

Letters to the Editor
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Andrew Kopkind spends more than two columns (2/20/89) in additional anti-Kennedy diatribes without once responding to what I ^{actually} wrote. He ignores my opening sentence, in which + could not have been more explicit: "Andrew Kopkind's version of J.F.K.'s legacy ^{is} fails to recognize the drastic change in Kennedy's policies beginning with the 1962 missile crisis..." He rambles on ^{at} in venomous length about the early Kennedy administration but does not, save for ^{an} occasional misrepresentation, address the post-missile crisis Kennedy policies. He can't. I was correct. I'd researched a book I was not able to write, "^{the untold story of the Cuba Missile Crisis} Tiger To Ride" ^{on} over the ^{radically} different last year of his administration.

^{actually} Where I ~~addressed~~ ^{Rupkind} addressed what he said about the "plots of assassination" against Castro he pretends I spoke about efforts to subvert and not the CIA's assassination attempts. ^{And} even then he attributes ^{these} the CIA's abuses to J.F.K., with no basis at all. He as much as says that it was Kennedy who ordered the CIA to manufacture toxins to poison Cubans with. I know of no basis for this and do ^{Rupkind} not believe ^{In my work} him. But, he does not respond to what I actually wrote.

He cannot refute but he pretends to dispute that Kennedy had ordered the liquidation of our involvement in Vietnam. ("He planned to reduce his troops.") As I wrote, just before he was assassinated there was a Pentagon press release you should be able to get announcing the gradual reduction that was to have been completed over a period of months. Just after he was assassinated the Pentagon re-evaluated its re-evaluation and said it was optimistic. And the rest, post-Kennedy, is bitter history.

^{Kopkind} was in Washington at the time of the missile crisis, if I recall correctly, and he should have a better recollection of both the day-by-day events and the solution. ^{He} also mixes the beginning with the end. ^{At} the beginning all the advisers were hawkish and urged strong military action except CIA Director ^{John} McCone, who was soon turned around by his subordinates, ^{and} Adlai Stevenson. But at the end Robert did the exact opposite of what kopkind says, "told him (JFK) to hang tough, to humiliate Khrushchev and

and to risk escalation."

(and secret)
Khrushchev's first proposal, via John Scali, then of ABC News, and outside his own diplomacy, was that Kennedy promise not to invade Cuba and he'd withdraw his missiles. When he did not receive a prompt reply his next proposal was released ^{in "takes"} while it was being teletyped to Kennedy: you take your missiles out of Turkey and I'll take mine out of Cuba. That looked too much like we'd be knuckling under. It was not accepted.

But it was Bobby Kennedy who recommended the opposite of hanging tough, the opposite of risking escalation, the opposite of humiliating Khrushchev that was the agreed-to solution. He added to Khrushchev's original demand ^{do} assurances Khrushchev did not ask for and gave Castro protections nobody else in the world could assure. Instead of promising only that we would not invade Cuba our offer was to protect Cuba against any invasion.

Kopkind ^d is wrong even in saying that "Kennedy refused to accept the principle of mutual withdrawal of missiles from the border regions of the opposing superpowers." (Only those in Cuba were near our border, ⁱ note.) Kennedy was shocked to learn that we still had missiles in Turkey because he had earlier ordered them withdrawn. While their removal was not part of the formal agreement, ^{some} they were removed, along with others we had elsewhere near the USSR and by the Kennedy administration.

Kopkind states what is at best a conjecture, "Khrushchev's fall from power two years later was directly attributable to Kennedy's action." That took two years?

I think it is more reasonable to attribute his fall to changed US policy under LBJ that made the Politburo believe they did not want a dovish premier or party secretary.

Kennedy learned from the missile crisis, ^{although} if Kopkind didn't and he did begin the first halting steps toward detente, when he feared he might fall because of them, like the limited test-ban agreement. It was his idea and he feared the Senate would clobber him.

There is nothing that can change the ^{actual} record of the Kennedy administration up to October, 1962 and I made no effort to. I regret that Kopkind and The Nation undertook to misrepresent the policies of his last 13 months. They were ^{proposals} radically different and peaceful ^{seeking} Harold Weisberg

Harold Weisberg