowed the Americans to fly over the launching sites. Those overflights were nothing else but preparation for a sudden American invasion of Cuba. I cannot blame the Soviet comrade who shot the U-2 for what he did because I understand his psychological condition very well. He saw that the Cubans opened fire at the American planes, and he decided to fire a missile at the U-2. I heard that many years later he was decorated for that act.

It is interesting that the former Soviet Ambassador in Cuba, [Aleksandr] Alekseev, wrote in his memoirs that I was trying to avoid the collision. For the sake of historical objectivity I must say that that was not so. In my letter to Khrushchev after we had deployed the anti-aircraft batteries and mobilized our people to repel the aggression I expressed my hope that we would be able to preserve peace. I wanted to show Khrushchev that I was not in an aggressive mood. At the same time I wanted to inform him about my concern with the possibility of an American first strike, not even excluding a possibility of a nuclear strike against Cuba.

At the same time I suggested to the Soviet Commander-in-Chief in Cuba [Pliyev] to disperse the nuclear warheads, so that they would not have been completely destroyed in case of an American attack. And he agreed with me.

One more question concerned the public statements made by the Soviet leadership and the coverage of the events in the organs of mass media. I sent two emissaries to Moscow [on 27 August-2 September 1962—ed.]—I think they were Che Gevara and [Emilio] Aragonés—who had to propose that Khrushchev make public the military agreement between the USSR and Cuba. Publicly the Soviet leaders claimed that there were no offensive weapons in Cuba. I insisted that we should not allow the Americans to speculate with the public opinion, that we should make the agreement public. However, Khrushchev declined.

The American leaders, Kennedy in particular, reacted to the Soviet statements very negatively. They thought they were deceived.

We, however, never denied the presence of the Soviet missiles in Cuba. In all their public statements Cuban representatives stated that the question of presence of weapons in Cuba was a sovereign business of the Cuban people, that we had the right to use any kind of weapons for the defense of the revolution. We believed that those statements of the Soviet leaders did harm to the prestige of the Soviet Union in the eyes of the general public, since at the same time you allowed U-2 flights over the Cuban territory that took pictures of the missiles stationed there.

At that time the question of the withdrawal of the Soviet missiles had not been raised yet. However, the aggravation of the situation forced Khrushchev to make that decision. We, on our part, thought that Khrushchev had rushed, having made that decision without any consultation with us. We believe that the inclusion of the Cuban side in the negotiations would have made it possible to get bigger concessions from the Americans, possibly including the issue of the American base in Guantanamo. Such rush resulted in the fact that we found out about the Soviet-American agreement from the radio. Moreover, the first statement said that American missiles would be withdrawn only from Turkey; in the second the mentioning of Turkey was dropped.

When I visited the Soviet Union in 1963, Khrushchev read several letters to me. The American letters were signed by Thompson, but the real author was Robert Kennedy. In Khrushchev's response he spoke about the missiles in Turkey and Italy. There were certain threats in Kennedy's letter. In particular, he wrote that if the Russians did not accept their proposals, something would have happened. In response to that Khrushchev stated that something would have happened indeed if the Americans undertook any actions against Cuba in disregard of the agreement, and that that something would have been incredible in its scale. That meant that if the Americans had dared to violate the agreement, a war would have begun.

Probably Khrushchev did not anticipate that the interpreter who read the originals would have mentioned Italy, but the original letter mentioned the withdrawal of missiles from Turkey and Italy. Later I asked the Soviet side to give explanations of that issue, but they told me that the agreement mentioned only Turkey.

We couldn't help being disappointed by the fact that even though the Soviet part of the agreement talked only about the missiles in Cuba and did not mention other types of weapons, particularly IL-28 planes, subsequently they had been withdrawn on the American demand. When Mikoyan came to Cuba, he confirmed to us that the agreement only provided for the withdrawal of the Soviet missiles. I asked him what would

happen if the Americans demanded a withdrawal of the planes and the Soviet troops. He told me then: "To hell with Americans!"

However, in 24 hours the Soviet planes and the majority of the troops were withdrawn from Cuba. We asked why that had been done. The troops had been withdrawn without any compensation from the American side! If the Soviet Union was willing to give us assistance in our defense, why did they agree to withdraw the troops, we were asking. At that time there were six regiments with 42,000 military personnel in Cuba. Khrushchev had withdrawn the troops from Cuba even though it was not required by the Soviet-American agreement. We disagreed with such a decision. In the end, as a concession to us the decision was made to keep one brigade in Cuba. The Americans knew about that brigade from the very beginning, but they did not discuss it.

Many years later, in 1979, before the Non-aligned Conference [in Havana in September 1979] American Senator [Frank] Church announced that a Soviet brigade was deployed in Cuba. Then our Soviet comrades suggested that we rename it into a training center. We were against it. However, before we had a chance to send our response, a [Soviet] statement had been made that denied the American Senator's claim and said that there was a Soviet military training center in Cuba.

At the time of the crisis President Kennedy was under a great pressure, but he defended the official Soviet position. However, when he was shown the photos of the Soviet missiles in Cuba, he had to agree that the Soviets lied to him.

On the question of nuclear warheads in Cuba I can tell you that one day during the crisis I was invited to a meeting at the quarters of the Soviet Commander-in-Chief in Cuba at which all the commanders of different units reported on their readiness. Among them was the commander of the missile forces, who reported that the missiles had been in full combat readiness.

Soon after the Reagan administration came to power an American emissary, Vernon Walters, came to Cuba. We talked extensively about all aspects of our relations, and in particular, he raised the question of the October crisis. Trying to show how informed he was, he said that, according to his sources, nuclear warheads had not yet reached Cuba by the time of the crisis. I don't know why he said that, but according to the Soviet military, the nuclear missiles were ready for a fight.

I don't know what Khrushchev was striving for, but it seems to me that his assurances about the defense of Cuba being his main goal notwithstanding, Khrushchev was setting strategic goals for himself. I asked Soviet comrades about that many times, but nobody could give me an answer. Personally, I believe that along with his love for Cuba Khrushchev wanted to fix the strategic

parity in the cheapest way. When the Soviet comrades proposed to us to deploy the nuclear missiles in Cuba I did not like the idea, but not because of the military risk; because from the political point of view we would have been seen as a Soviet military base in Latin America. We were ready to accept the risk of an American military invasion of Cuba in order to avoid the political harm to the prestige of the Cuban revolution. But at the same time we understood that the Soviet Union needed that measure to ensure their own security. We knew that we had suffered a big political damage at the very time when we were dreaming about a revolution in all Latin America, but we were ready to make sacrifices for the Soviet Union.

I cannot take the credit for the resolution of the crisis. More likely, I believe, the major role belongs to Khrushchev who caused that crisis by his stubbornness, and then resolved it. I did not know what was the real correlation of forces at that time, how many missiles did Khrushchev have. Khrushchev told me that after the missiles would have been deployed in Cuba, Kennedy would have to swallow it, and that later the Soviet leader was going to introduce the Fleet in the Baltic Sea (probably a mistake in the notes—should say “introduce the Baltic Sea Fleet”). I thought that Khrushchev’s actions were too risky. I believe that it was possible to achieve the same goals without deploying the missiles in Cuba. To defend Cuba it would have been sufficient to send six regiments of Soviet troops there, because the Americans would have never dared to open military activities against the Soviet troops.

Now I understand that the actions undertaken by Khrushchev were risky, if not to say irresponsible. Khrushchev should have carried out a policy like the one Gorbachev is carrying out now. However, we understand that at that time the Soviet Union did not reach the parity which it has now. I am not criticizing Khrushchev for pursuing strategic goals, but the choice of the timing and the means for achieving the goals was not good.

When I [Shakhnazarov] said that Americans had to and did abide by the agreement reached during the Caribbean crisis throughout the whole period after the crisis, Castro responded: yes, indeed, it was so. That is why I don’t think I have a right to criticize Khrushchev. He had his own considerations. And it really doesn’t make much sense to replay the history guessing what could have happened if...

Fidel Castro supported the idea of publishing memoirs of the participants of those events and added that he would be willing to take part in the discussions of the subject himself. “I know something about the Cuban crisis,” he said with a smile.

1. The organization and results of the 1987 Cambridge conference are described in James G. Blight and David A. Welch, *On the Brink: Americans and Soviets Reex-*

amine the Cuban Missile Crisis (New York: Hill and Wang, 1989; Noonday Press of Farrar Straus and Giroux, 1990).

2. On the 1989 Moscow conference, see Blight and Welch, *On the Brink* (1990 ed.).

3. On the 1992 Havana conference, see James G. Blight, Bruce J. Allyn, and David A. Welch, *Cuba on the Brink: Castro, the Missile Crisis and the Soviet Collapse* (New York: Pantheon, 1993).

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MIKOYAN’S TALKS

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The documents lend credence to the reminiscences of the historic participants—Nikita Khrushchev, Fidel Castro, former Soviet Ambassador in Cuba Aleksandr Alekseev.⁵ They reveal that the fraternity between Cuba and the USSR was badly fractured. While the Kremlin leadership, faced with a severe danger, preferred geostrategic pragmatism to ideological commitments, the Cuban revolutionaries sprung up in fierce defense of their national sovereignty and revolutionary “legitimacy.” From the Soviet perspective, that of a superpower, the most important fact was that Castro had, in his letter to Khrushchev of October 26, advocated a preemptive nuclear strike against the United States if it invaded Cuba.⁶ This notion, considered dangerous and irresponsible in Moscow, became an excuse completely to exclude Cuba from the U.S.-Soviet secret talks to resolve the crisis. Some of the Soviet leaders, gathered at the height of the crisis on 27 October 1962 at Novo-Ogarevo governmental dacha near Moscow, may even have feared that the Cubans, like Ulbricht, could push them all over the brink.⁷ John J. McCloy, a representative of the Kennedy Administration, told Mikoyan, in New York on November 1, that “he was reassured by the presence of Russian officers [in Cuba during the crisis]. The Cubans could open fire without thinking ... But the Russians would think first.”⁸ Khrushchev himself was forced to explain to Kennedy that the Cuban leaders were “young, expansive people—in a word, Spaniards.”⁹

Mikoyan’s trip was triggered by Alekseev’s cables from Havana. The Soviet ambassador alerted the Soviet leadership that Moscow’s actions had endangered Soviet-Cuban friendship. Khrushchev was particularly upset to learn that a rapprochement

was in progress between Cuba and the People’s Republic of China.¹⁰ The continuing pressure of the United States for more Soviet concessions indeed corroborated this impression.

Mikoyan was Khrushchev’s closest friend and most loyal ally. As had his predecessor—Stalin dispatched Mikoyan on a delicate mission to Mao in January 1949—Khrushchev frequently used Mikoyan as a troubleshooter and personal diplomatic emissary: to Hungary (October 1956), to West Germany (March 1958), to the United States (January 1959), and to talk to the anti-Khrushchev demonstrators during the Novocherkassk riots in south Russia (June 1962). Important from the Cuban viewpoint, Mikoyan had been the last in the Soviet leadership who belonged to the “old guard” of the Bolshevik revolutionaries. He had known all great revolutionaries of the century, from Lenin to Mao Zedong. And he was the first to embrace the Cuban revolution after his trip to Cuba in February 1960, at a time when the Kremlin still felt ambiguous about the Cuban revolution and its young, non-Marxist leaders. Castro, for all his anger, let Mikoyan know on November 3 that he remembered his role. Khrushchev sometimes said, Castro joked, that “there is a Cuban in the CC CPSU. And that this Cuban is Mikoyan.”

What both sides felt and understood during the talks was no less important than their “formal” written content. For the third time, since the Stalin-Tito split (1948) and the Sino-Soviet quarrel (since October 1959), there was an open conflict of perspectives and interests between the USSR and another communist regime. And both sides were fully aware of this. Fidel Castro said (as quoted to Mikoyan by Ernesto “Che” Guevara): “The United States wanted to destroy us physically, but the Soviet Union has destroyed us *de jure* [juridicheskii; juridically, legally] with Khrushchev’s letter”¹¹ it is not clear whether this comment referred to Khrushchev’s letter of October 27, with its offer to swap Soviet missiles in Cuba for U.S. missiles in Turkey, or his letter to Kennedy of October 28, agreeing without consulting Castro beforehand to withdraw the Soviet missiles from Cuba under UN inspection. But in any case, both actions enraged and offended Castro, who reminded Mikoyan, on November 4, that after the Spanish-American war (1898), when