

remark: "Now, Mr. Secretary, if you and your Deputy will go back to your offices, the Navy will run the blockade."<sup>128</sup>

### The Withdrawal of Soviet Missiles from Cuba\*

Chairman Khrushchev's announcement on Sunday, October 28, that "the arms which you describe as offensive [w]ill be created and returned to the Soviet Union" marked the climax of the crisis.<sup>129</sup> A week of intense interaction between the United States and the Soviet Union preceded that announcement. That interaction was in large part a by-product of action within each nation — action that pitted government leaders against organizations whose outputs they sought to control. Indeed, the similarities between the phrases with which the groups who sat on top of each government characterized "the problem" are suggestive. As Soviet ships approached American warships stationed along the quarantine line, the American leaders sent a letter to the Soviets expressing concern "that we both show prudence and do nothing to allow events to make the situation more difficult to control than it is."<sup>130</sup> Later a Soviet reply emphasized the danger, "Contact of our ships . . . can spark off the fire of military conflict after which any talks would be superfluous because other forces and other laws would begin to operate — the laws of war."<sup>131</sup> As the climax of the crisis drew near, developments were, in the American phrase, "approaching a point where events could have become unmanageable."<sup>132</sup> The Russians chose another metaphor: the logic of war. "If indeed war should break out, then it would not be in our power to stop it, for such is the logic of war."<sup>133</sup>

### Inside the Soviet Union

An understanding of the Soviet withdrawal must begin with an appreciation of the sense in which the missile crisis constituted for the Soviets a "Pearl Harbor in reverse." During the crisis, the leaders of the U.S. government vigorously debated whether the United States could perpetrate a "Pearl Harbor" — whether President Kennedy could be a "Tojo." There, "Pearl Harbor" referred to the Japanese decision to launch a surprise attack. But this symbol has another connotation as well. Especially for readers of Roberta Wohlstetter's artful account of

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 Decision of Dean Rusk's remark, "We're eyeball to eyeball and I think the other fellow just blinked."<sup>127</sup> But the Navy had another interpretation: the ships had simply stopped to pick up more Soviet submarine escorts. Orders went out immediately that Soviet ships were to be given every opportunity to turn back.<sup>128</sup> Ships approaching the area should be hailed and trailed, but no ships should be stopped without further orders. Nevertheless, the President expressed concern that the Navy — already frustrated because of the leashing of its designed blockade — might blunder into an incident. Sensing the President's fears, McNamara decided to explore the organization's procedures and routines for making the first interception. Calling on the Chief of Naval Operations in the Navy's inner sanctum, the Navy Flag Plot, McNamara put his questions harshly.<sup>129</sup> Precisely what would the Navy do when the first interception occurred? Anderson replied that he had outlined the procedures in the National Security Council meeting and that there was no need to discuss it further. Angered but still calm, McNamara began to lecture the admiral. According to Elie Abel's reconstruction of that lecture, McNamara firmly explained that:

The object of the operation was not to shoot Russians but to communicate a political message from President Kennedy to Chairman Khrushchev. The President wanted to avoid pushing Khrushchev to extremes. The blockade must be so conducted as to avoid humiliating the Russians; otherwise Khrushchev might react in a nuclear spasm. By the conventional rules, blockade was an act of war and the first Soviet ship that refused to submit to boarding and search risked being sent to the bottom. But this was a military action with a political objective. Khrushchev must somehow be persuaded to pull back, rather than be goaded into retaliation.<sup>130</sup>

Sensing that Anderson was not moved by this logic, McNamara returned to the line of detailed questioning. Who would make the first interception? Were Russian-speaking officers on board? How would submarines be dealt with? At one point McNamara asked Anderson what he would do if a Soviet ship's captain refused to answer questions about his cargo. At that point the Navy man picked up the *Manual of Naval Regulations* and, waving it in McNamara's face, shouted, "It's all in there." To which McNamara replied, "I don't give a damn what John Paul Jones would have done. I want to know what you are going to do, now."<sup>131</sup> The encounter ended on Anderson's

Ed-Pp. 131-2 of G.T.Allison's The Essence of Decision are interesting. You did not send the footnotes. They could all be to Elie Abbe, who also failed to understand his own fact, one of the easier ways of become a journalism college dean. The part that follows these excerpts, headed "Inside the Soviet Union", might be interesting. Is this book scheduled for reprint? I recall something at the time of its appearance of Roberta Wohlstetter's "artful account", where 132 ends, but not much. I have Able's book and annotated it when it came out...The essential simplicity of the situation it served the interests of both sides to make seem complicated is not recognized yet. The details, the execution of the "quarantine", the insane-schemings and alleged thought behind all in Washington, were not simple. The situation was. Now it serves no interest for it is be understood. I do long to return to that writing. Thanks, HW