

Tiger file: Moscow conference on 1962 Cuba Missile Crisis, add 1 1/29/89

Today's attached Wx Post story shows once again that war is too important to trust to the military. As is history to the professional historians, no one of whom, to my knowledge, has reported what I saw contemporaneously. Or to political and government leaders who took the world to the brink of incineration. Or to the press that then reported only what government wanted reported and even now angles to support falwed policy and the amount of revision of it that ^{our} participants practised.

What is reported in today's story confirms my recollection of my contemporaneous observation, that there was no indication that there were any warheads in Cuba.

It also confirms my analysis that Khrushchev did not have them there to use them because, although it is now disclosed for the first time that there were warheads, none of the operational missiles was armed. They could not have been armed before they could have been taken out (at least 90% of them) by a U.S. attack.

Today McGeorge Bundy (National Security Adviser) is quoted as McNamara (Defense) was quoted earlier, as saying that we did not intend to attack or invade. From the record this is not true. By the record I mean the published accounts of the participants, then known as the executive ^{committee} ~~council~~, as I recall, and from acts.

From the first moment all but two of JFK's advisers urged military action. The two are CIA Director John McCone and Ambassador to the UN, Adlai Stevenson. The CIA soon changed McCone's advice and Stevenson was entirely alone until the very end. There was no agreement on the form of the military action but there was on the need for it.

The U.S. mobilized by land and air, reported in the papers and electronic media, and by sea, where my recollection is not clear ^{on when} except that the naval blockade was announced immediately. All these acts, obviously, were known immediately to the USSR.

Air mobilization included more bombers only minutes away from Cuba.

Kennedy had campaigned on the allegation that the USSR had more missiles than the U.S. He learned when President that this had not been true. This story says the USSR had only about 20% of the missiles we had. My recollection is that it was about 16%.

The sole restraint on some military action was JFK himself. This includes even his brother Bobby who was that hawkish at the outset. He later formulated the offer Khrushchev accepted: in return for removal of the missiles we would prevent any attack on Cuba. This added to Khrushchev's initial demand, that we guarantee we would not invade Cuba. (Although there was no on-the-ground inspection all the USSR's ships uncovered the missiles they carried away from Cuba for US aerial ^{and counting,} inspection which from the then published pictures was from very, very close.)

All the indications to the USSR and Cuba were that we planned to attack.

This story again makes no reference to the USSR-Cuba "mutual defense" agreement.

There is further confirmation of the accuracy of my contemporaneous analysis in today's N.Y. Times by Bill Keller. On the first page it has a photo of a Russian ship carrying missiles away from Cuba, taken from close up.

The Times gives the total number of warheads in Cuba as 20, with that many more en route and blockaded.

These missiles represented three-quarters of the number the USSR then had! (20 ICBMs)

"Even in the event of an American invasion or air strike Soviet officers in Cuba had no orders to use the missiles," said Mr. Khrushchev (Sergie M. the son), who at the time was an engineer specializing in Soviet rocketry," the Times reports. (The Post quotes him as saying his father had forbidden the arming, even though it would have taken four or five hours to get them ready, I presume including arming them.)

The Times also confirms my analysis that Khrushchev did not trust his own diplomacy on this and handled it with his spook in the Washington Embassy, who conveyed the proposal to JFK via John Scali, then of ABC News. *The Times says:*

My Dobrynin reportedly told the conference today that as Soviet Ambassador to Washington, he had also been kept in the dark about the status of the missiles. According to one participant in the meetings, Mr. Gromyko (then USSR foreign minister) then interrupted Mr. Dobrynin to say, 'Didn't I tell you about that when you saw me off at the airport on my way back to Moscow?'

"No," Mr. Dobrynin reportedly replied, "you didn't."

"Oh," the taciturn Mr. Gromyko said, "It must have been a big secret."

This Times story also has no mention of the "mutual assistance" pact or of Castro's invoking of it for of his sending the delegation to Moscow to ask for aid under it.

While in Washington Gromyko had met with JFK and had assured him that the USSR was giving Cuba only defensive aid, no offensive weapons. When the presence of the missiles was reported American officials and media were outraged over what was described as the USSR's lie about only defensive purposes. These missiles were called "offensive." Yet we referred to our missiles in Turkey and other places near the USSR as "defensive." Our country was inflamed by this alleged lie. There was no discussion I recall of our missiles of that class ^{all} being only defensive and the USSR's ^{are} being only offensive.