

CUBA:

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Whose Missiles? 5/4/64

Fidel Castro is worried, and last week, in a speech commemorating the third anniversary of the Bay of Pigs invasion, he showed it. "Imperialist reaction is raising its head over the entire hemisphere," he lamented.

Castro had reason to be downcast. Cuba's economy is not picking up, and the coup in Brazil has dampened Cuba's hopes of exporting revolution to the rest of Latin America. But what obviously bothered Fidel most was the fact that the 3,000-odd Russian troops who are in Cuba to operate—and guard—the SA-2 ground-to-air missiles left there by Khrushchev have refused to shoot down the U-2 reconnaissance planes that the U.S. sends over the island. Those missiles, Castro affirmed, are "ours." The implication was clear. If the Russians pull out by May 1 as expected, the missiles stay—and Castro wants control of them.

Then what? Castro threatens to use the missiles. Washington maintains that if a U-2 is shot down, the launching pads will be bombed. But behind the strong words, no one is anxious for a military showdown, and last week the Cubans asked the U.N. to intervene. Moreover, the betting is that Russia will either render the missiles unoperational or leave behind troops to guard them. And, as one Washington official says, should a complete détente between Russia and the U.S. occur, that "would be the kiss of death for Fidel."