ADVANCE VIEW OF THE CUBAN CRISIS



BY SEN, KENNETH KEATING

Official Washington snubbed early tip-offs on the Soviet missile buildup. Now, the man who gave out the first warnings reveals how faulty intelligence and managed news releases brought us to the edge of nuclear war. ENATOR, you've got to believe me. There are at least six intermediatemissile sites under construction in Cuba right now. I can't understand why the proper people in Washington aren't getting this information. Those rockets are a serious threat to America's security, and they didn't sprout up overnight."

I looked out of my window at the Capitol dome, white in the morning sunshine, and felt an involuntary shudder. It was early October, 1962. The radio broadcasts of December 7, 1941, flashed through my memory. It was just as hard to believe that the Soviets would dare bring long-range missiles into Cuba as it had been to believe that the Japanese would attack the U.S. Naval Base at Pearl Harbor. The consequences this time might be far more dreadful.

this time might be far more dreadful.

"Are you sure?" I demanded. "Is this refugee information or confirmed intelligence?"

There was desperation in his answer, and I was certain that he was not trying to fool me. Although I cannot reveal his name, I knew he had access to reliable information.

Let me make one point clear: All my information about the Soviet buildup in Cuba was either furnished or confirmed by Government sources. Once I began to speak out, additional facts on Cuba poured into my office. Not a single item ever was used by me in public, however, until I had verified it with Government sources.

I have been in the Congress for nearly 20 years. In that time, I have heard as many wild rumors and cock-and-bull stories as anyone else. But I have never repeated them on the Senate floor or anywhere else.

This was different. My source about the Cuban missiles was not a sensation seeker. He was like others who brought me facts about the Communist buildup, a sincere, patriotic American who felt that his information had to be made known. Many of my informants knew they were jeopardizing their careers in the public service, but they put their country's interest before their own.

I don't believe that our mistakes about Cuba stemmed from Communist infiltration of the U.S. Government. It was simply that some key officials let their preconceptions about Soviet intentions blind them to facts. Their refusal to believe reports about missile installations only changed when photos of the launching sites were shown to them. One known exception was CIA Director John McCone, who pre-

One known exception was CIA Director John McCone, who prepared a memo in late August, 1962, suggesting that the "antiaircraft" buildup in Cuba might be designed to protect more dangerous intermediate-range missiles. Mr. McCone's warnings were largely discounted.

My own concern over Cuba was nothing new. I had been following the Cuban situation with growing anxiety ever since Fidel Castro visited the United States. I met the bearded "Robin Hood of the Garibbean," as he was then called, at a Senate reception in April, 1959. Sen. Hubert H.

continued

CUBAN CRISIS continued

When he told the truth, Castro's ex-Air Force chief was ridiculed



In a January, 1963, statement, Keating discussed Soviet-manned rocket sites in Cuba. His pointer is a model of a U.S. missile.

Humphrey and I got him off into a corner. "You promised to hold elections as soon as you came to power," we said. "Why have no elections been held? What is your timetable for elections now?"

There was a trace of a sneer on Castro's face as he said, "The people are not ready. When the time is ripe, we will have our elections."

I had my doubts then. Three months later, I found new grounds

I had my doubts then. Three months later, I found new grounds for concern in the testimony of Maj. Pedro Luis Diaz Lanz before a Senate subcommittee. Diaz Lanz was Castro's first Air Force commander-in-chief and had served with Castro in the Sierra Maestra. In 1959, he defected and appeared before the Internal Security Subcommittee that July. "Castro," he said, "has given to the Communists all of the control of the country."

all of the control of the country."

His testimony was ridiculed by many in and out of Government, but I believed him. I feared then that the Cuban people had gone from one tyrant to another.

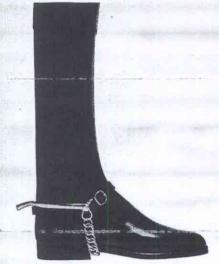
Certainly, I can understand our Government's desire in the early days of Castro's regime to be understanding and sympathetic. But after repeated examples of his ruthlessness, his disregard for human rights, his confiscation of property, his campaign against the Church, and his mass firing-squad executions, it became clear to me that Castro was not the promised savior.

During the 1960 election campaign, the then Sen. John F. Kennedy made it clear that he had never been taken in by Castro. In fact, to the chagrin of a good many Republicans, he went further than Vice-President Richard M. Nixon during their TV debates and pledged to help freedom-loving Cubans regain their homeland.

His failure to redeem that pledge with the 1961 Bay of Pigs invasion proved that the Communists were more deeply entrenched than official U.S. intelligence sources evidently realized. I have never been interested in recriminations, but it is signifi-

I have never been interested in recriminations, but it is significant to recall that one reason for the Government's decision to launch the Bay of Pigs project was the knowledge that unassembled Soviet

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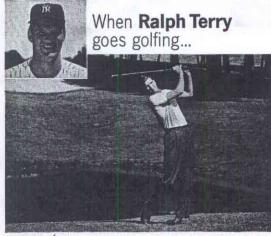


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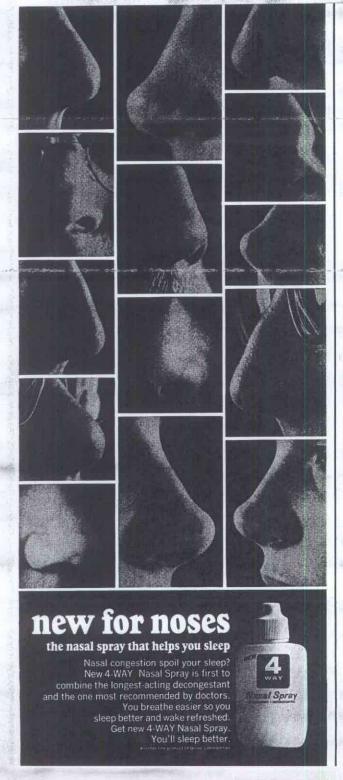
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CUBAN CRISIS continued

Not even President Kennedy knew what the Russians were really doing in Cuba

MIG jet fighters were being delivered to Cuba. In other words, the Government was prepared, in the spring of 1961, to sponsor an invasion of Cuba just to prevent Soviet fighter planes from achieving combat readiness so close to our shores.

After our failure at the Bay of Pigs, there was a steady increase in Soviet arms shipments to Cuba. By July of 1962, Castro had one of the best-equipped armies in Latin America.

In late July and early August, a massive Soviet buildup began. Russian cargo shipping doubled. The number of passenger ships increased four- and fivefold. Some people in Washington were aware of these developments, but the public was being kept in the dark. On August 31, I brought the situation in Cuba out into the open

for the first time on the Senate floor:

I am reliably informed that between August 3 and August 15, at the Cuban port of Mariel, ten to twelve large Soviet vessels anchored at the former Marante docks. The dock area previously had been surrounded by construction of a high cinder-block wall.

"The Soviet ships unloaded 1,200 troops. I call these men troops, not technicians. They were wearing Soviet fatigue uniforms.

"Through August 13, five torpedo boats have been unloaded and now are moored at nearby La Base. There is every indication that the naval complement to handle these disembarked at the same time. Again let me complement to manual these observations are associably be called technicians, what are the Soviets planning to do with their new island fortress? What are they going to build with all this new equipment? What will the army of technicians be required to maintain? So far we have had a number of answers, but in my judgment, none of them tells the true story."

The speech had immediate repercussions. To be sure, these facts had previously been transmitted upward through the intelligence pipe-line, but official Washington refused to accept them. I later learned that even after my public disclosure of the truth, efforts were made by some agency officials to discredit my report at so-called background news conferences.

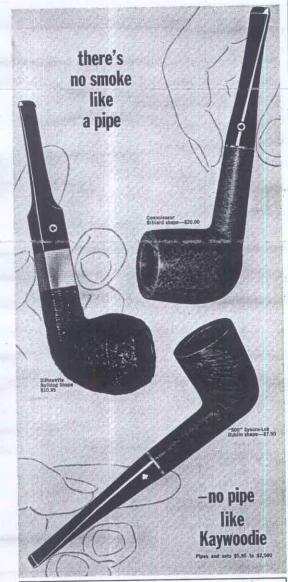
From the start, it appeared that the President was not receiving all the relevant intelligence. An exchange with a reporter at an August 29 Presidential press conference is revealing:

Question: ". . . Some of us were told at the State Department the other day that there is Russian military personnel in Cuba . . . and they are people who are probably going to operate missiles, similar to the NIKE missiles. . . ."President Kennedy: "I don't know who told you that at the State Department, that they are going to operate NIKE missiles, because that information we do not have at this time . . . we do not have evidence that there are Russian troops there. This is an expanded advisory and technical mission."

On September 2, I suggested on television that our Government seek an Organization of American States mission to probe reports of seek an Organization of American States mission to prove reports or missile bases in Cuba. Ten times on the Senate floor between Septem-ber 1 and October 22, I urged that the full facts be disclosed, and called for vigorous diplomatic initiatives by the OAS, along with economic sanctions to reduce Castro's power.

My statements on Soviet military personnel in Cuba continued to be denounced. Some suggested that I was confusing Soviet agricultural experts or farmers with troops. When I insisted that the Russians had thousands of soldiers as well as technicians in Cuba, I was accused

of playing a "numbers game." On October 29, 1962, the Department of Defense published a pamphlet stating that only 5,000 Soviet military personnel were in Cuba. But a later unanimous postmortem report of the Senate Sub-



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CUBAN CRISIS continued

McNamara squelched the full facts

committee on Military Preparedness revealed that "on October 22... committee on Military reparetines revealed in the order to the intelligence community estimated the Soviet personnel in Cuba to be 8,000 to 10,000." Still later, the number was raised to 22,000. So there were actually over four times as many Russian troops in Cuba in

October, 1962, as the Department of Defense had publicly estimated.
On this and other points, the subcommittee report in May, 1963, confirmed my statements. The subcommittee concluded: "Faulty evaluation and the predisposition of the intelligence community to the philosophical conviction that it would be incompatible with Soviet policy to introduce strategic missiles into Cuba resulted in intelligence judgments and evaluations which later proved to be erroneous."

By October 10, 1962, four days before reconnaissance photographs confirmed my information, I stated in the Senate:

"Construction has begun on at least half a dozen launching sites for intermediate-range tactical missiles. Intelligence authorities must have advised the President and top Government officials of this fact, and they must have been told that ground-to-ground missiles can be operational from inland Cuba within six months."

It was inconceivable to me that high officials would be in the dark over such a large-scale and important development. Yet it is clear now that they were.

Not until weeks afterward did the American people learn the full story: that the U-2 flights, which were the basis for our hard intelligence on the Soviet buildup in Cuba, had been largely suspended during this period.

My persistent attempts to alert the nation to the Communist menace in Cuba made me target number one for Administration spokes-men in Washington. Their criticism did not bother me. What did bother me was the knowledge that the Soviet was working day and night on missile sites that we officially insisted did not exist.

On the night of October 22, when President Kennedy spoke to

the nation in tones of ringing courage and revealed the full extent of the Soviet buildup, I was addressing an overflow political meeting in Utica, N.Y. I scrapped my prepared speech and devoted my entire effort that evening to support of the President.

John F Kennedy acted bravely and decisively at a moment when

America's future may well have been at stake. He won with the back-

America's future may well have been at stake. He won with the basing and loyal support of the Congress and the American people.

Even after the crisis had passed, my concern over Cuba lingered.

Our distinction between "offensive" and "defense" weapons allowed the Soviet to continue to supply Castro liberally with military equipment. I was disturbed at shipments of small arms, rifles, grenades, ex-plosives and small boats designed for terrorist excursions.

On January 31, 1963, I spoke up again about this new Cuban danger. In a Senate speech, I declared:

"What they are planning to do-in fact, they are already doing it-is mount an increasing wave of sabotage, terrorism, political subversion and agitation throughout Latin America. Already riots in Venezuela, Peru, Brazil clearly and demonstrably are the work of Communists trained and armed in Cuba. We can expect this to get worse and worse."

Six days later, Defense Secretary Robert S. McNamara appeared on television and tried to refute my charges. He stated flatly: "I have no evidence that Cuba is being used as a base for subversion against other Latin-American countries." But within a few days, CIA Director McCone gave testimony to a Congressional committee confirming my statements. He described Cuban camps for the training of terrorists and subversives from all over Latin America.

What I did not know then, but learned later, was that Communist Vietcong guerrillas from North Vietnam had also established a political base in Havana. In August, 1962, the Vietcong set up its first mission in Cuba, mainly to propagandize the achievements of guerrilla fighters in Asia and to blast U.S. policies.

In July of this year, the Vietcong's most publicized hero, Noup,

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CUBAN CRISIS continued

Our Government still won't admit that the Vietcong guerrillas have a base in Cuba

came to Cuba for the July 26 celebrations. This expert in guerrilla fighting toured camps throughout the island, contributing his experi-

ence against our own men to the Cuban training programs.

In other words, while Americans are being shot at halfway around the world, Communist terrorists from North Vietnam are in Cuba to stir up trouble for the United States and our friends, without any protest or public admission of the fact by the U.S. Government.

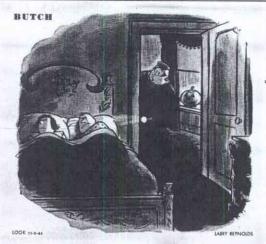
Some people say we are neurotic over Castro and his Communist outpost just 90 miles away. Some say Castro could not possibly launch an effective attack against us. But there are many other reasons why the continued existence of Cuba's Communist regime is a threat.

What Castro really wants is world recognition that communism

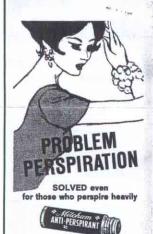
is here to stay and that it is the wave of the future. We must not forget the power of this uppeal to the power countries of Latin America. The Latinos look upon America not only as the Colossus of the North, but also as a rich uncle who isn't always concerned with their needs. To them, Castro holds the promise that communism can bring prosperity in a hurry. The promise is false, but that does not lessen its allure.

It is not enough just to recognize the dangers in Cuba. We must deal with them. From the start of the Cuban trouble, I have emphasized the importance of economic pressure. The economic power of the free world is a formidable asset. Yet the U.S. was very slow in bringing that power to bear. Until February of 1963, for example, there was no Government effort to prevent foreign ships from deliver-ing cargo to Cuba, then picking up a load in the United States for the return voyage home.

At the request of President Kennedy, CIA Director McCone came to my office about three months after the missile crisis for a discussion of the Cuban situation. I gave him my outline of 14 points for dealing with Castro. My proposals called for political isolation of Cuba from the other nations of this hemisphere, and increasing economic pressures against Castro by the North Atlantic Treaty Organization



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CURAN CRISIS continued

Government spokesmen have no right to lie for political reasons

and other free-world nations. Shortly thereafter, I discussed my proposals with Secretary of State Dean Rusk.

A number of my suggestions were later put into effect, including more restrictive shipping rules and more explicit export control measures. I was also assured that efforts were being made to persuade NATO and OAS states to cooperate on a boycott.

In late 1963 and early 1964, I proposed two more measures to combat Castro's terrorist tactics in other countries. First, I suggested an Inter-American Subversion Control Board, along the lines of the European Interpol, to keep tabs on subversives and troublemakers throughout the hemisphere. Once again, the official reflex was "no," Yet had such an organization existed in January, 1964, when the Panama riots broke out, it would have been easy to prove that the ringleaders were Communist agents, not loyal Panamanians.

My second proposal was for Special Squadrons to block gun-running around the Caribbean, Last November, the Cubans sauggled thousands of small arms into Venezuela. Fortunately, the cache was unearthed at a desolate beach site, but no doubt other weapons shipments go undetected. Our Navy admits that it is not presently equipped to do the kind of patrol job needed to stop this sort of Con munist gun-running.

The problem of Castro continues, requiring attention on many fronts. And it is difficult, requiring our best skill and judgment.

I feel now, as I did at the time of the missile buildup, that the people of the United States have the right to know what is going on in the world, whether it is good news or bad. Matters of military or national security import must be secret. But I cannot accept the view, suggested by an Assistant Secretary of Defense, that the Government has the right to lie for political reasons.

In fact, as I analyze the Cuban missile crisis of 1962, I realize that early U.S. efforts to play down the buildup, and to insist that the Soviet weapons shipments were merely defensive, very probably en-couraged the Russians. This initial lack of opposition could only have tempted Soviet war hawks to proceed on their dangerous course. At the eleventh hour, our country, by united action, won a brilliant vic-tory over Communist forces, but not before the world had been led to the brink of nuclear war.

To me, the lesson of the Cuban missile crisis is clear: Peace is not something that the Communists are ever going to give us. It is something that we will have to win. We can keep the peace only through firm policies that prove beyond doubt that the Communists have nothing to gain by provocation or aggression.



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