

Account of '62 Missile Crisis Supports U.S. Analysis

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The account of the Cuban missile crisis attributed to former Premier Nikita S. Khrushchev, though far from complete and interpreted as a victory for Soviet diplomacy, does not vary significantly from American perceptions of the event.

The most interesting portions of this version, if it is

News Analysis Mr. Khrushchev's bear on Soviet motives for placing missiles in the

Caribbean. The former Soviet leader takes personal responsibility for the idea and contends, as he did in 1962, that his only purpose was to deter an American invasion of Cuba.

President Kennedy and his aides always suspected that Mr. Khrushchev, though not averse to risky and remote diplomatic ventures, had been urged or even forced into the military strategists. They speculated that apart from benefits in prestige and diplomacy, the Soviet leaders were seeking to move intermediate-range missiles within striking distance of the United States to save on the time and money needed to build a larger force of intercontinental weapons.

Equal Only in 1969

The build-up of Soviet long-range missiles and nuclear submarines, which is now extensive, was decided upon after the Soviet withdrawal from Cuba and did not begin to match the United States' strategic force until last year.

The reminiscences published in this week's issue of Life magazine, like the Khrushchev speeches at the time of the crisis, cite the defense of Cuba as the only motive, making possible a claim of victory when President Kennedy pledged that the United States would not invade Cuba, and the Soviet Union, in return, removed the missiles.

Mr. Khrushchev's argument that Cuba had to be defended at any cost to preserve Soviet prestige and influence in Latin America and elsewhere is the perfect mirror image of reasoning in the Kennedy Administration.

Though some students of the situation have since wondered whether the threat of a few more missiles at Cuban bases was worth the risk of a nuclear war, the former President felt at once that acquiescence in the missile build-up would give dangerous impetus to Soviet influence in the Western Hemisphere and cast doubt upon American willingness to resist Soviet advances everywhere else.

Life magazine materials in which the former Soviet leader is quoted as having said that he lost "full control" over policy to more militant anti-American factions after the U-2 affair of 1960—some 30 months before the Cuban crisis.

Three Ships Intercepted

The Khrushchev version is deceptive when it asserts Soviet ships headed "straight through" the American naval blockade and that no ships were stopped or checked. According to Robert F. Kennedy's memoir, as well as to other American accounts, 20 Soviet vessels stopped dead in the water or reversed course away from Cuba less than an hour before the interception of three of them, including a submarine.

Thereafter, only oil tankers and other ships with noncontroversial cargo sailed on. All of them were checked, kept under surveillance, and one of them, deliberately chosen from among tankers of foreign registry in

Soviet use, was boarded by Americans to demonstrate the seriousness of the blockade.

The least persuasive portions of the account are some of the quotations attributed to Robert Kennedy. From what the President's brother has written, however, it is entirely possible that his views and words were understood—or misunderstood—in the indicated manner.

Robert Kennedy, then the Attorney General, did have two urgent meetings during the crisis with Ambassador Anatoly F. Dobrynin of the Soviet Union. Mr. Kennedy undoubtedly indicated that American military planners and other officials were straining to take more forceful action before the Soviet missiles were operational—indeed, the President was preparing for such action if the Russians had not yielded soon.

Robert Kennedy no doubt also warned that events could become irreversible and probably cited the "peculiarities" of the American system to explain

the need for forceful American response and firm proof of Soviet withdrawal. It is doubtful that he expressed fear of the President's "overthrow" by "the military," but his own book records John Kennedy's feeling that if he had not moved to expel Soviet nuclear weapons from this hemisphere, "I would have been impeached."

Much Is Left Out

In relating some of the specific events of the crisis itself, the Khrushchev document adds nothing important to American accounts, leaves out a great deal and appears to be misleading on several points.

It acknowledges a desire to take the United States by surprise, but does not refer to the elaborate deceptions that Mr. Kennedy regarded as perhaps the most ominous threat to a stable relationship with the Soviet Union.

Nor does the account explain why Mr. Khrushchev's offers of settlement came in two markedly different letters, one highly personal and emotional and a second much more formal and including a demand for the removal of American missiles from Turkey.

It does not report anything about the Soviet decision-making process at the time and, in saying that Mr. Khrushchev was free to do as he pleased, contradicts another portion of the