

Jerry and,

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I am finding the book Cuba on the Brink more interesting and informative than any earlier account of the conferences on the 1962 Cuba missile crisis. As you noted, this one confirms my use of Cuba rather than Cuban missile crisis to refer to it. However, I find that what was one of the triggering events has not been mentioned by the time I'm a quarter through the text and I do not recall it from the reports on the earlier conferences + read. That does not mean it was not there, poor as my memory has gotten.

I also find the US delegation by for the least forthcoming, to the point of ridiculousness. As in while admitted that the text of the Mongoose records read did call for an invasion of Cuba, the Cubans were wrong to interpret it that way because the US intended no such thing!


I was quite wrong in not believing that the USSR had any warheads in Cuba. I'm referring to the time I had formulated my analysis, the time I recall articulating it to someone else. Who and where is not important but I have a very clear recollection of that. The date was the Wednesday before the solution. As of then I believed that the USSR had not sent any warheads to Cuba and had no intention to. Very ~~was~~ wrong! This conference in Havana of 1/92 refers to the fact the CIA was as wrong on that as I was.

What triggered what grew in the 1962 crisis is Castro's nationalization of the US refineries, perhaps only one, near the end of the Ike administration. He had little choice. The US refinery was charging the most exorbitant prices. Castro was able to buy crude at what for Cuba was enormously less. He did and when the crude reached Cuba the refinery refused to refine it. It wanted those exorbitant profits, which all US interests in Cuba had come to believe was theirs as a matter of right.

I remember that another of the earlier nationalizations was ~~of~~ a nickel plant. I do not recall whether that and <sup>any</sup> other was before or after the very unusual thing that I do not recall seeing mentioned in any of the conference reports. The GOP administration broke relations with Cuba over the nationalization of that refinery only <sup>three</sup> ~~two~~ weeks before the new administration took over. That was unusual and it represented the determination of the GOP to control the policies of the incoming administration because it was not within possibility that JFK would renew relations.

So we have US corporate greed controlling US policy and then we have the Eisenhower administration controlling policy for the JFK administration before it took office.

These things also controlled what Castro could or would do. The US thought that as always happened in the past, he would bow and submit. If he had his revolution would have ended then. I believe that until then he was not a communist and that because the only survival choice he had was from the USSR he did become what he had not been, a Communist. While there is no way of knowing I believe that absent the break in relations Cuba would not have turned as it did ~~time~~ to the USSR and become what it became.

JFK had earlier ordered the removal of our missiles in Turkey and had been ignored! 

The comments of those from the United States led Castro to say that if Cuba were to be tried, he was willing. While these U.S. comments were not all alike in all respects, they were, in varying degree, alike in holding Cuba responsible for the crisis. Castro was quite familiar with accusations against Cuba from the U.S. in addition to those articulated at that conference. And he did "defend" Cuba from those accusations, at some length and in detail. He made, in addition, a case that Cuba was merely reacting to what the U.S. did and threatened to do. In the course of his defense against human-rights and similar charges he gave his own definition of them in terms of state behavior and he made a forceful and accurate attack on the U.S., without styling it as an attack, for its record of defending states in the area that were its most grievous offenders, ~~xxx~~ meaning of those Latin American states with the very worst records. This begins on 173, and I note for those who want to read the book, it was published by Pantheon.

Those who compiled it ~~lard~~<sup>add</sup> it with cracks against Castro and defenses of the U.S. but despite that, and with the exception of Ray Cline, who I do not boast of it in saying that he is a local boy - I could say who made no good - what they said and how they said it may be no more than what is required in this country for professional survival by historians, especially those who teach. I say no more about this because I do believe it should be read with care.

After that speech there was a break and when the book continues it is with Castro's account of what led up to the crisis, the crisis itself, and what followed. That is lengthy and the length is worth the time. He actually declassified documents as he spoke and offered copies to all present. He makes repeated references to international law and to U.S. violations of it, gives his own picture of Khrushchev, his account of Cuba's position, and he even disclosed some of what U Thant, then UN secretary general told him when they conferred. Of those things I say only that he said if the U.S. did more it would ruin the UN, be its end, and that he would resign.

I think Castro's performance was remarkable and I can now see why Cubans lingered for his interminable speeches. I've read as I wrote this through his address and an up to the questions he was asked and how he responded.

I note that he confirmed what I remembered, that his revolution did not begin as a communist one and that what the U.S. did is what drove him to that. I think and thought then gave him no alternative. He also goes into U.S. opposition to any kind of reform, anywhere in the area, with specific illustrations. And into its support of all the anti-democratic regimes while proclaiming that it helps democratic regimes.



I have finished the transcripts published in this book with more of a feeling of dismay than of satisfaction. I am, of course, satisfied about my own contemporaneous analysis - while it was going on. My dismay is not limited to how close we were to an unprecedented ~~disaster~~ <sup>disaster</sup> and that it was from ~~ignorance~~ <sup>ignorance</sup> ~~stupidity~~ <sup>hatred</sup>, illegalities by us, an unbending national attitude <sup>that</sup> that was wrong in all respects and that in terms of national policy ~~we~~ we have still not learned from it.

What is also dismaying is that those political forces that brought that about have increased rather than diminished since then. It is, for example, not possible for anyone to run for national office espousing any other policies than those that are so abundantly proven to be so wrong.

*and little recognition of -*

There is no talk in this country about the lack of political freedom that represents.

Those who were then and since then so wrong have created a situation in which it is not possible even to discuss politically what brought the world so close to such an unprecedented disaster, leave alone have any political changes. Thus there can be the same thing in different form, not that close to our borders, at any time. And there then will be no voice of reason that can be heard where it counts.

The vindictiveness with which we persevere in this is easily illustrated, as Castro proceeded to do, when he said he faced the charges against Cuba. Our police then and since in Cuba had nothing to do with ~~any~~ <sup>real</sup> danger Cuba presented to this country or to any lack of freedom inside Cuba. Castro ~~ticked~~ <sup>ticked</sup> off the military dictatorships we then supported and had relations with and they were many. In the closing moment he referred to our having relations with China and not with Cuba. He referred also to the murders by those dictatorships that did not influence <sup>our</sup> policies. And to these comments there were no responses of rebuttals.

McNamara was impelled to refer to the "horror" he felt in considering how close we were and what it would have meant if he ~~we~~ had invaded Cuba. (page 255) He then developed this with some eloquence. He was also eloquent the next day in his thanks to Castro for taking the time and for what he said and how illuminating that was. And in this land of the free, where there are no official restraints on what can be said or published I recall no reference in the media to what then transpired at that conference of those who were so intimately involved in what could have been so utterly disastrous.

We have the form of freedom in this but not the reality when the people can know nothing at all about such developments and disclosures and then use their knowledge to influence national policy, the basis of our political belief.

McNamara was far from alone in what he came to believe and said. The only one I recall who had no change and said nothing about any of this was the CIA's Cline.

Aside from vindictiveness all that our continuing anti-Castro policy means is that ~~our~~ our national policy is to prevent any meaningful change in Latin America, at least.

And there is and there can be no national discussion of this. The people by and large have no inkling of any aspect of it. Cannot have and will not have. In this we differ from a dictatorship only in form, we have the form of freedom ~~without~~ without the substance of it on national policy. And the antideluvian political forces that brought us, not Cuba alone to the brink, are more entrenched, not less. They make it a practical impossibility for there to be any change.

To at least a degree JFK did understand what happened and did start taking steps, meaningful steps. to change our policies and then that was ended with his assassination.

In thinking back over this after all those years I remember that my analysis had been formed before the time I recalled so clearly when I said earlier that was the first time I articulated it. That was the second time. The first was that same day but earlier.

I then had customers in the Washington Post Newsroom. When I had made those deliveries I looked up its national editor. His name was Thornburg or Thornbury, something like that. I laid my analysis out briefly to him. His reply startled me. He told me that they had considered it and abandoned it! And not since articulated it! This is to say that regardless of who is there the Post rather than opening any discussion on what had us to that horrifying brink, McNamara's words, suppressed it. It is also to say that the major media are part of national policy no matter how wrong the major media perceives that national policy to be. In our system that is a formula for disaster in a world so oversupplied with nuclear explosives - which we continue to make while claiming we want them eliminated. And ~~no~~ <sup>any</sup> any others the right to make them, like what we believe North Korea is doing now. Or, we create our own dangers and attribute all dangers to us to those our national policy does not like.

In thinking back over this again I am again sickened by the ~~fact~~ the thought that I could see these things, those involved in that 1962 crisis, and understand them clearly and accurately and almost nobody in government could or did. There were two known exceptions. Originally McCone at the CIA did but in almost no time at all others there talked him out of it. Adlai Stevenson at the UN also understood the realities and when he spoke he was ~~so~~ vigorously condemned. That did not change after what we finally did proved him to be so correct. He was condemned by the crime of being right by those who were so very wrong, and they were those of influence, then and since then.

I read all the memoirs of those involved then and kept them, some marked up <sup>heavily</sup> to have any meaning in those days before markers that do not show on copying. No others in any position of authority or responsibility had any glimmer of the realities or in any way articulated any. The one real restraint was JFK's. If he had listened to his advisers we would have invaded Cuba or bombed it into nothingness. And then the end of the world would have loomed, as belatedly McNamara sees.

What is really horrifying is that we have a situation in which there is no escape from a formula for disaster and one that permits no needed changes anywhere in the world.



Because that these are authentic scholars cannot be denied I raise questions of honesty, of whether they are still converting these remarkable conferences into defense of the US policies that caused all of this. For example, in the lengthy essay after the last of the transcripts they give a less than honest account of the break in relations by the Eisenhower administration, without giving the precise date for it (my recollection is that it was three weeks before the JFK administration took office) and not only without any account at all of what preceded it, by giving a less than honest one, on pages 535-6.

They get into this by saying that Castro had been well thought of in the U.S. This means by the people but suggests the government also. They say that once in power the Castro regime "quickly alienated the United States." Then that it struck an "economic blow of nationalization...." and the real "foreign policy blow was a declaration of 19 December 1960 openly aligning Cuba with the Soviet bloc." Ike then "imposed limited economic sanctions and cut off diplomatic relations."

They say nothing at all about U.S. policy for the two years leading up to nationalization. It was a program of isolating and weakening the Castro regime. Ike had sent Nixon there and not surprisingly Nixon had reported that it was a communist government, which it wasn't any more than the Arbenz government in Guatemala was when it was overthrown. The clear U.S. policy was to overthrow the Castro government short of a military invasion. As I noted earlier, the straw that broke Castro's back was a very, vdry heavy straw, the usurious rates charged by the U.S. refineries in Cuba for fuel. Castro got <sup>the crude</sup> it abroad for very much less than he was being charged. It was when the U.S.-owned refineries refused to refine that crude that Castro had little choice. He simply could not survive if he were to be charged such greatly excessive rates for all his needs.

Another example is the section, "Khrushchev's Predicament: The Nuclear Problem," beginning on page 348. They get into this on the pages before it by raising questions about how "the deployment of" nuclear weapons "was to defend the Cuban Revolution."

They could do this only by not addressing how Cuba could be defended when it was clear to Cuba and Khrushchev that it needed to be defended. There is no way in the world that Cuba could be defended against the United States. A U.S. invasion would be an enormous disaster even in the remote event its failed, <sup>and</sup> a serious effort would have failed. The only possible way of defending Cuba, of preventing the U.S. attack that Cuba knew was explicit in the Mongoose plans, was to try to talk JFK out of it. And there was only one way Khrushchev could do that. This is what led to the title of the book I'd planned, Tiger to Ride, by giving JFK his own tiger to ride, by giving him the power to make the decision, with the knowledge of what it would, at least could mean if he started an invasion.

Without any of this they get into a discussion of the tactical nuclear weapons in Cuba and suggest that the use of them would start a real nuclear war. In their discussion

they say nothing at all about what the invasion of Cuba would mean, that Khrushchev had given ample indication of his determination to defend Cuba not only by sending missiles there but by having 45,000 Soviets to be among the casualties. So there are at least two considerations that should have occurred to a real scholar or scholars about this. One is that either few as they were those nuclear ~~warheads~~ warheads on those tactical ~~miss~~ luna launchers would have caused enormous casualties or they were there for discouraging the U.S. which the transcripts reflect we knew were there. The other is that their presence told JFK that if he invaded Cuba he would be triggering the nuclear war he did not want.

Then there is the fact that we had innumerable more of those artillery nuclear weapons all along the Soviet border. Were they any less likely to start a nuclear war if they were used? Why the double standard? Right for us, wrong for the USSR?

In their constant references to the intermediate range nuclear weapons the same is true. They are offensive with the USSR's in Cuba <sup>but</sup> by defensive with ours in Italy and

Turkey? When it is admitted, as they do admit, that Khrushchev had no intention of using them other than after a US invasion, how can they be regarded as other than <sup>the</sup> the USSR described them, as "defensive" in their purpose? A toothpick can become an offensive weapon, if stuck into an eye.

It is true that even after we knew the <sup>55</sup>missiles were there Gromyko was at the White House and assured JFK that the USSR was giving Cuba only what was defensive. And in the absence of any reason to believe that Khrushchev intended to start a war, there is no reason at all, other than to support US policy, for raising any question about this.

And that is not the way we, scholars included, <sup>can</sup> learn from the mistakes of the past and from such truly remarkable conferences.

Not <sup>the</sup> way to <sup>remember</sup> ~~revert~~ them in the future in the nuclear age.

At no point to this point <sup>do</sup> they ever address what the USSR's international and domestic situation would have been if its ally, Cuba, had been invaded by the US and the USSR did ~~nothing~~ at all. The USSR certainly ~~was~~ had that in mind.

And consistent with all I have said above they actually say that Khrushchev hastily wrote his capitulation of the 28th ~~as~~ soon as he had ~~was~~ word on the 27th that JFK would speak again on the 28th! This is just plain intended <sup>de</sup>deftiveness!

At the same point they say that our removing our missiles from ~~A~~ Turkey was part of JFK's public offer, which is what Khrushchev accepted. That is false. ~~It~~ It was not included in JFK's public offer, and pointedly, because Khrushchev had publicly offered to accept that as a substitute for his original offer which the early published accounts of our side Bobby hastened to urge JFK to ignore by returning to <sup>in</sup> Khrushchev's original offer.

I have to ~~susped~~ suspend at this point but I note, in the event it also is omitted in this lengthy conversion of scholarship into defense of faulted US policy, that on his own initiative JFK broadened, added to the demand Khrushchev had made in accepting the



feat Khrushchev offer, made it a greater success for the USSR and a major step toward world peace. The demand <sup>was</sup> to guarantee that the US would not invade Cuba, What JFK added is that the US would guarantee Cuba against any invasion. The difference is great and <sup>surely meant much to the USSR as,</sup> there after, they started groping toward the meaningful <sup>peace</sup> ~~peace~~ the JFK assassination ended.

Orwell in 1993 and in the US!

I've finished the text and while there is more like this I could <sup>add</sup> I mention only one. At the press conference after the meetings <sup>w/</sup> were over McNamara said that there now is no threat to Cuba. He did not say, whatever he may have meant, no military threat. There was no recognition of what may be called reverse <sup>K</sup>lausewitz: War is politics by other means. So also is politics war by other means and that is what the economic and political pressures the US continued to apply to Cuba amount to, war by other means.

It has the minimum <sup>the</sup> purpose of changing the Cuban government. That could not be done by force so it is being done this way. With enormous suffering of the Cuban people a matter of official US indifference.

The US is determined to change the economic system in Cuba, <sup>a/</sup> as it <sup>w/</sup> was to do that in Guatemala and in Nicaragua and even where such changes were imagined to be in prospect, in El Salvador. As if did in Chile, etc.

I do not remember that a single US participant acknowledge <sup>a/</sup> that since Batista was thrown out - and it had amply "human rights" matters with him it ignored - the US has been interfering in internal Cuban matters, politically and economically and in sponsoring and supporting military and terrorist attacks on Cuba.

In their comments, none of this is considered by the US participants although in this conference that clearly is not what Schlesinger and McNamara want.

At the press conference Schlesinger said what is obviously true, that <sup>a/</sup> Castro could cut back on the incarceration of people for their opinions, Castro gave what they were accused of a different twist and told Schlesinger he ought consider the context. Schlesinger said he saw Castro's point.

How strange is what the US was accusing him of within the US? From the day of the Salem witches at least? And in recent time, before, during and after World War II? We even legislated some of it! <sup>a/</sup> And did more by executive order.

Let him who has clean hands....? Not these scholars and participants.

Aside from their continuation of what led to all that potential disaster, this was I think a very productive and worthwhile meeting and I think those transcripts ~~are~~ should be read with care.

I had hardly finished reading the book when our government made it clear that it learned nothing at all from the conferences reflecting on the horror ~~but~~<sup>that</sup> its illegal activities with regard to Cuba had brought to the edge of reality. It is reflected in the attached Washington Post story from Madrid, published 6.17.94 under the headline, "U.S., Spain, Tangle Over Cuba." The subhead is "Washington Kiffed at Madrid's Role in Diplomacy, Investments."

Spain did not do the "tangling." Washington did that by its bully-like interference in Spain's affairs. Without regard for the respect we lose in Spain and all other countries by it. We were insisting that Spain be part of our economic blockade of Cuba. The blockade we did not have against any fascistic government or any military dictatorship all of which we supported until, like Saddam, they ended our support of them. There is not tyranny, virtually, we do not have relations with.

Spain, with much of the world agreeing, "think(s) that the embargo is not the best way to change the situation in Cuba." Spain's foreign minister added, "We see some contradictions between lifting the embargo on Vietnam and maintaining the embargo on Cuba."

And how about China, to say Nothing of authoritarian governments?

The US persists despite the fact that "Few Western countries pay much attention to the U.S. embargo on Cuba. And despite the changes represented by Cuba selling Mexican investors "49 percent of Cuba's telephone system." Mexico is also selling Cuba much that the US fought with Japan to be able to seal it, like cellular phones.

Among the other countries having significant trade with Cuba is Canada. Canadian firms have invested there, too. And "Canada sends more tourists to Havana than any other nation."

So, all is not state-owned in Cuba, not at all.

There is no sense to this at all. It hurts the seriously ailing U.S. economy, too.

But the sick political beliefs of this country make it a practical impossibility for any administration to dare consider any changes in this stupid and self-destructive policy because the propaganda of the past, persisted with in the present by those of the irrational extreme, almost assures defeat at the polls.

Where change is needed is here. not abroad.

And who dares say it and hope to survive politically?

The beaten bully remains a bully even when ignored insisting on trying to be the bully and regardless of the cost of its bullying to its own people and to those suffering from it in Cuba. Most of whom understand clearly why they are suffering and that it is the US that causes it.

While these other countries are bringing the changes the US says it wants about.

No US administration has learned a thing from this policy bringing the world to the brink of nuclear annihilation and the domestic political sickness assures this.