

Notes for Tiger

The one thing that was unique in Khrushchev's ploy is its daring. In the nuclear age, there had never been so risky ~~an~~ operation. In diplomatic thinking as in military acts it is in no sense an unusual move. Rather was it orthodox for a ~~big~~ super-power. Its seeming unorthodoxy comes from the magnitude of its potential and the secrecy with which the super-powers cloak their gut diplomacy.

(p. 418-9)
This is limed by one of The Pentagon Papers that escaped significant attention in the press at the time Daniel Ellsberg, the pacified hawk who participated in the secret study of ~~the Vietnam war~~ our undeclared war in Viet Nam ordered by then Defense Secretary Robert Strange McNamara, leaked some of this study and the classified papers upon which it was based.

On the night of November 15, 1964, McNamara had had a conversation with the inappropriately-named Walt Whitman Rostow. Rostow was then chairman of the State Department's Policy Planning Council. He was, actually, one of LBJ's big and trusted thinkers. The next day, Rostow wrote McNamara a personal letter that could be brutally honest as it was callous because ~~here~~ he had every reason to believe it would never be seen by anyone. It is titled "Military Dispositions and Political Signals."

Rostow's concern was not for the hurt of the innocent killed, maimed, horribly burned and tortured victims of then-exalating United States violent military aggression. Nor was it ~~for~~ he troubled by adverse world reaction to what we were doing and planned doing more of, as, steadily, we did. "I am concerned," he wrote, "that too much thought is being given to the actual damage we do in the North, not enough to the signals we wish to send."

Khrushchev, too, had "signals" he wished to send.

After this lucid exposition of United States morality, set down straightforwardly only because it was never expected to be seen by/devils loving/such scripture, Rostow policy: "The signal consists of three parts." These are that "a) damage" would "be inflicted..."; "b) we are ready and able to go much further..."; and "c) we are ready and able to meet any level of escalation they might mount in response, if they are so minded." These are precisely Khrushchev's "signals".

Without amplification, none being needed, and with the waste of no words, Rostow here next wrote only "Four points follow." Parts of all are pertinent in helping understand what Khrushchev was "signalling". The first, which says that tangible military "commitment" is required for credibility, dictates "a U.S. ground force commitment." Two of the three following subordinate points in explanation exactly parallel the purposes of Khrushchev's introduction of missiles into Cuba:

1.34
"a. The withdrawal of these ground forces could be critically important in our diplomatic bargaining position."

Translated into everyday language, ~~the~~ one of the reasons for introducing ground forces into Viet Nam was to use their withdrawal ~~as~~ "in our diplomatic bargaining."

1.35
"b. We must make clear that counter escalation by the Communists will run directly into U.S. strength on the ground..."
precisely

This is Khrushchev's "whatever you can do I can do better" of the popular song of that era; "counter escalation by the " United States " will run directly into" the USSR's "strength", at least theoretically magnified by the missiles then in Cuba.

Rostow's "point" numbered 2 is that "The first critical military action... should be designed merely to install (sic) the principle" that they would "be vulnerable to retaliatory attack..." He explained the need for restricting the first move: "This means that the initial use of force... should be as limited and unsanguinary as possible. It is the installation of ^{the} that principle that we are ~~not~~ initially interested in, ^{not} for tat/"

Translation: they they don't escalate, we don't. The "principle" is the threat.

Substitute "the United States" for "the north" in Rostow's third point and we have the real Khrushchev "signal":

"3. But our force dispositions to accompany an initial retaliatory move against the north should send three further signals lucidly:

- a. that we are putting into place a capacity subsequently to step up...
- b. that we are prepared to face down any form of escalation...; and
- c. that we are putting forces into place to exact retaliation directly..."

Although the fourth and final point is an exposition of the position in which the President would find himself, its language is applicable to the position of Khrushchev as well as his purposes, ^(1.36) "...This will also be perhaps the most persuasive form of communication... In addition, I think the most direct communication we can mount..."

is desirable, as opposed to the use of cut-outs. They should feel they ~~have~~ now confront an LBJ who has made up his mind. Contrary to an anxiety expressed at an earlier stage, I believe it is quite possible to communicate the limits as well as the seriousness of our intentions..."

~~if~~ It is fascinating that this "scholar" and top-level "diplomat" found it expedient to use the lingo of the spooks, "cut-out", to describe diplomatic intermediaries, a cut-out ~~in~~ to the spooks being a buffer.

Rostow said exactly what Khrushchev was "signalling", ~~that~~ with appropriate substitutions that "They [the United States] should feel that now confront an LBJ [a Khrushchev] who has made up his mind" and who believes "it is quite possible to communicate the limits as well as the seriousness of our [his] intentions" without setting the world ablaze.

As Rostow put it, the decision was up to the other side. ^{his} This is exactly what ^h Khrushchev was telling JFK when he gave him his own tiger to ride.