

Kennedy Secretly a 'Dove' In Cuba Crisis, Letter Shows

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The Cuban missile crisis of October 1962 brought the world to the brink of nuclear war, introduced into the political vocabulary the words "hawk" and "dove" and inflicted an emotional wound on one of the most interesting political figures of the 20th century, Adlai E. Stevenson.

Within six weeks after the crisis ended, Stevenson had been branded a "superdove," a man who "wanted a Munich. He wanted to trade U.S. bases for Cuban bases." In the mythology

that quickly took hold, Stevenson had been an appeaser, while President John F. Kennedy and his tougher colleagues had faced down Nikita Khrushchev and forced withdrawal of all medium- and intermediate-range missiles installed in Cuba by the Soviets. That reputation stayed with Stevenson until he died in 1965, cursing the unfairness of it all.

It now appears that Stevenson was not the only "dove" at the White House during the crisis. Kennedy had secretly agreed to a major concession to the Soviet Union that Stevenson had urged

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ADLAI E. STEVENSON
... reputation lingered until death

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as a way to end the crisis short of nuclear war. The evidence is contained in a letter written in March by Dean Rusk, Kennedy's secretary of state. It concerns a proposal that the United States should withdraw Jupiter missiles from Turkey simultaneously with the withdrawal of Soviet missiles from Cuba.

Rusk described the letter, first published yesterday in The New York Times, as a "postscript" to the missile crisis "which only I can furnish." Kennedy, he said, had decided to agree to the missile swap if the Soviets insisted. This was among Stevenson's recommendations throughout the crisis. For advancing his views he was called a latter-day Neville Chamberlain, whereas Kennedy was hailed for his "toughness."

The instrument for branding Stevenson as an appeaser was a magazine article published in the Saturday Evening Post on Dec. 8, 1962, about six weeks after the missile crisis had been resolved. Its authors were Stewart Alsop, now dead, and Charles Bartlett, a columnist who was one of Kennedy's closest friends. (Bartlett was in the Caribbean yesterday and could not

be reached.)

Their article was a chronological account of what had gone on in the National Security Council during the missile crisis, how policies had evolved and who had emerged as "hawks" and "doves."

"The article," Newsweek reported at the time, "pictured [U.N. Ambassador] Stevenson as a sort of Neville Chamberlain who had come down from New York, belatedly, to argue with the decision [to impose a naval blockade against Cuba] already reached." At one point, the story said, "There is disagreement in retrospect about what Stevenson really wanted. 'Adlai wanted a Munich,' says a nonadmiring official who learned of his proposal. 'He wanted to trade the Turkish, Italian and British missile bases for the Cuban bases.'"

The Alsop-Bartlett piece had enormous resonance in Washington because it had been authorized by Kennedy and had been read and approved in advance by a White House official. There were widespread rumors that the "Munich" quote had come from Kennedy. The fact that Kennedy and Stevenson had been political opponents in the past and that Stevenson was never popular with the Kennedy "inner circle" added spice to this political stew, and created the impression that, as Newsweek said, "there was