

The Washi

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Looking for Trouble *Spotted*

Fidel Castro must thank himself for the American determination to continue aerial reconnaissance over Cuba. Had he not played silent host to Soviet missiles in 1962, and had he permitted inspection of their removal, there would be no question of overflights. But he did not. He flouted the legitimate hemispheric demand for assurance that no further offensive threat remained.

A new danger lurks, however, in the possible transfer of the Soviet anti-aircraft missiles to Cuban hands. Ironically, there is cause for dismay in the apparent success of American efforts to shove Russians off the island. After the October crisis, Moscow respected American power enough to allow unhindered aerial reconnaissance in place of the on-site inspection which Castro refused. But Havana may not be so deferential towards American airplanes. A war of nerves, in which each side has committed its pride, is already under way.

The American position on overflights is strong from the viewpoint of strategy and security. But a lot of mud will still surely be thrown Washington's way. Cuba, after all, never agreed to inspection, which was accepted in its name by the Russians, who couldn't deliver. The Oct. 23, 1962, resolution of the Organization of American States, cited by the State Department in justification of continued overflights, can have no legal effect on Cuba. Cuba will be able to play on Latin sensitivity to American force. It will be able to embarrass the United States without much trouble.

In better times, diplomacy might have prepared for the foreseeable day when Moscow would leave the anti-aircraft missiles to Cuba. Havana might have been offered new inspection arrangements. The United States might have switched earlier to oblique aerial photographs or to reconnaissance by satellite. But these things, apparently, have not been done. Emotion and pride have piled high on both sides, with the American election and Cuba's many economic, international and domestic woes adding to the load.

It is difficult now to see the resolution of the crisis that could be created by Cuba's downing of an American plane. Great pressure would then be put on Washington to take decisive counter-action. The hope must be that Castro will be made to recognize, by his friends in Moscow if not by his adversaries elsewhere, the peril he would thereby court.