

The Editor of the Bulletin said she liked this statement and wanted to publish it. She later wrote that they had been unable to use it and hoped we could get its subject matter into another publication. The editor in chief also wrote me that I had made my point and that they would print it.

June 29, 1961

The Editor  
The Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists  
1020-24 East 58th St  
Chicago, Ill 60637

Dear Sirs:

The article by George Kennon "Scholarship, Politics and the East-West Relationship in the May issue of the Bulletin deals with a part of recent history and its relevance to the threat of nuclear war and the escalation of the arms race about which we indeed need to be informed. Mr. Kennon presents at the heart of his article a misconception that has become general among the American public, and must be corrected before it does more harm. He wrote

"Although Khrushchev was a crude man, he wanted no war, and he believed in human communication. But he overplayed his hand. And such favorable prospects as his influence presented went largely without response from the West. The compulsions of military competition were already too powerful. . ."

George McGovern in his autobiography Grass Roots accurately depicted one phase of what actually happened in writing:

". . . Through skillful but potentially catastrophic diplomacy and naval deployment, President Kennedy had persuaded Khrushchev to withdraw Russian missiles from Cuba in return for assurances that the United States would not invade the island. The two superpowers looked into the nuclear grave and backed away with a new appreciation of the need for peaceful accommodation. As Admiral Hyman Rickover put it: 'The cold war turned the corner in October, 1962, and it has never been the same since.'

Out of that confrontation between Khrushchev and Kennedy and its resolution there emerged a united front between Kennedy and Khrushchev against the military hawks in their respective countries. Some of the background of this development is described in Kenneth O'Donnell's Johnnie We Hardly Knew Ye in his account of Kennedy's decision that the United States must get out of Vietnam. Kennedy had been astounded and greatly impressed that General Douglas MacArthur had come and urged him to disengage from the Vietnamese conflict. In this visit MacArthur "was extremely critical of the military advice from the Pentagon, blaming it on the military leadership . . . which, he said, had advanced the wrong officers." "You were lucky to have had that happen in Cuba, where the strategic cost was not too great," he said about the Bay of Pigs, and urged the president (against) a military build-up in Vietnam."

Senate majority leader Mike Mansfield had similarly urged against that policy. Kennedy had told him he now agreed with the Senator's thinking on the need for a complete military withdrawal from Vietnam. O'Donnell quoted him as saying "But I can't do it until after 1965--after I'm re-elected" and Mansfield had agreed. Then after Mansfield left Kennedy told O'Donnell "So we had better be damn sure I am re-elected."

That was the background for the situation George Kennon described as Khrushchev's