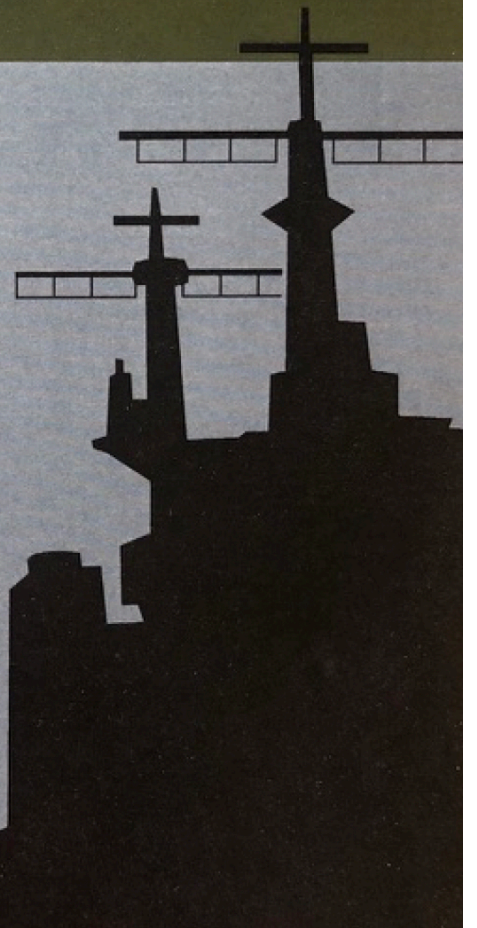


Daniele Ganser

RECKLESS GAMBLE



The sabotage of the
United Nations in the
Cuban Conflict
and the Missile Crisis
of 1962.

UNIVERSITY PRESS



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An illuminating study that greatly contributes not only to the understanding of the Cuban conflict and the missile crisis but also of the United Nations and its most powerful members. **Noam Chomsky**

A very interesting look at high level United Nations diplomacy, CIA covert actions, and the details of US hostility towards the Cuban revolution from Day One. **William Blum, Author of: Killing Hope. US Military and CIA Interventions since World War Two.**



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The author lives in Switzerland.

PHILOSOPHISCH-HISTORISCHE FAKULTÄT DER UNIVERSITÄT BASEL HISTORISCHES
SEMINAR

THE ROLE OF THE UNITED NATIONS IN THE CUBAN MISSILE CRISIS 1962

LIZENTIATSARBEIT VORGELEGT VON

DANIELE GANSER

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UNTER DEM TITEL:

RECKLESS GAMBLE: THE SABOTAGE OF THE UNITED NATIONS
IN THE CUBAN CONFLICT AND THE MISSILE CRISIS OF 1962

REFERENT: PROF. DR. GEORG KREIS KORREFERENT: PROF. DR. RAINER HOFFMANN

Keine aus der objektiven anschauenden
Auffassung der Dinge entsprungene und
folgerecht durchgeführte Ansicht der Welt
kann durchaus falsch sein; sondern sie ist
im schlimmsten Fall nur einseitig.

Schopenhauer, *Parerga* § 13

In any event, it is not demanded of the
reader that he accept my biases, but that he
reflect upon his own.

William Blum, *Killing Hope* (Intro.)

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I want to thank Professor Georg Kreis for the professional assistance and support he gave me while I was writing this paper. My warm thanks also go to Professor Rainer Hoffmann for his support and for our inspiring conversations on many wonderful walking-tours in the Black Forest region. Dr. Mark Kyburz kindly read through my paper and I am grateful for the corrections and suggestions he offered me. Special thanks go to my girlfriend Michèle.

Erklärung

Ich habe die Hilfe empfangen, die ich oben erwähnt und verdankt habe. Zudem war die in der Bibliographie angegebene Literatur überhaupt erst die Basis, welche diese Arbeit möglich machte. Ansonsten wurde mir bei der Zusammenstellung des Materials und der Abfassung der Arbeit von niemandem geholfen. Die vorliegende Lizentiatsarbeit ist noch keiner anderen Fakultät zur Begutachtung eingereicht worden. Ich bezeuge mit meiner Unterschrift, dass alle in dieser Erklärung gemachten Angaben in jeder Hinsicht der Wahrheit entsprechen und vollständig sind.

Daniele Ganser

Basel, July 1997

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1. Introduction

In October 1962, mankind stood on the brink of nuclear disaster. The actions of the United States, the Soviet Union and Cuba had led to a missile crisis that threatened to turn the Cold War hot. At the height of the crisis, US bombers were in the air, carrying nuclear bombs and flight plans that could take them to targets in the Soviet Union. US military forces had assembled in the South of the United States in an increased alert position. Soviet ships and Soviet submarines were moving into the Caribbean. In Cuba, Soviet soldiers were working on the missile sites. Castro expected an invasion to be imminent and positioned his military forces. Disaster was close - but it didn't come. Through a combination of luck and management a disaster was averted.

1.1 Thesis and structure

The motivation for this study lay in the observation and the bringing together of two crucial historical moments. On the one hand the observation that the United Nations was established in 1945 to maintain international peace and security. On the other hand the observation that the Cuban missile crisis of 1962 brought mankind to the brink of nuclear war. The bringing together of these two observations then resulted directly in the question of how efficient the most ambitious organisation to prevent wars was when mankind stood closest to World War three. This is the question of the role of the United Nations in the Cuban missile crisis in 1962.

When working on this question it became clear that a chronological approach is most beneficial as one must not only be able to follow the year or month structure, but more often be able to see into the day structure or even, in some cases, into the sequence of hours. But if this study must therefore to some extent remain a chronological narrative of the events it is crucial to see that this narrative is not an end in itself but always and only serves the purpose of evaluation. The ultimate aim of this study is therefore not to present a chronology of the actions of the United Nations in the missile crisis. The ultimate aim is to judge the efficiency of the United Nations in this crucial moment in the history of mankind. The fact that the evaluation presupposes a description shall confuse no one to assume that the latter instead of the former is the real focus.

As so often in historiography the selection of the time scale is crucial. Where is it most justified to cut the continuum? Many scholars have taken a "two weeks approach" to the Cuban missile crisis. Such approaches start with October 14, 1962, the day when an American U-2 photographed the missile sites for the first time, and end with October 28, the day when

Nikita Khrushchev confirmed the withdrawal of the missiles.¹ These two weeks present without any doubt the period in which peace was most endangered; therefore the "two week's approach" is justified to a certain extent.² However, a better and more complete understanding of both the crisis and the role of the United Nations can to my mind only be reached if especially the prelude that directly led to the crisis (i.e. the inability of the UN to react to Cuba's charges, nationalisation of US property, Bay of Pigs invasion, OAS expulsion, Operation MONGOOSE) as well as the aftermath (i.e. the question of inspection, removal of bombers) are included in the period considered. This study therefore analyses selected events from the period starting January 1959, when Fidel Castro came to power in Cuba, and ending January 7, 1963, when Adlai Stevenson and Vasily Kuznetsov informed the United Nations that the Security Council need not consider the Cuban problem any longer. To structure these four years I have organised my material in three chapters.

The first chapter covers a period of almost four years and looks at a selection of events which directly led to the crisis. The emphasis is on how the UN dealt with the Cuban case. The chapter starts with Castro's coming to power on January 1 1959, then shows how Cuba complained to the United Nations several times, includes the Bay of Pigs invasion and an enlightening excursus on Guatemala. The discussion of the OAS expulsion, operation MONGOOSE and Khrushchev's decision to deploy missiles helps to understand the actions at the United Nations in their broader context.

The second chapter focuses on the two crucial weeks of the missile crisis. It starts on Monday, October 14 1962, the day when the United States of America discovered the missiles, and ends on Sunday, October 28 1962, the day when Khrushchev explained to the world that he would withdraw his missiles. It is clear to everybody who realises the vast amount of literature that has been published on these two weeks that I can and will only deal with selected events. My emphasis is on whether and, if yes, how the United Nations contributed to the peaceful outcome of the crisis.

With Khrushchev's decision on October 28 to withdraw the missiles the crisis cooled down, but it did not end. The events had shifted from a "missile crisis" to a "bomber crisis"

¹ Elie Abel's *The Missile Crisis* (1966) and Robert Kennedy's *Thirteen Days* (1969) are two classic examples of the "two weeks approach". More recent examples are Bernd Greiner: *Kuba-Krise: 13 Tage im Oktober* (1988) and Dino Brugioni: *Eyeball to Eyeball* (1990).

² It is interesting to notice that a "two weeks approach" to the crisis results in a more favourable presentation of the United States than the whole story allows for. This is mainly because the "two weeks approach" excludes firstly the Bay of Pigs invasion of April 1961, excludes secondly OPERATION MONGOOSE and all other sabotage activity, and excludes thirdly the CIA assassination attempts against Castro.

and the problem of inspection remained to be solved. The events until January 7 1963 and the role the United Nations played in them are considered in the third chapter. After these three chapters a conclusion in which the main findings are summarised ends the study.

1.2 Literature

The secondary literature for this study derives from two fields: The missile crisis on the one hand and the United Nations on the other hand. The answer to my question - "What role did the UN play in the Cuban missile crisis?" - was to be found somewhere in the overlapping areas of these two broad fields. Let me first discuss the relevant research on the United Nations field.

It soon became clear that histories of the United Nations have not yet taken a very strong interest in the role of the UN in the Cuban missile crisis. If my literary research has been extensive enough then I may conclude that there is no description or evaluation of the UN's role in the Cuban missile crisis which could be described as thorough. There are no full-length descriptions of the role of the UN in the Cuban Crisis. Only shorter accounts of the role of the UN in the Cuban crisis, ranging from 2 pages to maximum 30 pages, have been available up to now. In these works the missile crisis is usually one among other conflicts (such as Korea or Angola) in which the UN was involved.³

³ The following works which look at different conflicts in which the UN was involved, discuss the Cuban missile crisis in a separate (sub-)chapter. Many of them are excellent, though all of them are relatively short and thus to my mind not extensive enough. They are *necessarily* short, I might add, because they look at so many different conflicts. None of them focuses entirely on the UN in the Cuban Crisis. Evan Luard: *A History of the United Nations*, (pp. 377-406) deserves special comment here. His chapter on the UN in Cuba is clearly the most detailed and extensive account I could find. I think he deserves special praise, too, for including the events that led to the missile crisis. However, he deals with 18 other conflicts in the same book and this, as he states himself, "inevitably involves drastic compression - only if an entire volume were devoted to each crisis could an adequate understanding be provided" (Preface vii). Then there is of course U Thant's posthumously published biography: *View from the UN*, which includes an excellent chapter on the Missile Crisis. Richard Hiscocks is short and concise: *The Security Council*, pp. 231-234. Andrew Boyd's *Fifteen Men on a Powder Keg* (pp. 170-178) is equally valuable. Wonderfully critical is Geoff Simons' *The United Nations*, (pp. 129-131). Other examples are: Ruth Russell: *The United Nations and United States Security Policy*, (pp. 75-81); Rüdiger Wolfrum (ed.): *United Nations*, pp. (210-211); Amos Yoder: *The Evolution of the United Nations System*, (pp. 69-71); Werner Schlüter: *Die Politische Funktion des Sicherheitsrates*, (pp. 213-216); Robert Riggs: *US/UN*, (pp. 101-105); Arthur Rovine: *The first fifty years*, (pp. 368-375); Charles

Besides the account of the events in these short works especially their different evaluations of the performance of the UN in the missile crisis are of particular interest. Judgements range from "The UN played an essential role in the Cuban missile crisis" to "The UN played no role at all in the Cuban missile crisis". To show this variety of possible positions I shall hereafter briefly look at some evaluations. I have grouped the evaluations into three blocks: a) no role at all; b) those that argue for a modest role and c) those that claim a very important role. It goes without saying that logically the extreme positions are incompatible and that therefore some evaluations must be more persuasive and others must be less so.

Let me start with authors who claim that the UN had no role at all in the Cuban missile crisis. Ernest van Den Haag is one of the most outspoken of this group. In his view "The UN had nothing to do with averting war over the Cuban missile crisis." By implicitly alluding to the Scali-Fomin meeting he states that "there is no need, and no advantage, for talks to take place within, or under the auspices of , the UN. Any coffee shop will do."⁴ On the border of "no role" and "modest role" is Mathias Münchau who concludes that "the UN was not able to take an active role in maintaining peace and security during the Cuban missile crisis", a paralysis which he attributes to the US-Soviet power parity.⁵

A second group of evaluations gives the UN credit for its activity during the crisis but maintains that its role was modest. Rovine clearly sees that the key discussions and communications in the Cuban crisis were bilateral between Kennedy and Khrushchev and "were not channelled through New York." He acknowledges Thant's face saving device but maintains that "obviously his role was of secondary importance."⁶ Quite a few analysts that judge the overall UN performance as modest make the useful and sensible distinction between evaluation of Security Council and Secretary-General, giving the Security Council low and the

Patterson: *United Nations*, (pp. 80-82). A promising title with a disappointing content finally is Richard Gardner: *The United Nations in Crisis. Cuba and the Congo*, (pp. 477-478).

⁴ Ernest van Den Haag: *The UN. In or Out? A debate between Ernest van Den Haag and John P. Conard* (1987), p. 20. (The title of the book, "In or Out?" addresses the USA). Much as I appreciate van Den Haag's sobriety and his foregrounding of the advantages of private diplomacy I cannot follow the conclusions he draws. Van Den Haag takes the fact that the UN hardly played a role in the Cuban crisis as an argument that the UN is not effective and that therefore the USA should leave the organisation. The logical flaw in this argument becomes obvious if to start with one realises that the US something to do with the ineffectiveness of the UN during the Cuban crisis and that therefore in the essence of this argument the accuser accuses himself.

⁵ Mathias Münchau: *The role of the UN in maintaining peace and security* in: Wolfrum Rüdiger (ed.): *United Nations: Law, Politics and Practice* (1995), p. 774

⁶ Arthur W. Rovine: *The first fifty years. The Secretary-General in World Politics 1920-1970* (1970), p. 375

Secretary-General high marks. So for instance Russell: "the Security Council could only provide a forum, but U Thant became a focal point."⁷ Similarly Parsons: "the Security Council played little or no part" but the Secretary-General made "a valuable initiative" to help the Soviet Union "to climb down ... without unacceptable loss of face."⁸ Simons concludes that the UN was a "largely passive bystander" in the Crisis while maintaining that U Thant functioned "as a crucial bridge between Kennedy and Khrushchev."⁹ At the border of "modest" and "very important role" is Luard. In his well known history of the United Nations he states that the UN, and especially its Secretary-General, had "played a useful part in moderating the crisis" and concludes that the UN "had helped to resolve what many believed to have been the most dangerous crisis of the post-war world."¹⁰

A third group finally thinks that the UN played an important or even very important role in the crisis. Richardot lists the Cuban crisis under "Highlights of UN History" noting that "The Secretary-General plays key role in resolving US Soviet confrontation."¹¹ Riggs thinks that "the Cuban missile crisis of 1962 deserves to rank ... as an example of successful articulation of UN action."¹² Schüter is of the opinion that the UN made "einen bedeutenden, wenn auch sicherlich nicht entscheidenden Beitrag" and urges not to forget "dass ohne die Vereinten Nationen, ohne die schnelle Ueberweisung des Konflikts an den Sicherheitsrat, ohne die von dem Generalsekretär ergriffenen Initiativen die Machtprobe vielleicht nicht mit einer friedlichen Lösung geendet hätte."¹³ Bingham also thinks that the UN played "eine bemerkenswerte Rolle" in solving the crisis.¹⁴

A fourth group does not judge the overall role of the UN but only praises the Secretary-General's performance. Boyd thinks that U Thant provided Khrushchev "with a 'golden bridge' across which he could retreat without more loss of face than he could stand."¹⁵ Nassif also

⁷ Ruth B. Russell: *The United Nations and United States Security Policy* (1968), p. 79

⁸ Anthony Parsons: *From Cold War to Hot Peace. UN interventions 1947-1994* (1995), p. 244

⁹ Geoff Simons: *The United Nations. A Chronology of Conflict* (1994), p. 130, 131. Simons offers an outstanding analysis and also includes the prelude to the crisis.

¹⁰ Evan Luard: *A History of the United Nations. Volume 2: The Age of Decolonization, 1955-1965* (1989), p. 406. Luard in his evaluation inserts "in the eyes of the world". Technically this leaves the possibility that he does not agree with the evaluation he presents.

¹¹ Jean Richardot: *Journeys for a Better World. A Personal Adventure in War and Peace. An Inside Story of the United Nations by One of its First Senior Officials* (1994), p. 359

¹² Robert E. Riggs: *US/UN. Foreign Policy and International Organization* (1971), p. 101

¹³ Hilmar Werner Schlüter: *Die Politische Funktion des Sicherheitsrates der Vereinten Nationen von 1945-1950* (1970), p. 215, 216

¹⁴ June Bingham: *U Thant. Eine Biographie* (1966), p. 365

¹⁵ Andrew Boyd: *Fifteen Men on a Powder Keg. A History of the UN Security Council* (1971), p. 174

states that U Thant's "dramatic intervention" enabled Khrushchev "to back down."¹⁶ Hiscocks is similarly aware of the face saving device: "It was much easier for each superpower to respond to UN conciliation than to yield to threats from the other side."¹⁷ Gordenker thinks that Thant's intervention "made it easier for both sides to claim that an impartial third party was furnishing the ideas which permitted them to adopt less belligerent policies" but soberly maintains that the Secretary-General was not able to give "his organization a commanding position."¹⁸ Parsons also evaluates the Secretary-General individually, attests that U Thant had helped Khrushchev to climb down and concludes that "The UN escape-route had worked."¹⁹ Gardner finally claims that the Secretary-General "helped avoid an armed clash at sea."²⁰ My own evaluation will follow after a detailed analysis at the end of this paper. So much as for the relevant research from the United Nations field.

When I hoped that starting from the other field, the missile crisis, would be more helpful my expectations were not met. Although the Cuban missile crisis has undoubtedly been the most studied event of the Cold War - the amount of publications on the issue is impressive - no text focuses on the UN's role in the crisis. This is somewhat surprising. We've seen in the evaluations above that the publications that focus primarily on the UN and for whom Cuba is one case among others often give the UN good or even very good marks for its performance in the crisis. But how can this be? If these good marks are indeed justified, then it is hard to understand why the publications from the other field which are primarily interested in the event of the missile crisis only treat the UN as a marginal factor. One of course immediately starts to wonder how this discrepancy between the two fields can be explained. Could it be that historians who are interested in the UN and therefore write about its performance in different conflicts derive their initial interest from a general liking of the United Nations Organisation, a fact which in the end leads to a positive assessment of the UN's role? Or are, on the other hand, the missile crisis specialists absorbed too much by MRBMs, tactical nuclear warheads and the vast power of heads of states, too disillusioned by the traditionally veto-

¹⁶ Ramses Nassif: *U Thant in New York. 1961-1977. A Portrait of the Third UN Secretary-General* (1988), p. 129

¹⁷ Richard Hiscocks: *The Security Council. A Study in Adolescence* (1973), p. 233

¹⁸ Leon Gordenker in James Barros' (ed.): *The United Nations. Past, Present, and Future* (1972), p. 119

¹⁹ Anthony Parsons in Adam Roberts' (ed.): *United Nations, Divided World. The UN's role in international relations* (1993), p. 107

²⁰ Richard Gardner: *The United Nations in Crisis: Cuba and the Congo* (1963), p. 478. Gardner, obviously, goes too far with this claim as Khrushchev had stopped his ships independently already before U Thant's intervention as we have seen above.

blocked Cold War Security Council, and disillusioned furthermore by the propaganda speeches at the UN, to allow for any real influence of the UN during the Cuban crisis?

It seems that in the final analysis both fields have to be brought closer together again. The UN historians have to notice where the UN failed bitterly in the context of the missile crisis. The missile crisis analysts on the other hand have to pay tribute to the role the world organisation played and the perspectives therefore have to be enlarged by a detailed study that focuses on the UN's role in the crisis.

Since the event of the Cuban missile crisis 35 years have elapsed. During these 35 years and especially during the last 10 years the historiography of the crisis has undergone crucial changes. The historic rule that histories have always to be rewritten was therefore once more confirmed. I will briefly outline the major changes. I think one can distinguish three phases. After the crisis until well into the eighties, thus for more than twenty years, the standard version of the events was based primarily on the memories of American participants in the crisis or on publications by western scholars and journalists. Except for the memories of Nikita Khrushchev which had been smuggled into the West and published in 1970 no Soviet accounts existed.²¹ This is the first phase and it lasted until well into the eighties.²² Then with Mikhail Gorbachev and the changes in the USSR Soviet views and documents on the crisis reached and challenged the Western audience, thus starting the second phase. This process is still going on now, in 1997.²³ In their works the Soviet put forward the plausible claim that US actions against Cuba before October 1962 had contributed significantly to Khrushchev's decision to deploy the missiles. Therefore the intrinsic Cuban elements of the crisis, which had only been included by a few historians up to then, got more attention. This inclusion of the Cuban perspective initiated a third phase in the historiography of the crisis. In phases one and two Cuba had been only the accidental stage of the superpower conflict and Castro had not been an actor in any meaningful sense. But with this third phase the Cuban/American

²¹ In *Le débat sur les origines de la guerre froide: état de la question*, Kreis speaks of "une accessibilité unilatérale" as far as the availability of documents is concerned still in 1986. While the US documents are readily accessible, the Soviet archives remain closed.

²² Three classic examples of this first phase are: Arthur M. Schlesinger Jr.: *A Thousand Days: John F. Kennedy in the White House* (1965); Elie Abel: *The Missile Crisis* (1966); Robert Kennedy: *Thirteen Days* (1969).

²³ Examples of this second phase are: Blight and Welch: *On the Brink. Americans and Soviets Reexamine the Cuban Missile Crisis* (1989); Ally, Blight and Welch: *Back to the Brink. Proceedings of the Moscow Conference on the Cuban Missile Crisis* (1992); Gribkov and Smith: *Operation Anadyr. US and Soviet Generals recount the Cuban Missile Crisis* (1994); Zubok and Pleshakov: *Inside the Kremlin's Cold War* (1996).

relationship as well as Castro's actions were taken more fully into account, characterising the crisis as very much *Cuban* and Castro as one of three main actors.²⁴

No review of the literature could be complete without a brief discussion of the different sources of knowledge that were used to write this paper. The first source of knowledge were of course the primary documents. This meant on the one hand an extensive reading of the official United Nations transcripts of both the General Assembly and Security Council meetings. On the other hand this meant the study of the correspondence between Kennedy, Khrushchev and U Thant, the study of the secret documents of the CIA and the transcripts of the US Executive Meetings, which all range among the very important primary sources.²⁵ The subsequent declassification of documents in all three countries but especially in the USA (Freedom of Information Act be praised) in the 80s and 90s helped to create reasonably good working conditions for researchers.²⁶ However, there is good reason to assume that with the future emergence of new documents the Cuban missile crisis will have to be rewritten one more time.²⁷

²⁴ Examples of this third phase are: Philip Brenner: *Cuba and the Missile Crisis* (1990); Allyn, Blight and Welch: *Cuba on the Brink. Castro, the Missile Crisis, and the Soviet Collapse* (1993); Richard Lebow: *We all lost the Cold War* (1994).

²⁵ Especially the transcripts of the US Executive Meetings present a rather unique and very fortunate situation for the researcher. These ExComm meetings were held in secrecy at the White House and formed the American decision by advising Kennedy. Unknown to the other participants, President Kennedy recorded the meetings. Many of the transcripts are now available (For instance in Chang and Kornbluh: *The Cuban Missile Crisis, 1962. A National Security Archive Documents Reader*).

The UN main building in New York on the other hand certainly saw a lot of talks in closed offices and debates in corridors on the issue, too, and some of them might be more interesting than the official speeches made in the Security Council or in the General Assembly. But unlike the talks in the White House the unofficial talks at the UN main building were not recorded. Unfortunately.

²⁶ A few collections of documents on the crisis exist. An early (and therefore limited) one is David Larson: *The Cuban Crisis of 1962. Selected Documents, Chronology and Bibliography* (1986); Chang and Kornbluh's *The Cuban Missile Crisis, 1962. A National Security Archive Document Reader* (1992) is absolutely excellent and a must for every researcher; As for the CIA some interesting data can be found in: *The Secret Cuban Missile Crisis Documents. Central Intelligence Agency* (1994).

²⁷ Marc Trachtenberg claimed at the beginning of the 90's that "the historical analysis of the Cuban missile crisis is still in its infancy. The new documents on the crisis, as revealing as they are, represent just the tip of the iceberg." Marc Trachtenberg: *History and Strategy*, p. 260. Trachtenberg was influential in publishing the transcripts of the October 16, 1962 ExComm meeting. Blight claims that Trachtenberg's "familiarity with archival sources concerned with American defence planning makes him one of the most knowledgeable students of the crisis." James G. Blight: *On the Brink*, p. 15

Somewhere between primary and secondary sources of knowledge stands a very specific and rather unique form of text: the transcripts of the Cuban missile crisis conferences. Between 1987 and 1992 five such conferences were held in which surviving leaders debated with scholars, a process which produced interesting and valuable results. The five conferences both reflect and directly influenced the three phases of the historiography of the crisis. In the first conference, held in early 1987, the Americans debated without Soviet or Cuban participation. In the second conference in late 1987, knowledgeable Soviets participated for the first time. The third conference was held in Moscow in 1989. And the fifth conference finally highlighted the intrinsic Cuban element of the crisis as that conference was held in Havana with the participation of Fidel Castro.²⁸

Besides the primary documents and the conference transcripts a wide range of secondary literature helped to write this paper. Above I have already spoken of the two fields, the United Nations field on the one hand and the missile crisis field on the other hand, whose overlapping areas form the critical material which is specifically interesting for this context. I have above also spoken of the changes that the research has undergone during the last 35 years. Here at the outset of this investigation I would finally like to take the occasion to mention those scholars whose work has especially influenced and helped me in my thinking and writing: William Blum, Noam Chomsky, Warren Hinckle and William Turner, Thomas Paterson, Bertrand Russell, Geoff Simons and Mark White. Their critical and independent thinking together with their brilliant analysis have enlightened me in the best sense of the word.²⁹

²⁸ The American scholars James G. Blight, Bruce J. Allyn and David A. Welch were the initiators and organisers of the five conferences. They call their method *critical oral history*. The first conference was held at Hawk's Cay, Florida in March 1987. The second in Cambridge, Massachusetts in October 1987. Then followed the Moscow conference in January 1989, the Antigua conference in January 1991 and the Havana conference in January 1992. The transcripts have been published. I know of no conference that followed Havana.

²⁹ Specifically I mean the following publications: William Blum: *Killing Hope. U.S. military and CIA interventions since World War II* (1995); Noam Chomsky: *What Uncle Sam really wants* (1993); Warren Hinckle and William Turner: *The Fish is Red. The Story of the Secret War Against Castro* (1981); Thomas Paterson: *Fixation with Cuba: The Bay of Pigs, Missile Crisis, and Covert War Against Fidel Castro* (1989) and *ibid. Contesting Castro. The United States and the Triumph of the Cuban Revolution* (1994); Bertrand Russell: *Unarmed Victory* (1963); Geoff Simons: *The United Nations. A Chronology of Conflict* (1994) and *ibid. Cuba. From Conquistador to Castro* (1996); Mark White: *The Cuban Missile Crisis* (1996).

2. Towards the Missile Crisis

1 January 1959 - 14 October 1962

The Cuban missile crisis did not start in October 1962. It started much earlier. Almost four years of hostility between Cuba and the United States had paved the ground for the missile crisis. This chapter considers the time period starting with Fidel Castro's coming to power on January 1 1959 and ending with the United States discovery of the missiles on October 14 1962. During this time period the United Nations dealt with the Cuban issue several times both in the General Assembly and in the Security Council. The UN discussions form the core of this chapter. Yet to consider these discussions in isolation would result in a somewhat unfinished analysis. To provide a broader framework a selection of events that took place outside the United Nations are therefore included. These "events in the field" form the second essential part of this chapter.

2.1 A Revolution in the "American Lake"

In the early weeks of the Cuban revolution a friendly relationship between Cuba and its big neighbour United States seemed possible. Former Cuban President Batista had fled in the dead of night to the Dominican Republic and Fidel Castro was still moving triumphantly through cheering crowds from Santiago to Havana when the United States was the second state in the world to recognise the new Cuban government six days after it had come to power on January 7, 1959. When he had still been fighting in the Sierra Maestra, Fidel Castro had enjoyed broad support in the American press.³⁰ In April 1959, upon an invitation of the American Society of Newspaper Editors, Castro even visited Washington and New York. Wherever the charismatic leader went he was followed by crowds. To his group he said repeatedly: "We have never met Americans like these. We only knew the colonialists."³¹ It seemed a promising start.

President Eisenhower who had unsuccessfully suggested that Castro be denied a visa deliberately snubbed the new Cuban President by leaving Washington for a week to play golf in Carolina.³² Castro met with Vice-President Richard Nixon instead. Nixon, in a memorandum for Eisenhower, Herter, Foster and Allen Dulles judged that Castro "is either incredibly naive

³⁰ Gardner, p. 241

³¹ Quoted in Simons (1996), p. 287

³² Paterson (1994), p. 256

about communism or under communist discipline - my guess is the former."³³ Eisenhower came to follow Nixon's judgement.

Washington had in fact made up its mind about this new revolution already before Castro's April visit. On March 10, 1959 the secret agenda of the National Security Council meeting featured *ways of bringing "another government to power in Cuba"*³⁴ (my emphasis) as its principal item. The administration of the United States didn't want this new revolution. It objected to the new power from the start. Eisenhower later authorised the CIA to organise, pay, train and equip Cuban exiles to sabotage Castro's revolution. What therefore *seemed* a promising start with the early US recognition of the new Cuban government and with Castro's visit to the United States was in fact heading for confrontation already two months after Batista's fall.

It is sometimes claimed that the hostility between Cuba and the United States resulted from the expropriation of US property in Cuba.³⁵ While it is certainly true that expropriation increased the spiral of hostility it is important to remember that the US government in its NSC meeting on March 10, 1959 had decided to search for ways of bringing another government to power in Cuba *before* any American property had been nationalised. At that point the United States had had no reason to complain about any Cuban actions.

After having come back from his American journey Fidel pushed one of the essential parts of his revolutionary program: the land reform. The agrarian reform law was passed in May and in June expropriations of US companies started. American investors claimed that compensation was inadequate. The new agrarian law limited land ownership to 966 acres per individual with the land belonging to the State. Castro said of the reform afterwards: "It truly established a rupture between the Revolution and the richest and most privileged sectors in the country, and a rupture with the United States."³⁶ He was right. The law was immensely popular among the Cuban peasants but much disliked in the United States.

During the following year Cuba and the United States exchanged punch for punch. Cuba continued to nationalise US property: land, cattle ranches, oil refineries, hotels. In May 1960 for example Cuba announced that the expropriation of the 271,410 acres that belonged to the United Fruit Company had been completed.³⁷ Nunez Jiminez of the Cuban Agrarian Reform

³³ Quoted in Simons (1996), p. 288

³⁴ Quoted in Szulc, p. 480

³⁵ The most recent example for such a claim is most probably the Helms-Burton Act which President Clinton signed in March 1996.

³⁶ Ibid., p. 493

³⁷ The United Fruit Company is of course a very famous and influential firm. See also chapter 2.9: Guatemala 1954

Institute declared that United Fruit would be repaid with only \$ 6 million worth of 20-year bonds "because ours is not a government of fools."³⁸ The United States protested.

Cuba's monocultural economy was based on sugar, and this is where the American punch landed. In a speech on June 29, 1960, to thousands of peasants Castro threatened to seize all US owned sugar mills if the US Congress was to cut the Cuban sugar quota. He threatened that all "Yankee property down to the nails in their shoes" would be seized "if they try to force us to surrender by hunger." Well aware of the United State's superior power in a contest with Cuba, Congress was not impressed. Four days after Castro's speech the American President received full authority to cut the Cuban sugar exports to any level he considered in the US interest. In the discussions in the House, Republican Harold D. Cooley had, with true understanding as it seems, criticised the cutting of the Cuban sugar quota as "overt economic aggression." However, for some reasons the opposition later faded away and the proposal virtually flew both through the House (394-0) and through the Senate (84-0). President Eisenhower immediately ordered a cut. On July 6 the Cuban sugar quota was reduced to 700'000 tons, with "the most genuine regret" as Eisenhower insisted. He couldn't have cut much more.³⁹ The president's authority to cut the Cuban sugar quota was to expire on March 31, 1961. Kennedy, who by then was President, made sure he didn't miss the opportunity. On exactly that date he cut the Cuban quota again. This time to zero.⁴⁰ Cold war economics worked. The USSR and China were now the main importers of Cuban sugar.

The US - Cuban relationship worsened, but connected to this another relationship grew stronger: the ties between Cuba and the Soviet Union. In February 1960, more than a year after the revolution had succeeded, First Deputy Premier Anastas I. Mikoyan came from Moscow to Havana.⁴¹ Contacts were established and trade and economic aid agreements signed. Part of the economic deal was concerned with oil. On April 19, 1960, in exchange for Cuban sugar, the Soviet oil tanker *Vishinsky* arrived in Cuba with a cargo of Soviet crude oil. Yet the foreign owned oil refineries in Cuba refused to process the crude Soviet oil. After a

³⁸ *Facts on File*, p. 10

³⁹ All quotations and figures in this paragraph are from: *Facts on File*, pp. 10-11. In 1960 Cuba's sugar quota to the US was 3,119,655 tons. By the time Eisenhower got the authority from Congress to cut, 2,379,903 tons had already been shipped or certified for shipment. Choosing an even number, 700,000 tons was the highest possible cut Eisenhower could make.

⁴⁰ Larson, p.330

⁴¹ The fact that Moscow came to Havana only one year after the revolution had taken place is another fact that indicates that the Cuban revolution was *not* orchestrated by Moscow. Zubok comments: "In 1959 and early 1960 the Soviet leadership did not believe that there could be any chance for 'proletarian' revolution on the semicolonial island [Cuba] with a monoculture economy" (*Inside the Kremlin's Cold War*, p.206).

warning and continued refusal Castro seized the Texas oil refinery in late June followed by Esso and Shell. By July 1960 Castro controlled all oil processing in Cuba.

Meanwhile the Cuban exile community and its CIA mentors had become active. Bombing and sabotage attacks on Cuba by planes leaving from the United States had begun in October 1959, maybe before.⁴² Cane fields and sugar mills were the targets of sabotage attacks in early 1960. Every now and then a plane crashed. On February 18, 1960, for instance, Robert Kelly of the US Civil Air Patrol crashed east of Havana after having attempted to firebomb sugar-cane fields. The State Department, while insisting that it was against the wishes of the government, admitted that the plane had taken off from Florida.⁴³ On March 21 the Cuban defence downed another plane east of Havana. Its pilot, wounded in the leg, was Howard Luis Rundquist from Miami.⁴⁴

Castro for his part was well aware that he had to protect his revolution with arms. In mid-1959 José Ramon Fernandez, a member of Castro's administration, had gone shopping for arms in Italy, Switzerland, West Germany and Israel. He had been able to buy some arms from Italy but soon pressure from Washington stopped the Europeans from selling any arms to Cuba. In March 1960 the US Commerce Department refused to issue licences to US firms for the export of helicopters to Cuba.⁴⁵ According to Fernandez weapons from the Soviet Union and its allies began to arrive only late in 1960. One can observe that Castro had tried Western sources first and that pressure from Washington on European producers had led to the deal with the Soviet Union.⁴⁶

One cannot help but wonder where all this hostility began. An American observer in October 1960 judged that:

"We refused to help Cuba meet its desperate need for economic progress ... We used the influence of our government to advance the interests and increase the profits of the private American companies which dominated the island's economy ... Administration spokesmen publicly hailed Batista, hailing him as a staunch ally and a good friend at a time when Batista was murdering thousands, destroying the last vestiges of freedom and stealing hundreds of millions of dollars from the Cuban people ... Thus it was our own policies, not those of Castro, that first began to turn our former neighbour against us."

⁴² *New York Times*, 23 October 1959, p.1. Indicated by Blum, p. 186

⁴³ *Facts on File*, p. 7

⁴⁴ *Facts on File*, p. 7

⁴⁵ *Facts on File*, p. 6

⁴⁶ See Szulc, pp. 497,498

The observer was none other than not yet President John F. Kennedy.⁴⁷

2.2 Assassination attempts

To really understand the relationship of the United States and Cuba and the respective actions that took place between the two states one must first of all clearly understand the principal aim of United States foreign policy as far as Cuba is concerned. For anyone who cares to take a closer look the aim is obvious: The principal aim of US foreign policy towards Cuba after 1959 has been to get rid of Castro. To understand this first axiom means to understand most of the drama that has taken place between the two states. Sometimes the cast, the plot or the staging of that drama has changed. The basic issue, however, has always remained the same: To get rid of Castro.⁴⁸

The Bay of Pigs invasion or OPERATION MONGOOSE could be used to prove that it is and has been the objective of the United States to topple Castro. A third activity, however, makes the principal aim of US foreign policy towards Cuba even more obvious: The assassination attempts. In 1975 the United States Senate, which according to the constitution is responsible to supervise and control the executive, ordered a select committee to investigate whether the United States foreign policy used the assassination of foreign leaders as a means to achieve the set ends. Castro was one of the leaders discussed. The answer that the Committee had to the Senate's question was: Yes.⁴⁹

⁴⁷ *New York Times*, 7 October 1960. Quoted in Simons (1996), p. 279. The passage stems from a speech that Kennedy held at Cincinnati in early October during his pre-election campaigning. Arthur M. Schlesinger, JFK's biographer, claims that the passage reflects Kennedy's views faithfully. See: Schlesinger, pp. 211, 212. Although it is not surprising, it is still interesting to notice that US campaign oratory, despite all its distortions, offers some of the most critical inside evaluations of US foreign policy. Another example is Nixon whom I will quote in chapter 2.5

⁴⁸ I very consciously use the present or present perfect tense here as the aim is still the same today. The Helms-Burton Act, signed by President Clinton in March 1996 asks in Title II openly and explicitly for the establishment of a new Cuban Government exclusive of Fidel and Raul Castro.

⁴⁹ *United States Senate: Alleged Assassination Plots Involving Foreign Leaders. An Interim Report of the Select Committee to study Governmental Operations with respect to Intelligence Activities.* US Government Printing Office. Washington 1975. (Hereafter referred to as "*Assassination Report*"). The Assassination Report, about 350 pages long, looks at Castro (Cuba), Lumumba (Kongo), Trujillo (Dominican Republic), Diem (South Vietnam) and Schneider (Chile). The activities against Castro and Cuba take up more than 100 pages of the report. The report is based on oral testimony on the one

In the introduction to the report the independent Senate Committee emphasised: "We believe that the public is entitled to know what instrumentalities of their Government have done ... The Committee believes the truth about the assassination allegations should be told because democracy depends upon a well-informed electorate."⁵⁰ In the epilogue to the report the Committee expressed its "distaste for what we have seen."⁵¹ I couldn't agree more.

Activity against Castro's person didn't start with assassination attempts. From March until August 1960 the CIA thought of ways to destroy his charisma. One idea was to spray his broadcasting studio with a chemical which would produce similar effects to LSD; another idea was to impregnate cigars with a chemical which produced disorientation. A third chemical with strong depilatory effects was tested on animals and designed to make Castro's beard fall off. The first action against the life of a Cuban leader was aimed not at Fidel but at his brother Raul. In July 1960 a Cuban exile was offered ten thousand dollars to arrange a fatal accident. The assassin went to Cuba but there was no suitable occasion. Then, aimed at Castro, cigars that had been treated with such a strong poison that they would kill if put in the mouth were given to an assassin in February 1961.

To have Castro killed the CIA was not even shy to establish a 'liaison fatale' with the Mafia. Under Batista's dictatorship the Mafia had run casinos in Cuba. When Castro came to power the casinos were closed. Havana ceased to produce hundreds of millions of Mafia profits from gambling, dope and abortion operations each year.⁵² The CIA wisely concluded that the Mafia did not only have a lot of practice in killing people but, more importantly, that it had the motive, too. In September 1960, CIA's Robert Aime Maheu met with Chicago gangster John Rosselli in a bar in Beverley Hills. It was the first known time that the government, or a subpart of the government, had attempted to use the Mafia to carry out assassination plans.⁵³ Next to Rosselli, Salvatore Giancana and Santos Trafficante were

hand - over 8000 pages of sworn testimony taken from over 75 witnesses during 60 hearing days and numerous staff interviews - and written testimony on the other hand - files from agencies and departments, the White House, and the Presidential libraries. Nobody who really wants to understand the Cuban missile crisis can afford to neglect the 100 pages on Cuba. Discussions of the assassination attempts in the secondary literature are Warren Hinckle (1981), pp. 23-60; Geoff Simons (Cuba) (1996), pp. 303-310; Lloyd Gardner (1976) p. 251; Tad Szulc ((1986) pp. 510,524

⁵⁰ *Assassination Report*, p. 2

⁵¹ *Assassination Report*, p. 285

⁵² Hinckle and Turner, p. 36

⁵³ On July 6, 1971, US District Judge William P. Gravey was considerably surprised. He had given the accused five years for card cheating when the defenders rose and asked for a reduction of the sentence on the ground that their client was an unsung US hero of the cold war: He had risked his life

contacted. Giancana, for instance, figured on the "ten-most wanted criminals" list of the US. The mob rejected the CIA's suggestion to gun down Castro in a "gangland-style killing" but suggested poisoned pills for Castro's drink as a less dangerous alternative. The pills, provided by the CIA, successfully killed the test monkeys and were handed by Rosselli and Trafficante together with several thousands of dollars to a Cuban assassin. Around the Bay of Pigs invasion the attempt was made but failed - according to one theory because Castro stopped visiting a certain restaurant. A year later assassins were again equipped by the United States with poisoned pills, explosives, detonators, rifles, handguns, radios and a boat radar. This time plans existed to also kill Raul and Che Guevara besides Fidel.

In early 1963 the CIA planned to deposit an exotic seashell, rigged to explode, in an area where Castro often went skin-diving but the plan was discarded as impractical. Later the CIA prepared a diving suit contaminated with a fungus that would produce a chronic skin disease and a breathing apparatus contaminated with a tubercule bacillus which was to be offered as a present to Castro. Fidel however received a normal diving suit from another source and the deadly CIA suit never left the laboratory. Also in 1963 an assassin known as AM/LASH received a ball-point pen rigged with a hypodermic needle and was also promised a high powered rifle including a silencer and a telescopic sight. All destined one more time to kill Castro. AM/LASH received the poisoned pen from a CIA official on November 22, 1963. On that very same day another deplorable assassination was successful. Kennedy was shot in Dallas.⁵⁴

Who authorised the attempts to kill Castro? In its conclusions the report is crystal clear about the following three findings: First of all it had been established beyond any doubt that officials of the United States Government had initiated, paid and participated in several plots to kill Fidel Castro for over five years. That secondly United States officials for this aim among others used and paid the mob and other criminals and that thirdly the attempts to kill Castro had started several years before the Cuban leader received missiles from the Soviet Union.⁵⁵

attempting to assassinate Fidel Castro for the CIA. The client was no other than Johnny Rosselli. See Hinckle and Turner, p. 23

⁵⁴ All the above mentioned attempts are described in the *Assassination report*, pp. 71-90

⁵⁵ *Assassination report*, pp. 255 - 258. The question of authorisation is of course a "hot issue" and the assassination report discusses the related Cuban evidence on more than 100 pages. Next to President Eisenhower, President Kennedy and his brother Robert and President Johnson the top CIA officials Richard Bissell, Richard Helms, Allen Dulles and John McCone are discussed. The rule is simple: The higher you move, the less direct evidence you have. Let's take an example. It is for instance established beyond any doubt that the CIA's Deputy Director for Plans, Richard Bissell, knew and approved the Castro assassination. This is two steps removed from the President. One step up and only one step away from the President is the Director of Central Intelligence Allen Dulles. The report finds

When on October 10 1961, Cuba told the United Nations General Assembly that the United States was plotting to assassinate Fidel Castro and his brother Raul the American ambassador to the UN Adlai Stevenson couldn't believe it and said that the "repulsive accusation" was "ridiculous" and that "as little as the United States likes Fidel Castro and his associates, it abhors assassination as a means of accomplishing political objectives."⁵⁶ Maybe the US government did not only deceive its own electorate but also its UN ambassador. There is that hope in me that Stevenson really didn't know.

2.3 Cuba complains to the Security Council: July 1960

On July 11 1960, the President of the United Nations Security Council received the following letter.

"... the facilities provided [by the US Government] to counter-revolutionary elements for their conspiracies and invasion plans, the frequent violations of Cuban air space, with loss of life and considerable material damage, by aircraft proceeding from United States territory and in some case piloted by United States pilots, the unconcealed diplomatic pressure ... the continued threats of economic strangulation which have now been put into effect through the refusal of the oil companies to refine crude oil ... of extraordinary powers, now in application, conferred upon the President of the United States to reduce the Cuban sugar quota ... these, by any standards, are acts which go to make up a policy of

that he "approved 'through consideration' of the 'elimination' of Castro." Now there remains but the summit. All steps before have been proven to be involved.

The summit is the president. As regards the involvement of Eisenhower and Kennedy, there is only indirect evidence. Bissell stresses, as the report states, "that Dulles would have informed Presidents Eisenhower and Kennedy" by circumlocution after the assassination had been planned and was underway. Working on the premise that Dulles knew and that Bissell is correct the presidents must have known. But the evidence remains indirect and dependent on two premises (p. 264). In the absence of direct evidence one must choose between three options: a) That there was a serious shortcoming in the system of authorisation and that the presidents therefore did not know; or b) That there was linguistic confusion, i.e. that "dispose of Castro", "remove Castro" or "knock off Castro" did not include killing and that therefore the presidents again didn't approve of the assassination; or, last but not least c) That the classic practice of "plausible denial" worked and that therefore despite the absence of direct evidence the presidents approved and authorised the assassination attempts. Out of these three everybody has to make his own choice as it is unlikely that more evidence will surface.

⁵⁶ United Nations General Assembly Official Records. 1032nd Plenary Meeting, paras. 161 and 280. Raul Roa spoke for Cuba.

intervention in Cuba's domestic affairs and of economic aggression contrary ... to the fundamental principles of the United Nations Charter."⁵⁷

Cuba had decided to ask the United Nations for help. And the organisation reacted promptly. On Monday July 18 1960 one week after it had received Cuba's letter, the Security Council met to consider what Cuba in its complaint had called "a serious situation which seriously affects international peace." The discussions lasted two days and in the end the Security Council voted to hand the problem over to the Organisation of American States (OAS). For Cuba at least this was a disappointing result.

Raul Roa, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Cuba, who had been invited to participate in the debate in the Security Council seemed to have been aware of the possibility of such an outcome. In his opening statement he explains with much emphasis that Cuba had specifically chosen the United Nations and *not* the OAS to raise its complaints. Roa in this context mentions the Guatemala case of 1954 which the United Nations had handed over to the OAS⁵⁸ and calls it a "regrettable decision".⁵⁹ The implication is absolutely clear. In 1954, thus six years earlier, Guatemala had got no help from the US dominated OAS. Cuba fears the same fate and therefore *deliberately* chose the United Nations.

As the core of his speech Roa tries to explain to the Security Council that Cuba has been and still is the victim of US aggression. He puts forward the same points that are raised in the letter, but backs them up, if necessary, with very detailed data. 1) US cutting of Cuban sugar quota is economic aggression. All members of the council know that the quota had been cut drastically two weeks earlier. No further evidence is needed. 2) Bombing raids on Cuban sugar mills and cane fields by planes that operate from the United States had killed some Cubans, leaving many burnt and wounded and destroyed over 350 000 tons of sugar.⁶⁰ This of course needs to be backed up. Roa presents names of pilots, attack dates, plane registration numbers and other details from about 20 bombings. One bomb that didn't go off for instance had the marking "Bristol Marines", in another case the plane was later found in Florida. The evidence is abundant. 3) The threat of aggression which Roa bases on quotations of American Government and press items that speak of armed aggression against Cuba. Furthermore Roa rejects the American claim that Cuba is a communist satellite of the Soviet Union, he admits

⁵⁷ United Nations Security Council Official Records. Supplement. Doc. S/4378

⁵⁸ It is very enlightening to consider the Guatemalan case of 1954 in some more detail. This is done in chapter 2.9

⁵⁹ United Nations Security Council Official Records. 874th meeting. paragraph 9. Throughout my paper I will work with English statements. I work on the premise that where the statement has been translated, the translation is correct.

⁶⁰ Ibid. para. 41

however that the revolution was for the benefit of the lower classes. But I wonder why he says "Today, in Cuba, it is the people who rule."⁶¹ After all, no elections had taken place by then, nor have any taken place until today. At the end of his speech Roa formally invites the US to solve the problems through normal diplomatic channels.

Mr. Lodge for the United States starts by saying that his country has no aggressive purpose against Cuba:

"Unnecessary though it most certainly seems to me, let me here and now give him [Castro] this assurance, heaped up and overflowing: the United States has no aggressive purpose against Cuba."⁶²

Contrasted against this promise one should remember the fact that nine months later the CIA orchestrated the Bay of Pigs invasion, was to drop its first bombs on Cuba and land its troops on Cuba's shore. But in July 1960 nobody in the council - maybe with the exception of Raul Roa - expected such aggression, especially not in the face of Lodge's promise.

Turning to the Cuban accusations Lodge started his reasoning. He justified the cutting of the sugar quota with the argument that Cuba after the revolution was now an insecure supplier. The cut was of course no economic aggression but " a justifiable measure of self-protection of the United States to ensure its needed supply of sugar."⁶³ The argument is flimsy enough. Yet when Lodge later makes the same point again formulating "the United States *regretfully - and very regretfully -* [my emphasis] has to protect its own long range sugar supply" the words to today's reader carry an almost sour taste.⁶⁴ His comment on the bombing raids is astonishing:

"the United States has instituted the most vigorous and elaborate system of controls ever adopted in time of peace to prevent unauthorised flights in the Caribbean area and had deplored the very few which have taken place in spite of our restrictive actions."⁶⁵

How could the members of the council have believed the sophisticated American control systems to be so ineffective? As far as aggressive plans against Cuba are concerned, Lodge points out that only the words of the American President matter. And Eisenhower had not made such comments. In public, one is tempted to add. Lodge explains that he thinks the OAS is the right organisation to handle the dispute and concludes that "above all it is the United

⁶¹ Ibid. para. 20

⁶² Ibid. para. 96

⁶³ Ibid. para 119

⁶⁴ Ibid. para 121

⁶⁵ Ibid. para 116

States of America which wants to be friends with Cuba and which some day, somehow, will be friends again."⁶⁶ It is crucial that Lodge refuted none of the facts put forward by Roa. He only tried to give them a positive interpretation. This strongly suggests that Roa's claims are factual.

Yet the Security Council, although "deeply concerned", decided that it was not its job to go into the matter in more detail. A draft resolution submitted by Argentina and Ecuador passed easily⁶⁷ and the Security Council decided "to adjourn the consideration of this question pending the receipt of a report from the Organisation of American States."⁶⁸ Mr. Sobolev of the Soviet Union stood no chance with his suggestion to have the United Nations and not the OAS consider the problem. He claimed "that the Ecuador/Argentine proposal means that the question of aggressive acts by the United States would be transferred to a body in which the United States has a predominating influence and could quietly deal with Cuba as it pleased."⁶⁹ He affirmed personally and furthermore quoted Khrushchev that the USSR "shall support the Cuban people."⁷⁰ To Lodge he said "we are not threatening the United States with our rockets ... we do not intend to make ... threats. We say 'Hands off Cuba', let it work out its own destiny."⁷¹ Later came the Bay of Pigs invasion. And again later Khrushchev deployed missiles to Cuba.

After the resolution had passed Cuba made no secret of her disappointment with the outcome saying that it would have preferred a condemnation of the aggressions or at the very least a consideration exclusively by the Security Council.⁷²

Boutros Boutros-Ghali wrote in his "Agenda for Peace" in the nineties that during the Cold War "regional arrangements worked on occasion against resolving disputes in the manner foreseen in the Charter."⁷³ Looking back at this decision with almost 40 years of hindsight one indeed wonders why the case went to the OAS although Cuba had *deliberately* chosen the UN. A rather convincing argument during the debate in the Security Council was that the OAS had *already* been considering the Cuban case. This is almost true. On Monday, July 18 1960, thus on the same day the Security Council started to discuss Cuba, OAS representatives voted

⁶⁶ Ibid. para 124

⁶⁷ The resolution was passed by a 9-0 vote (USA, F, GB, I, China, Argentina, Ecuador, Tunisia, Ceylon) with the USSR and Ireland abstaining. The USSR had before suggested to discuss the matter in the SC, this was rejected 2-8 (Tunisia abstaining).

⁶⁸ United Nations Security Council Official Records. Supplement Doc. S/4395

⁶⁹ United Nations Security Council Official Records. 876th meeting. Para. 77

⁷⁰ Ibid. para. 73

⁷¹ Ibid. para. 74

⁷² Ibid. para. 131

⁷³ Boutros-Ghali, p. 490

in Washington to hold a meeting of foreign ministers.⁷⁴ This timing, one is inclined to say, was no coincidence. It is furthermore interesting to see that the request for the OAS meeting originally came from Peru on July 14 1960, three days after Cuba had sent its letter to the Security Council. The *New York Times* reported that Peru had acted "with strong United States encouragement."⁷⁵

2.4 Castro complains to the General Assembly: September 1960

In September 1960 the United Nations had its 25th anniversary. The event gave occasion to a meeting of heads of state at the General Assembly. Castro too came to the United States and the trip was a spectacle. When the large Cuban delegation arrived in New York Manhattan all hotels, according to Castro, had received instructions not to rent rooms to the Cuban delegation. The management of the luxurious Shelbourne Hotel near the United Nations asked the Cubans to pay in advance. The Cubans took this as an affront and Castro, dressed in olive-green battle fatigues, protested to UN General-Secretary Dag Hammarskjöld who offered UN accommodation facilities. But Castro had other plans. Upon the suggestion of the "Fair Play for Cuba Committee" he used the situation for an immense propaganda advantage and directed his whole delegation to the Theresa Hotel in Harlem. There crowds of Black Americans cheered the symbolic act. Castro had found a group that sympathised with his idea of fighting against oppression.

The next day the Theresa Hotel in Harlem was to feature what Szulc rightly calls "one of the most improbable diplomatic encounters of the postwar years."⁷⁶ On Tuesday September 20 Khrushchev, who had come to the UN anniversary as well, embraced Fidel Castro at the entrance of the Theresa Hotel. It was their first meeting. Other prominent heads of state who came to greet Fidel in Harlem were Abdul Nasser of Egypt and India's Jawaharlal Nehru.

Then, on September 26, Castro made a speech at the United Nations. He commenced by telling the Assembly that they "need not worry. We shall do our best to be brief."⁷⁷ After that he spoke for five hours. Yet his speech was such that Simons in his history of Cuba comments

⁷⁴ *Facts on File*, p. 14. The OAS then met in San José, Costa Rica, from 22 to 29 August 1960. The government of the United States was not censored.

⁷⁵ *New York Times* 17 July 1960

⁷⁶ Szulc, p. 526

⁷⁷ United Nations General Assembly Official Records. Fifteenth Session. 872 Plenary Meeting. Paragraph 47

that it "deserves to be widely read."⁷⁸ Castro's main intention was to inform the assembled countries about what he called "the Cuban problem".

"Some representatives are perhaps well informed, some of them not so well - it depends on your sources of information - but there is no doubt that for the world as a whole the Cuban problem is one that has arisen in the last two years, it is a new problem. Formerly the world had little reason to know that Cuba existed. To many people it was rather like an appendix to the United States."⁷⁹

When Batista, supplied with US tanks, ruled a country in which 95 per cent of the children in rural areas suffered from diseases caused by parasites there was no Cuban problem. Yet the Cuban problem arose when the new government nationalised and therefore clashed with the powerful interests of the United States. Castro claims that especially the land reform was the only way through which the problem of landless peasants could be solved. And the only way the American owners could be repaid was in 20 year bonds at 4.5 per cent interest. "How could we pay for the land in dollars? How could we pay immediately?" Castro asks.⁸⁰ He discussed the cutting of the sugar quota which hurt the Cuban economy and the sabotage activities. "One afternoon an aircraft coming from the north flew over one of our sugar mills and dropped a bomb. That was a strange, an unusual event."⁸¹ He says that they traced the planes back to the United States. "Many ordinary people, the little people of our country, who saw this property [sugar cane fields] that was now truly theirs being destroyed, suffered burns and injuries while fighting the persistent and relentless bombing attacks by pirate aircraft."⁸² In his general remarks on economic aggression Castro makes a point of stressing that "there can be no political independence unless there is economic independence."⁸³ And referring to the existing tensions between the United States and Cuba he asks:

"Can anyone ... who is willing to think for himself and not as the United Press or the Associated Press tells him to think ... consider that the things which the Revolutionary Government has done were such as to call for the destruction of the Cuban revolution?"⁸⁴

⁷⁸ Simons (1996), p. 381

⁷⁹ United Nations General Assembly Official Records. Fifteenth Session. 872 Plenary Meeting. Paragraph 62

⁸⁰ Ibid. para. 96

⁸¹ Ibid. para. 108

⁸² Ibid. para. 113

⁸³ Ibid. para. 200

⁸⁴ Ibid. para. 100

He claims that the US hoped to destroy Cuba on the pretext that it was Communist dominated. In a second part of his speech Castro addressed world politics.⁸⁵ This is not of direct interest here. Yet the comments he made on the recent Security Council decision to hand Cuba's complaints over to the OAS are highly revealing:

"Perhaps it was felt that it would be easier to obtain an automatic majority in the OAS, although it is hard to see why, as automatic majorities have frequently been obtained here in the United Nations. With all due respect to this Organisation, I must say that our people, the people of Cuba, have learned much."⁸⁶

It is plain to see that Cuba was disappointed with the United Nations. About two weeks after Castro's speech the United States submitted a "fact sheet" to the General Assembly refuting Castro's "untrue and distorted allegations."⁸⁷ But as by the end of October even the newspapers were writing about the preparations of an invasion force in Guatemala, Cuba's disappointment must have become even stronger when the General Assembly after a two day debate rejected on November 1 1960 a Cuban/Soviet suggestion to debate immediately and in plenary session whether Washington was preparing an invasion of Cuba. Wadsworth for the United States had called Roa's claims "monstrous distortions and downright falsehoods."⁸⁸ Upon his pressure the item was not discussed immediately in plenary session but handed over to the Political Committee of the General Assembly where it was destined to hang as that Committee had an overcrowded agenda. Zorin for the Soviet Union had strongly opposed any postponement claiming that there was clear evidence that an invasion was coming. He quoted an address of Khrushchev to Cuba: "we have supported, we are supporting and we shall continue to support your struggle."⁸⁹ To give emphasis to his statement Zorin explained that "with modern means of waging war, the distances between the most widely separated points

⁸⁵ On world politics Castro says that Cuba was but an example of a broader pattern. Therefore Cuba supports the Negroes in South Africa, claiming that they are oppressed. That Cuba in the Congo is for Lumumba, claiming that Mobutu is in the hand of colonial interests backed by the USA. That Cuba in Algeria is for its independence, claiming that it is ridiculous to say that it is a part of France. That Cuba is for the admission of the Peoples Republic of China to the UN, claiming that if even a representative of Franco can be present it is unforgivable that on the other hand one quarter of the world's population is unrepresented. At the end Castro quotes the Havana Declaration which includes "the right of intellectuals, artists and scientists to fight through their works for a better world."

⁸⁶ Ibid. para. 131

⁸⁷ *Facts on File*, p. 19

⁸⁸ United Nations General Assembly Official Records. Fifteenth session. 910 Plenary Meeting. Para. 62

⁸⁹ Ibid. para. 25

on the earth's surface can be covered in a matter of minutes." A clear allusion to Soviet missiles. But by then nobody or too few thought of a possible missile crisis. He went on: "In other words, it is perfectly obvious that any local conflict can now develop into a major war."⁹⁰ While Zorin at the UN urged for immediate discussion on the island of Cuba mobilisation against the expected invasion had begun. Thousands of Cuban militiamen were called out on October 30 to take up positions in various sections of Havana and its suburbs. Hospitals were ordered to reserve beds and set aside emergency supplies to care for the wounded.⁹¹ But in New York the General Assembly followed the US. It rejected the Cuban case with 45 to 29 (18 abstentions) and sent it on the slow motion track. By the way: U Thant, representative of Burma, had stated that the problem "merits the earliest consideration".⁹² He too was outvoted.

2.5 Nixon: "We would probably be condemned in the United Nations"

The Cuban revolution was not much older than a year when the Eisenhower administration gave its plan to overthrow Castro a practical dimension. On March 17 1960, three months before he cut the Cuban sugar quota, Eisenhower agreed to a CIA recommendation and ordered to recruit, organise, equip, train and finance an army composed of Cuban exiles for possible use against Castro.⁹³

Like the American and French revolutions of the 18th century the Cuban revolution of 1959 had produced émigrés. These émigrés were Cubans who for different reasons disliked Castro and the changes that had taken place in Cuba and who had therefore left their country for Central American countries and especially for Florida. It was primarily in Florida where the CIA recruited its Cubans. The ground rule was that the building up of this émigré army remained a secret and that especially the leading American hand be concealed. The training therefore took place in Guatemala. Unmarked American planes picked up the émigrés in the supposedly deserted Opa-Locka airport in Miami and flew them to the secret airbase in the Guatemala mountains. The émigrés, who began to arrive by midsummer 1960, had to build their own camp in volcanic mud five thousand feet above the sea. But the money, the arms

⁹⁰ Ibid. para. 26

⁹¹ *Facts on File*, p. 23

⁹² Quoted above. para. 159

⁹³ Schlesinger (1965), p. 209. It is sometimes claimed that the CIA is an "invisible government", not controlled by the president and his administration. I do not agree with this thesis. Eisenhower's order of March 17, 1960 is but one example to support Hinckle and Turner's claim that the CIA "is a relatively slavish, if twisted, tool of the imperial presidency"(Hinckle and Turner, p. 18).

and the training came from the United States. In August, President Eisenhower approved a budget of \$ 13 million.⁹⁴ The plan how exactly to overthrow Castro was not always the same. In the beginning sending small groups into Cuba was the CIA policy line. Later the invasion plan got broader support.

While the CIA continued to recruit émigrés and drilled them for an attack on Cuba in the Guatemalan mountains, Kennedy was campaigning against Nixon for the coming presidential elections. Cuba was one of the central issues. Kennedy, without knowing anything about the secret CIA army in Guatemala, spoke about strengthening the Cuban "fighters for freedom"⁹⁵ and in trying to outdo the republicans in their anti-Cuba propaganda urged that the United States must "strengthen the non-Batista democratic anti-Castro forces in exile and in Cuba itself, who offer eventual hope of overthrowing Castro."⁹⁶

These statements clearly implied that the Eisenhower administration had not done enough regarding a possible overthrow of Castro. Nixon who later in *My Six Crises* was to write that the "covert training of Cuban exiles" by the CIA was due "in substantial part at least to my efforts"⁹⁷, was beside himself with fury. To his view Kennedy was about to claim credit for an idea that he, Nixon, had initiated. Yet the existence of the top secret CIA army in Guatemala could not be disclosed. Super-hawk Nixon therefore decided to dress up as an ultra dove and in the fourth and final television debate with Kennedy staged a masterpiece in hypocrisy:

"I think that Senator Kennedy's policies and recommendations for the handling of the Castro regime are probably the most dangerously irresponsible recommendations that he's made during the course of this campaign. In effect, what Senator Kennedy recommends is that the United States Government should give help to the exiles and to those within Cuba who opposed the Castro regime, provided that they are anti-Batista.

Now let's just see what this means. We have five treaties with Latin America, including the one setting up the Organisation of American States in Bogota in 1948, in which we've agreed not to intervene in the international affairs of any other American country, and they as well agreed to do likewise.

The Charter of the United Nations, its preamble, Article I and Article II also provide that there shall be no intervention by one nation in the internal affairs of another. Now I don't know what Senator Kennedy suggests when he says that we should help those who oppose the Castro regime both in Cuba and without. But I do know this, that if we were to follow that recommendation that we would lose all of our friends in Latin America, we would probably be condemned in the United Nations, and we would not

⁹⁴ Schlesinger (1965), p. 215

⁹⁵ Schlesinger (1965), p. 212

⁹⁶ Quoted in Walton, p. 38

⁹⁷ Quoted in Hinckle and Turner, p. 40

accomplish our objective. I know something else. It would be an open invitation for Mr. Khrushchev to come in, to come into Latin America and to engage us in what would be a civil war and possibly even worse than that."⁹⁸

Nixon was right in pointing out that aggression against Cuba could lead to Soviet intervention on the island. The missile crisis of October 1962 was to support his thesis. But when he assumed that the United States "would probably be condemned in the United Nations" he missed the point. Unless he meant: "We would be condemned in the United Nations - if we gave the Security Council all the facts." An improbable premise, anyway.

2.6 Cuba complains to the Security Council: January 1961

To some at the United Nations Cuba must have looked like an annoying "agenda-taker" when it asked the Security Council in late December 1960 to meet again urgently. This time it claimed in its letter that "the Government of the United States ... is about to perpetrate, within a few hours, direct military aggression against the Government and people of Cuba."⁹⁹ The Security Council reacted promptly again and with four new members in the new year met for two days on January 4 and 5 1961 to consider the problem.

The foreign Minister of Cuba, Raul Roa, had again been invited to participate and like half a year before started to bring Cuba's complaints against the United States before the Security Council. The charges were by now almost familiar. Yet this time he put them forward with more urgency and especially with a lot of data including photocopies, photos, dates, names of persons and names of places to prove his charges. And, remembering the outcome of the last Security Council discussion, he stated that Cuba vehemently opposed a transferral of the case to the OAS. Yet Roa needn't have feared that the Security Council would do this. Because this time the outcome was different. The mild draft resolution sponsored by Ecuador and Chile that contained nothing more than an appeal to the USA and Cuba to seek a solution for their differences by all the peaceful means provided for in the Charter was, after it had been opposed by the US, Great Britain and France, not even voted on.¹⁰⁰ The Security Council this time decided to do nothing at all.

⁹⁸ Quoted in Walton, p. 38

⁹⁹ Roa to the President of the Security Council 31 December 1960. United Nations Security Council Official Records. Supplement Doc S/4605

¹⁰⁰ The draft resolution is contained in the United Nations Security Council Official Records. Supplement Doc S/4612

One wonders whether Roa had not backed up his charges. But the official record of the United Nations shows that he did.¹⁰¹ He said that on 17th Street and Biscayne Boulevard in Miami exile Cubans were being openly recruited. He gave names and dates of examples how the men were brought to Guatemala, gave the names of the training camps in Florida, Guatemala, Nicaragua and Swan Island. He said that the Guatemalan lieutenant Eduard Chacon had confirmed that 12 000 men were being trained by the US in Guatemala, something which was also acknowledged by Prof. Ronald Hilford of Stanford University. The *St. Louis Post-Dispatch* of December 1 1960 would say the same. Roa explained that the men in the camps received \$ 25 pay a week as well as \$275 for their families by the CIA and presented a photocopy of a paycheque. He said that Eisenhower on December 2 had granted a credit of one million dollars for the so-called Cuban refugees. That on 225 Park Avenue, New York, there was an "International Rescue Committee" which administered one million dollars on behalf of the "anti -Communist fighters of Cuba". That the Texaco, Esso, United Fruit, the CIA and others had opened their bulging purses to fight Cuba. He said that Allen Dulles of the CIA had made the invasion plans and that although it had been postponed several times the invasion was now imminent. The breaking off of diplomatic relations by the US which had taken place just two days ago including the closure of the United States Embassy was a further sign of the imminence of the invasion.¹⁰² From Swan Island, a territory which the US had taken from Honduras, a strong radio transmitter would send anti-Castro broadcasts on long waves into Cuba and as an example of the attempted isolation of Cuba within America he claimed that the evening paper *El Diario* had stated that the Uruguayan Ambassador had been informed in the White House that the US will invade Cuba "to prevent seventeen sites for the launching of Russian rockets being installed in the island"¹⁰³ (If there is anything to this claim, then the parallel to the real missile crisis is almost frightening). Roa stressed that his charges were not against the people of the United States but against the Government. A lot of accusations, still. One would expect a thorough investigation. None took place.

How could Wadsworth of the United States disprove these charges? The answer is simple. He didn't. He simply claimed that they should not be believed because they were "empty, groundless, false, fraudulent"¹⁰⁴ and used the flimsy argument that "To try to refute them all in detail would be like making a point by point rebuttal of *Alice in Wonderland*".¹⁰⁵ This needs no further comment. The further debate followed a familiar pattern. Zorin urged that

¹⁰¹ United Nations Security Council Official Records. 921st meeting. para. 63-125

¹⁰² Switzerland's embassy now represented the USA in Cuba.

¹⁰³ Ibid. para. 115

¹⁰⁴ United Nations Security Council Official Records. 922nd meeting. para. 40

¹⁰⁵ Ibid. para. 11

"If the Security Council does not come to Cuba's defence, if it does not take steps to preclude aggression by the United States against that country and if this aggression should nevertheless take place, Cuba will, of course, not stand alone."¹⁰⁶

After two days the Security Council ended its debate of the Cuban complaint with the decision to do nothing. Mr. Wadsworth at the very beginning of the urgent meeting had given what is maybe the best summary of the ability of the United Nations to protect Cuba: "We hope that the Government of Cuba, having failed three times out of three to gain support in the United Nations ... will realise at last that such tactics do not hurt the United States."¹⁰⁷ After the January 1961 effort the failure rate for Cuba had risen to four out of four.

2.7 Bay of Pigs invasion

Senator Fullbright characterised the issue in the following way:

"To give this activity even covert support is of a piece with the hypocrisy and cynicism for which the United States is constantly denouncing the Soviet Union in the United Nations and elsewhere. This point will not be lost on the rest of the world - nor on our own consciences."¹⁰⁸

He was speaking of the planned invasion of Cuba. The foundations for this so-called "Bay of Pigs invasion" had been laid by the Eisenhower administration and its secret training of Cuban exiles in the Guatemalan mountains. The new President Kennedy inherited the plan. On November 17, 1960, shortly after his election, Allen Dulles and Richard Bissell of the CIA informed him for the first time about the US constructed Cuban army in Guatemala. In another meeting a few days later Kennedy, far from being outraged about the hypocrisy, "listened with attention, then told Dulles to carry the work forward."¹⁰⁹ Quite a few liberals both in America and in Europe who had invested new hope in this new President would have been heavily disappointed about Kennedy's support of the invasion option. But they didn't know.

In the meantime the very sensitive issue of the Guatemalan base was to many no longer much of a secret. In the leading Guatemalan daily newspaper *La Hora* one could read already

¹⁰⁶ Ibid. para. 91

¹⁰⁷ United Nations Security Council Official Records. 921 meeting. Para. 52

¹⁰⁸ Quoted in Schlesinger (1965), p. 236

¹⁰⁹ Schlesinger (1965), p. 219

on October 20, 1960, that an invasion of Cuba was being prepared.¹¹⁰ Professor Ronald Hilton, director of Stanford's Institute of Hispanic American and Luso-Brazilian Studies, read the article with much surprise. He published an item about the CIA's training of Cuban exiles in Guatemala that was the basis of a November 19 editorial in *The Nation* which urged US news media to verify the story. Although *The Nation* had sent the editorial to all major news media in New York, nothing happened.¹¹¹

As time passed, it became apparent, too, that the Cuban exiles in Miami didn't share the CIA's urge for secrecy: They began to gossip excitedly about the invasion. In early March 1961, Guatemalan President Ydigoras informed Kennedy that the presence of the Cubans was a mounting embarrassment. And Fidel Castro, too, was well aware that an attack was being prepared. Ramiro Valdés of the highly efficient Cuban intelligence said: "We were very seriously infiltrated in the counterrevolutionary bands." He explained that they were able to track invasion preparations step by step from Miami to the training camp in Guatemala. "It was an open secret."¹¹² The only ones in the region who were still being effectively kept in the dark were the American people, a fact to which the new administration contributed actively. On April 11, 1961, four days before the attack started, Kennedy was asked at his weekly press conference about intervention in Cuba. He replied that he would not undertake, "under any condition, an intervention in Cuba by the United States armed forces." A commentator was later to call this "a superb effort in misdirection."¹¹³ And on Monday April 17, when the invasion had already started, Secretary of State Dean Rusk told a press conference: "The American people are entitled to know whether we are intervening in Cuba or intend to do so in the future. The answer to that question is no. What happens in Cuba is for the Cuban people to decide."¹¹⁴

It must be admitted that Kennedy had been very uncomfortable about the planned invasion. Or to be precise: He was very uncomfortable *about concealing the American Hand in the invasion*.¹¹⁵ But to succeed against Castro's army the invasion had to be sufficiently

¹¹⁰ Schlesinger (1965), p. 221 says that the *La Hora* story came out on October 30, 1960. Hinckle and Turner, p. 67, say it came out on October 20, 1960.

¹¹¹Hinckle and Turner (pp. 67-70) offer one of the best overviews of the sad role the American free press played before the Bay of Pigs invasion.

¹¹² Quoted in Szulc, p. 543

¹¹³ Quoted in Hinckle and Turner, p. 82

¹¹⁴ Schlesinger (1965), p. 257

¹¹⁵ The difference is a major one here. Kennedy was never opposed to the invasion *in general* (for instance for reasons of Cuba's sovereign rights). But he was strongly opposed to a failure and to a detection of the American hand.

strong. Kennedy, as Schlesinger remembers it, sharply concluded that "the trouble with the operation was that the smaller the political risk, the greater the military risk, and vice versa."¹¹⁶ The trouble, obviously, never was that an attack on Cuba could be wrong *per se*.

Allen Dulles and Richard Bissell of the CIA assured the President that the operation would work even better than the overthrow of Guatemala's President Arbenz in 1954. Furthermore Dulles explained that there existed a "disposal problem" with the Guatemalan army: "We can't have them wandering around the country telling everyone what they have been doing."¹¹⁷ That, admittedly, would indeed have been very embarrassing for the new administration. With the Joint Chiefs of Staff and Secretary of Defence Robert McNamara approving the military and Secretary of State Dean Rusk approving the political aspects of the operation Kennedy gave the go ahead.

The 1400 Cuban émigrés were moved by truck from the Guatemalan mountains to the Nicaraguan shore. When they boarded the boats Nicaraguan General Luis Somoza waved and said "Bring me a couple of hairs from Castro's beard."¹¹⁸ In New York upon the initiative of a number of CIA insiders Cuban sugar shares became more attractive. When the brigade hit the beach prices were climbing sharply.¹¹⁹

The attack began on Saturday morning April 15, 1961, when with the invasion fleet still on its way, B-26 bombers with CIA paid pilots who had taken off from Nicaragua started to bomb Cuba's airfields. According to the maxim *conceal the American hand* the planes were flying under false colours. They had the Cuban flag painted under their wings and FAR (abbreviation for Cuban airforce) on their tail. Castro, having long expected the invasion of the big neighbour, was ready. When the bombs fell he is reported to having said calmly: "This is aggression."¹²⁰

The CIA's cover story for the bombing of Cuba was to present it as an act of Cuban pilots who had defected from Castro's army. Therefore in the early morning of that same day, Saturday April 15, a B-26 bearing Cuban insignia crash-landed at the Key West naval air station in Florida. Minutes later the show was repeated by another B-26, this time at Miami international airport. The pilots disappeared behind closed doors but the press was allowed to photograph the planes. The photo of the Miami plane contributed to Stevenson's most humiliating moment at the United Nations. In Florida some unusually critical reporters noticed that the B-26 had a Plexiglas nose. Yet the Cuban B-26 had opaque noses. The CIA cover story was beginning to fade away.

¹¹⁶ Schlesinger (1965), p. 228

¹¹⁷ Allan Dulles on March 11, 1960. Quoted in Schlesinger (1965), p. 227

¹¹⁸ According to Haynes Johnson of *The Washington Post*. Quoted in Turner and Hinckle, p. 84

¹¹⁹ Hinckle and Turner, p 85

¹²⁰ Hinckle and Turner, p. 85

The invasion, to put it shortly, was a complete disaster for the émigrés and a total victory for Castro. When the invasion force waded ashore at the Bay of Pigs in the early morning hours of Monday, 17 April 1961, they were immediately spotted by Castro's army and fired upon. The element of surprise was gone. As soon as the sun rose it became apparent that the CIA's B-26s had in their attacks on the previous Saturday not destroyed all the planes of the small Castro air force. A Cuban Sea Fury sank the vessel carrying the invader's ammunition for the next ten days. Castro's army was much stronger and efficient than the CIA had expected. The CIA's calculation that the Cuban people were dissatisfied with their revolution and would support the invasion with an internal uprising was equally miscalculated. The invaders were doomed. The CIA constructed provisional Cuban government that was held under house arrest in a clapboard house next to an airfield outside Miami was never flown into Cuba.¹²¹ On Wednesday afternoon, only 72 hours after they had first set foot on Cuba, the invading force surrendered.

One of Kennedy's biggest concerns had been that the American hand be concealed and that no Americans took part directly in the invasion. It's almost funny to note that contrary to Kennedy's orders the first two invaders that reached the Cuban shore were Americans. Later, when it became more and more obvious that Castro was smashing the attack, it was Kennedy himself who ordered direct US intervention. On Wednesday morning, when US destroyers were already searching the Cuban coast for survivors, Kennedy sent six unmarked jets from the United States carrier *Essex* that was lying off Cuba over Cuba to cover B-26s that came from Nicaragua to bomb Cuba again. The event has almost symbolical character. In a further failure (this time confusion of time zones) the B-26s arrived one hour before Kennedy's unmarked jets were there to protect their attack. The B-26s ran into Cuban artillery, four of the pilots were killed and Castro, who recovered one of the bodies, could demonstrate to the world that the United States of America had been actively involved in the invasion. The American hand, this time, could not be concealed.

On April 21 Kennedy held a press conference. At the press conference he had held exactly ten days before he had assured his audience that America would of course not attack Cuba. Now he had a slightly different message. He said: "I'm the responsible officer of the Government." In a White House statement the following Monday he put it more directly: "President Kennedy has stated from the beginning that as President he bears sole

¹²¹ Castro was well aware of the fact that after 72 hours of holding an area a government in arms could be declared. Had the invasion been successful the CIA would have flown its provisional Cuban government from Miami to the Bay of Pigs. This government then could have asked other states, the US for instance, for military assistance. A purely Cuban affair, of course. Castro said after the invasion to newsmen: "it became an urgent political need for us to oust them as quickly as possible so that they would not establish a government there" (Quoted in Hinckle and Turner, p. 94).

responsibility."¹²² Richard Walton, one of the early critical historians on the period, dryly comments. "It is true that Kennedy shouldered the blame, but why not? The blame was his."¹²³ It is maybe surprising that most Americans supported their President after the defeat (a Gallup poll of May 3 showed an unprecedented 82 percent behind the administration). Yet some criticism existed. C. Wright Mills, Sociologist and Professor at Columbia University, wired a Fair Play for Cuba demonstration on April 22 the following message: "Kennedy and company have returned us to barbarism. Schlesinger and company have disgraced us intellectually and morally. I feel a desperate shame for my country. Sorry I cannot be with you. Were I physically able to do so, I would at this moment be fighting alongside Fidel Castro."¹²⁴ And a telegram from Cambridge (Mass.) to Schlesinger asked: "Nixon or Kennedy: Does it make any difference?" It was signed: Graduate Students.¹²⁵ Killing hope, as William Blum would say.¹²⁶

Some more distant and more powerful people didn't like the invasion either. The American ambassador in Moscow, Mr. Thompson, had informed the Kennedy administration *before* the invasion that Khrushchev was unusually preoccupied with Cuba.¹²⁷ On April 12, the counsellor of the Soviet Embassy, Georgi Kornienko, asked for an urgent meeting with Schlesinger on which "he said courteously that he did not fully understand the policy of the United States toward Latin America and especially Cuba". Kornienko asked whether the US "excluded the possibility of further negotiation with Cuba". Schlesinger in retrospect judged that Kornienko had been acting on instruction, yet the instruction could not have been very urgent as "his talk was marked by a total absence of warnings or threats."¹²⁸ All this hardly influenced Kennedy. The invasion went ahead. On Monday, April 17 while the invasion force was in full battle Khrushchev sent Kennedy a diplomatic note. He denounced the invasion and promised "all necessary assistance" to Castro.¹²⁹ On April 19, Khrushchev warns Kennedy against arming Cuban émigrés for future attacks on Cuba. Such a policy of "unreasonable actions", he writes, "is a slippery and dangerous road which can lead the world to a new

¹²² Both quotations in Schlesinger (1965), p. 271

¹²³ Richard Walton, p. 49

¹²⁴ Quoted in Schlesinger (1965), p. 268

¹²⁵ Schlesinger (1965), p. 267

¹²⁶ William Blum wrote an excellent book about US military and CIA interventions in the world since World War Two. He entitled it: *Killing Hope*.

¹²⁷ Schlesinger (1965), p. 233

¹²⁸ All quotations in Schlesinger (1965), pp. 246, 247

¹²⁹ Ibid. 257

global war."¹³⁰ The United States of America didn't change their policy. Some of the foundations for the missile crisis of October 1962 had therefore been laid. Tad Szulc solemnly notes: "The Cuban Missile crisis of October 1962 was a historically inevitable consequence of the Bay of Pigs events."¹³¹

2.8 Cuba complains to the General Assembly: April 1961

At the United Nations some people must have felt utterly fooled. In the Security Council meetings of July 1960 Mr. Ortona for Italy had said "we do not believe that our friend and ally, the United States of America, is pursuing a policy of aggressive acts against Cuba."¹³² Mr. Berard for France had said that "one could not but be impressed by the formal assurances [of non-invasion] which [the representative of the USA] repeated here."¹³³ Sir Corea of Ceylon had remarked that "This is a clear statement made by a responsible official of the United States, and must be taken at face value."¹³⁴ Mr. Slim for Tunisia had pointed out that "The United States representative's formal assurances, expressed with his usual sincerity, leave, in our view, no room for doubt as to his Government's peaceful intentions towards the Government of Cuba."¹³⁵ In the Security Council's January 1961 meeting, Mr. Padmore for Liberia had said that "it is inconceivable that the great United States in these days of our Lord would attack the territory of the Cuban people" and that his delegation "heartily welcomes the categorical denial of the United States in connection with such an [invasion] plot"¹³⁶. Mr. Schweitzer speaking for Chile had formulated "We are very much relieved to hear the representative of the United States emphatically reject the Cuban charge and refute the arguments on which it was based."¹³⁷ And Mr. Menemencioglu of Turkey had pointed out that "we have noted the statement of the representative of the United States in which he has reiterated his Government's denial of any intention of aggressive action."¹³⁸ Mr. Tsiang for

¹³⁰ Soviet Public Statements with Respect to Cuban Security, 9/10/62. Quoted in Chang and Kornbluh, p.349

¹³¹ Szulc, p. 562

¹³² United Nations Security Council Official Records. 875th meeting. Para. 14

¹³³ Ibid. para 20

¹³⁴ Ibid. para. 27

¹³⁵ Ibid. para. 38

¹³⁶ United Nations Security Council Official Records. 923rd meeting. Para. 4 and 8

¹³⁷ Ibid. para. 53

¹³⁸ Ibid. para. 69

China had said that "we must note that the United States representative has categorically denied this charge."¹³⁹ Mr. Loutfi, then President of the Council, but speaking for the United Arab Republic had remarked "I take note of this [no invasion] statement."¹⁴⁰ And now, despite all the promises and the trust repeatedly put in them an invasion had taken place. I guess UN historian Evan Luard captures the emotional atmosphere of these days rightly when he explains that "the situation was one of acute embarrassment for the Kennedy administration, which had taken power only four month earlier."¹⁴¹ The fooled ones at the United Nations must have been furious. Or so one should expect.

An attack on a sovereign state probably looked like a strong case to Cuba's Foreign Minister Raul Roa who therefore took the issue to the United Nations. After all, when the bombs were falling on Cuba on Saturday, April 15 1961, the Political Committee still had the Cuban invasion charge on its agenda which the General Assembly, following the US suggestion, had rejected for the Plenary discussion on November 1 1960. Now the urgency was more obvious. The discussions started on the very same day and lasted for a whole week. Yet the outcome for Cuba was, one more time, one of grievous disappointment. The organisation which had as its primary purposes to "maintain international peace and security, and to take effective collective measures for the prevention and removal of threats to the peace"¹⁴² performed pitifully. At the end of the day only a soft resolution calling on member states "to take such peaceful action as is open to them to remove existing tensions" survived. Not really an "effective measure", isn't it ?

The question that immediately arises is, of course, "Why ?". How could it happen that the United Nations failed so bitterly to live up to its Charter? I think that the obvious and real aggression on the one hand and the inability of the United Nations to react adequately on the other hand justify a somewhat longer analysis. Forty-two nations had spoken. Lets see what they said.

At 3 pm on Saturday, April 15 1961, Raul Roa maybe still hoped that although the bombing had taken place, the invasion might be averted. He explained to the First Committee that B-26 bombers had just attacked Havana, San Antonio de los Baños and Santiago de Cuba, leaving seven persons killed. He said that the invasion coming from Guatemala was now really imminent. Stevenson decided to refute Cuba's complaints with "a few facts."¹⁴³ As he saw it,

¹³⁹ Ibid. para. 75

¹⁴⁰ Ibid. para. 87

¹⁴¹ Luard (1989), p. 385

¹⁴² Very first article of the UN Charter

¹⁴³ United Nations General Assembly Official Records. Fifteenth Session. First Committee. 1149th meeting. Paragraph 6. The Official United Nations transcripts of the First Committee are, contrary to those of the Security Council and the General Assembly Plenary Meetings, always recorded in indirect

the bombing attack on Cuba had been carried out by defecting Cuban pilots who, prior to leaving for the United States, had dropped some bombs on their country. Stevenson exhibited the photograph of one of the planes, pointing to the clearly visible tail markings indicating that the plane belonged to the Castro Air Force. Clearly a Cuban affair. Zorin for the USSR urged that the United Nations should take immediate measures, stressing that "it should not be forgotten ... that Cuba had many friends in the world who were ready to come to its aid, including the Soviet Union."¹⁴⁴ After one and a half hours the meeting rose to meet again the following week. Stevenson had taken the first hurdle for the United States by lying about US involvement and by presenting pictures of faked insignias. In late 1963 US President Lyndon B. Johnson was to tell the United Nations General Assembly: "We support the United Nations as the best instrument yet devised to promote the peace of the world and to promote the well-being of mankind."¹⁴⁵

After the weekend the discussions resumed. Right on Monday morning Roa stated that his country had that day been invaded by "a mercenary force organised, financed and armed by the Government of the United States and coming from Guatemala and Florida"¹⁴⁶ whereupon he quoted the many times Cuba had asked the United Nations for help during the last year. Again he backed up his charges with Newspaper quotations, names and dates. While the fighting was going on in Cuba, Roa stressed that "the present case was a decisive test for the United Nations."¹⁴⁷ Stevenson, loyal to his strategy, said Roa's claims were "totally false. The United States had committed no aggression against Cuba."¹⁴⁸

Yet other members in the Committee couldn't help but show that they were concerned. Mr. Camara from Guinea said that his delegation "recalling its own experience as a victim of colonialism was ready to support any measure aimed at putting an end to the aggression launched from abroad." He stressed that the United Nations "could not remain indifferent."¹⁴⁹ Mr. Brucan for Romania explained that "the United Nations had failed in its duty in 1954 ... Should the United Nations fail again, with respect to the Cuban complaint, the Organisation itself and each Member State would bear a heavy responsibility."¹⁵⁰ Mr. Pavicevic of

speech. In my quotations I shall neglect this and, relying on the accuracy of the transcription, treat them as direct speech.

¹⁴⁴ 1149th meeting, para. 14

¹⁴⁵ White House Press Release, *Remarks of the President to the United Nations General Assembly*, December 17, 1963. Quoted in Haviland, p. 643

¹⁴⁶ 1150th meeting, para. 1

¹⁴⁷ 1150th meeting, para. 20

¹⁴⁸ 1150th meeting, para. 21

¹⁴⁹ 1151st meeting, para. 14 and 1159th meeting, para. 30

¹⁵⁰ 1151st meeting, para. 26

Yugoslavia thought that "the invasion of Cuba was a flagrant violation of the letter and spirit of the United Nations Charter."¹⁵¹ Mr. Nosek for Czechoslovakia and Mr. Lewandowski for Poland expressed themselves along the same lines. Mr. Loutfi for the United Arab Republic condemned the aggression and made the intelligent comment that arms and transport of the ongoing invasion "must have required considerable funds."¹⁵² Mr. Ly who wished to convey "the indignation of the Government and people of Mali at the aggression which Cuba was suffering from counter-revolutionaries which had powerful assistance" unknowingly anticipated the future when he stated that the situation was "alarming" as the USSR had offered Cuba "unconditional assistance."¹⁵³ Mr. Malile for Albania said that the "United States struck at the very roots of the United Nations Charter."¹⁵⁴ Zorin for the USSR said that "the sequence of events had been exactly the same as when the United had organised an invasion of Guatemala" in 1954 and urged for "immediate measures."¹⁵⁵ Mr. Pachachi from Iraq supported Cuba "whose problems and aspirations were strikingly similar" to their own. He asked for "effective measures" and formulated in a for United Nations discussions unusually clear way that it would be far more honest for those who stood behind the invasion "to say frankly that they had decided to get rid of Castro."¹⁵⁶

At one point during the discussions, Roa informed the Committee that the fighting was still going on in his country providing further data on US involvement. A US aircraft had been downed. The pilot's name was Leo Francis Berliss, he carried his pilot's licence, social security card, driver's licence and invasion documents on him.¹⁵⁷ At the UN critical voices continued to make themselves heard. Mr. Jha from India clearly saw that the invasion "must have received outside assistance"¹⁵⁸ and Nepal through Mr. Shaha reminded the Committee that "what had happened in Cuba might happen in anyone of the smaller countries unless the United Nations could become an effective instrument for relieving situations of that kind." He made it clear that "the active participation by any foreign country in a counter-revolution was not permissible."¹⁵⁹ Mr. Palamarchuk for the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic spoke of "an act of provocation for which there could be no justifications" claiming that "the United States

¹⁵¹ 1153rd meeting, para. 3

¹⁵² 1153rd meeting, para. 23

¹⁵³ 1154th meeting, para. 3 and 1158th meeting, para. 24

¹⁵⁴ 1154th meeting, para. 6

¹⁵⁵ 1154th meeting, paras. 37 and 39

¹⁵⁶ 1155th meeting, paras. 1, 2 and 3

¹⁵⁷ 1156th meeting, paras. 46 and 1155th meeting, para. 14

¹⁵⁸ 1156th meeting, para. 2

¹⁵⁹ 1156th meeting, paras. 9 and 10

policy towards Cuba had remained aggressive." ¹⁶⁰ U Thant speaking for Burma stressed that there was "ample evidence that some foreign Powers were involved in accelerating the conflict."¹⁶¹ Mr. Subasinghe from Ceylon commented that the fears that Cuba might be attacked had been justified by events. He said the case was "of direct concern to the many Member States which were small and weak" and asked for "decisive action" by the United Nations.¹⁶²

And more nations continued to sympathise with Cuba more or less openly. Mr. Quaison-Sackey for Ghana expressed his admiration for the Cuban Government and asked the United States to give assurances that it "had not provided and did not intend to provide anti-Castro forces with money, equipment, arms and training."¹⁶³ Mr. Tchobanov for Bulgaria stated more directly that "the United States was guilty."¹⁶⁴ Mr. Noseh for Czechoslovakia stated that there was now "irrefutable evidence that the United States had instigated aggression against Cuba."¹⁶⁵ The representatives of Poland and Romania spoke in a similar way. All in all, one must say that the Revolutionary Government of Cuba had never before received so much understanding at the United Nations for its complaints. Yet the above quotations are but one side of the picture.

The Latin American countries, which were incredibly united, argued along a rather strange line. Ecuador through Mr. Benites Vinueza said that the bloodshed in Cuba was a "civil war."¹⁶⁶ Mr. Sosa Rodriguez of Venezuela stressing that his country felt deep sympathy for the people of Cuba also spoke of a "civil war."¹⁶⁷ Mr. Schweitzer said that the "Chilean delegation believed that the United States authorities were sincere in their denial of any participation by their country in the civil war in progress."¹⁶⁸ Mr. Amadeo said that Argentina had "no reasons to doubt the sincerity" of the United States.¹⁶⁹ Mr. Umana Bernal explained with an allusion to the Second World War that Columbia "had been on the side of the United States ... and was firmly resolved to remain in the camp of democracy and of Western Christian civilisation."¹⁷⁰

¹⁶⁰ 1156th meeting, paras. 24 and 27

¹⁶¹ 1156th meeting, para. 34

¹⁶² 1157th meeting, paras. 1, 2 and 4

¹⁶³ 1157th meeting, para. 14

¹⁶⁴ 1157th meeting, para. 17

¹⁶⁵ 1159th meeting, para. 35

¹⁶⁶ 1153rd meeting, para. 7

¹⁶⁷ 1155th meeting, para. 15

¹⁶⁸ 1156th meeting, para. 21

¹⁶⁹ 1155th meeting, para. 21

¹⁷⁰ 1156th meeting, para. 15

El Salvador through Mr. Urquia added another "civil war" statement¹⁷¹ while Peru left it at a reiteration of the claim that the OAS would be a good agency to deal with the Cuban case.¹⁷² The same feelings were expressed by Panama.¹⁷³ But surely the best effort at distorting the truth was made by Guatemala through Mr. Alejos: "the forces which had landed in Cuba had not been trained in Guatemala and had not come from Guatemalan territory. Guatemala had never allowed and would never allow its territory to be used for the organisation of acts of aggression against its American sister republics."¹⁷⁴ And for those who wanted another example of his convincing theories he declared that the invasion of Guatemala in 1954 had been undertaken not by United States mercenaries but by "Guatemalans who had wanted freedom and democracy."¹⁷⁵ Nicaragua through Mr. Roman was not much inferior to Guatemala with its denial "that his Government had participated in any way in aggressive acts." Nicaragua "would continue to maintain complete neutrality."¹⁷⁶ All things considered the representatives of Latin America stood more or less explicitly behind the United States and against Cuba. From today's perspective it is almost ironical that the draft resolution of exactly this group would finally be adopted.

The only odd one out in that group was Mexico. Although it too spoke in its draft resolution of a "civil war", Padilla Nervo in the discussions made the sensible remark that "no foreign Power had the right to instigate or bring about the fall of a Government which was not to its liking." He explained that "Mexico's support for the right of self-determination was based on bitter historical experience." And again, unknowingly, the direct links to the events of October 1962 were established:

"It would be impossible to prevent any country or geographical area from becoming the battleground of third Powers unless the principles of non-intervention and self-determination were respected. Mexico did not want Cuba to become the catalyst which might touch off a chain ending in world war. For like Laos, the Congo, Korea and Germany, Cuba was a political nerve-centre of the world today."¹⁷⁷

¹⁷¹ 1158th meeting, para. 6

¹⁷² 1158th meeting, paras. 1 and 2

¹⁷³ 1158th meeting, para. 23

¹⁷⁴ 1154th meeting, para. 4. This is the most blunt lie I've ever seen in all UN documents I've read. Misleading is a common practice, but such blunt lying is, luckily, very seldom.

¹⁷⁵ 1154th meeting, para. 41

¹⁷⁶ 1159th meeting, para. 14. The Nicaraguan delegate, by the way, did not say whether Somoza had really asked the embarking invasion force to bring him a hair from Castro's beard.

¹⁷⁷ 1154th meeting, paras. 18 and 24

The chain reaction continued. And if it could not have been stopped at the eleventh hour world war would have come, too.

And what did the rest of the world say? Italy's Mr. Ortona said that "the course of events showed that the United States has scrupulously refrained from interfering. That restraint was... remarkable."¹⁷⁸ The man who represented the whole of China termed Cuba's accusation as "hollow". Mr. Liu must have felt it the right moment to praise the United States and said that "an impartial survey of United States foreign policy could not fail to reveal that the good-neighbour doctrine, as applied in particular to Latin America, was founded ... on ... co-operation." And he continued: "The United States had always endeavoured to encourage economic development and democracy in the whole world."¹⁷⁹ Australia as well commented admiringly on the "good neighbour policy of the United States" and stated that it was impressed with the statements of the Latin American representatives and would follow their resolution.¹⁸⁰ Stevenson, representing the prime suspect in "the courtroom of world opinion"¹⁸¹, spoke comparatively little, but deserves to be mentioned here again with his brilliant argument that "the best evidence that the United State was not concerned in the present action was the fact that it had so far failed of its purpose."¹⁸² Sir Patrick Dean explained that it "had been the experience of the United Kingdom Government that it could rely upon the word of the United States."¹⁸³ Mr. O'Brien for Ireland said that

"it was true that the Assembly, which seldom condemned the actions of a Member State, had condemned the Soviet action in Hungary. That, however, was a case in which a great Power had actually used its armed forces to overthrow the recognised Government of a small country and to crush its people, whereas in the case under consideration the President of the United States had declared that United States forces would not intervene in Cuba. There was thus a very clear distinction between the two cases."¹⁸⁴

¹⁷⁸ 1158th meeting, para. 12

¹⁷⁹ 1156th meeting, para. 31

¹⁸⁰ 1158th meeting, para. 17

¹⁸¹ As Stevenson pointedly called the UN on another occasion (United Nations Security Council Official Records. 1025th meeting: October 25, 1962. See also chapter 3.6).

¹⁸² 1159th meeting, para. 17

¹⁸³ 1156th meeting, para. 39

¹⁸⁴ 1159th meeting, para. 34

A remaining group of states was clearly worried, yet hesitant. Mr. Nesbitt for Canada said that essential information was unfortunately not available;¹⁸⁵ Mrs. Rössel, the only woman to speak at the committee, commented for Sweden that one should obtain more objective information;¹⁸⁶ Mr. Shukairy of Saudi Arabia who said he sympathised with the Swedish attitude simply couldn't believe the charges against the United States and called them "fictitious" but demanded the US to explain how the invasion had taken place.¹⁸⁷ Pakistan's mister Hasan claimed that "the Committee was in no position to investigate the truth"¹⁸⁸ and Afghanistan said as well that "full information was not available."¹⁸⁹ Nigeria's representative Mr. Wachuku, too, said that the "Committee had not sufficient evidence to brand any Member State an aggressor at the current stage" but stressed that "if an impartial inquiry furnished categorical evidence" he would support the condemnation.¹⁹⁰

The problem was that no such inquiry was ever made. Instead the 98 members of the Committee voted on Friday. Four draft resolutions had been handed in. Of these four, none provided specific provisions that would enable the United Nations to take action. Only the strongest one named the United States an aggressor. A milder one condemned no one but simply called for the "immediate cessation of military operations against Cuba." A draft-resolution that had been put forward by Mexico, again not naming any aggressor, similarly asked that all countries "put an end to any activity which might result in further bloodshed." The forth resolution submitted by seven Latin American countries contained no hint of criticism and furthermore tried one more time to move the Cuban case from the UN to the OAS. The Committee was only able to pass the last two draft resolutions over to the Plenary Meeting of the General Assembly where the battle immediately continued.¹⁹¹ But in the Plenary only the

¹⁸⁵ 1156th meeting, para. 37

¹⁸⁶ 1159th meeting, para 29

¹⁸⁷ 1157th meeting, para. 8 and 11. 1159th meeting, para. 42

¹⁸⁸ 1158th meeting, para. 14

¹⁸⁹ 1158th meeting, para. 25

¹⁹⁰ 1159th meeting, para. 31

¹⁹¹ A crucial question in the Committee was how strongly the soft Latin American draft resolution would be supported. It got strong support: 61 against 27 with 10 abstentions (compared to 42 against 31 with 25 abstentions of the Mexican draft resolution). Here are the countries:

In favour: Chad, Chile, China, Colombia, Congo (Brazzaville), Congo (Leopoldville), Costa Rica, Cyprus, Dahomey, Denmark, El Salvador, Federation of Malaya, France, Gabon, Greece, Guatemala, Honduras, Iceland, Iran, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Ivory Coast, Japan, Laos, Liberia, Luxembourg, Madagascar, Netherlands, New Zealand, Nicaragua, Niger, Nigeria, Norway, Pakistan, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Philippines, Portugal, Senegal, Somalia, Spain, Thailand, Togo, Tunisia, Turkey, Union of South Africa,

seven Latin American countries' resolution, the softest of them all, survived. The referral to the OAS had been voted out of the final resolution.

So what remained at the end of the day? Hardly anything. Despite the bombs. Despite the invasion. The UN had decided to take no specific action, to label no one an aggressor and to leave it with a call on member states "to take such peaceful action as is open to them to remove existing tensions." A heavy disappointment for Cuba.¹⁹² Zorin, who had just the day before "hoped that the United Nations do its duty towards the Cuban people", had lost the battle. The second part of his above statement was: "If not, the Cuban people could rely on the protection of their true friends."¹⁹³

I have asked at the beginning of this chapter why the United Nations failed so bitterly in this case. The answer must now be obvious to anyone. The most important reason was that the United States deceived the UN members about the leading American hand in the invasion. The same goes for Guatemala and Nicaragua. Had all these three nations admitted their action, the United Nations could have acted. A second reason was that in this case a very powerful member was the accused. Quite a few members knew that the accused could influence their own spheres of interest and as they didn't want that they sacrificed Cuba. Thirdly the accused was an interesting economic partner of many.¹⁹⁴ Finally it was unfortunate that the draft resolution that condemned the aggression came from the USSR. This set the

United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, United States of America, Uruguay, Venezuela, Argentina, Australia, Austria, Belgium, Bolivia, Brazil, Cameroon, Canada, Central African Republic.

Against: Cuba, Czechoslovakia, Ghana, Guinea, Hungary, India, Indonesia, Iraq, Lebanon, Libya, Mexico, Morocco, Nepal, Poland, Romania, Saudi Arabia, Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic, Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, United Arab Republic, Yemen, Yugoslavia, Afghanistan, Albania, Bulgaria, Burma, Byelorussian Soviet Socialist Republic, Ceylon.

Abstaining: Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Ethiopia, Finland, Jordan, Mali, Sudan, Sweden, Upper Volta, Cambodia.

¹⁹² In his essay *Systeme der kollektiven Friedenssicherung* Kreis maintains: Die UNO "Mitglieder wissen, dass sie durch das Organ der kollektiven Sicherheit weder ernsthaften Schutz noch ernsthafte Strafe erfahren werden." (p.28). The Bay of Pigs evidence illustrates this claim almost too clearly.

¹⁹³ 1159th meeting, para. 13

¹⁹⁴ The economic implications of every political decision can of course never be neglected. Just recently, in April 1997, one could observe another example of this. At the annual United Nations Human Rights meeting in Geneva the question was whether China should be criticised. Some bigger European Countries who wanted to sell Airbus planes to the big Chinese market together with the United States who had already sold Boeings to China decided not to criticise. Denmark and a few others courageously maintained that they would not sell out ethics for economic interests. But this of course was not a majority position. China was not reprimanded.

cold war framework within which some members were unable to think independently. Had the condemnation been put forward by Sweden, for instance, the UN would have stood a better chance to live up to its Charter.

The detailed analysis above also shows, and this is important for my whole study, that to judge the United Nations as one body is on the one hand a necessity but on the other hand it is an oversimplification. One should judge its members. When the majority principle reigns it is not enough, as we have seen, when out of 98 only 30 or 40 states are willing to provide support. Majority support is essential. It must therefore be kept in mind that the judgement that "the United Nations failed" neglects an outvoted minority that had tried to make the world organisation successful.

Maybe some might want to know whether the US government had even misled cold war liberal Adlai Stevenson. Did he know? It's almost ironic that Stevenson who until early April 1961 was still in the dark about the US invasion plans had got suspicious through oblique references in the *New York Times* of April 7, one of the very newspapers that US representatives at the UN had classified as unreliable when Roa had used them in his quotes. Stevenson's checking up in Washington where Kennedy "had been much concerned about the UN aspect of the Cuban operation"¹⁹⁵ clarified things. On April 8, Arthur Schlesinger and CIA agent Tracey Barnes came to New York and briefed Stevenson in a long talk about the Cuban invasion. For those who therefore wanted to know whether Stevenson knew and consciously misled the public in "the courtroom of world opinion", here is the answer: He did.¹⁹⁶

¹⁹⁵ Schlesinger (1965), p. 253

¹⁹⁶ To do justice to Stevenson one should consider the wider context. Stevenson who had framed letters by Washington, Lincoln and Albert Schweitzer hanging in his office was considered by the White House as "too soft", "too liberal" and in the eyes of his nominal superior, Secretary of State Dean Rusk, "too prone to compromise with the Soviets" (Broadwater, p. 199). He was therefore a clear dove already before the missile crisis. Still, I think that Stevenson biographer Jeff Broadwater lets the US representative off too easily - maybe for the same psychological reasons that Lawrence Wittner saw as the foundations of the Kennedy myth: "it filled the terrible need to find an American President who fought for peace and social justice in the Cold War era." (Wittner, p. 236) Broadwater emphasises Schlesinger's quote that the briefing had been "probably unduly vague" (Schlesinger (1965), p. 254; Broadwater, p. 205. Corrigenda: Broadwater says the debate was in the UN Security Council. It was of course in the First Committee). Porter McKeever, another Stevenson biographer, quotes the same Schlesinger passage. I have of course not had access to any transcripts of the allegedly "unduly vague" meeting of April 8 1961. It is even doubtful whether any exist, but I conclude that if Stevenson had "wholly disapproved of the plan" he must have known enough (although he most probably believed the bombing story). He can therefore not be let off too easily because he was an actor, not only a victim. He had lied and he knew it. Not for nothing had Stevenson briefly considered resigning after the debate

Furthermore, the comment he made in the Security Council on the Bay of Pigs invasion more than a year later, at the height of the Cuban missile crisis is especially sad: "I have no apologies to make for ... the assistance which these brave Cuban refugees received from our hands."¹⁹⁷

2.9 Excursus: Guatemala 1954

Why, one might wonder, is it justified to include an excursus on Guatemala in a study that is concerned with the United Nations and the Cuban crisis? There are, basically, two justifications. First of all the undeclared war against Guatemala of 1954 bears such striking parallels to the Bay of Pigs invasion of 1961 that an excursus is indeed enlightening in the best sense of the word. In both cases the CIA planned and executed the operation. And in both cases the United Nations suffered from pressures that prevented it from reacting adequately. The second justification is that an excursus offers room for more general reflections.¹⁹⁸

President Jacobo Arbenz of Guatemala took office in January 1951 after having been elected democratically by a wide margin. Like Fidel Castro after him he decided that if any social change was to be reached a land reform had to be part of his reform program. A fair conclusion, one might say, considering the fact that in Guatemala, a country almost completely rural, 2.2 percent of the landowners owned 70 percent of the arable land . But his expropriation of large tracts of mostly uncultivated land which he distributed to approximately 100'000 landless peasants made him the arch enemy of the United Fruit Company whom he was offering \$ 525'000, their own declared valuation for tax purposes. Unfortunately for President Arbenz United Fruit did not only control Guatemala but had powerful friends in Washington, too. "CIA Director Allen Dulles was a stockholder. His brother, Secretary of State John Foster Dulles, also held a large block of shares, and Dulles' New York law firm, Sullivan &

on the first day. Not for nothing had he described the whole episode to Pierre Salinger as the "most humiliating experience" of his public career (Broadwater, p. 207). Charles Yost, who was for the US in the General Assembly Plenary, reports that Stevenson "thought his credibility and usefulness had been destroyed" (McKeever, p. 490). To Agnes Meyer, Stevenson wrote in May that "the Cuban absurdity made me sick for a week" and in the same letter he said: "... but I've been surprised how little it seems to have affected my *personal* regard." (Broadwater, p. 207). Yost was similarly surprised: "We got amazingly little flak under the circumstances". (Mc Keever, p. 490). I share that surprise.

¹⁹⁷ United Nations Security Council Official Records. 1022nd meeting, para. 50, Tuesday October 23, 1962. Schlesinger had drafted and Kennedy had cleared the speech (McKeever, p. 523).

¹⁹⁸ I follow mainly William Blum's chapter: *Guatemala 1953-1954: While the world watched*. In Blum, pp. 72-81.

Cromwell, was United Fruit counsel. General Robert Cutler, chairman of the National Security Council, which approved covert operations, sat on the United Fruit board of directors."¹⁹⁹ Honourable academics were not too lazy to make an effort for a good cause: Yale man and former professor Richard M. Bissell had joined the CIA and engineered the overthrow of Arbenz. A few years later he was to assure Kennedy that the Bay of Pigs invasion would work even better than Guatemala.

Washington officially decided that Arbenz was a Communist and therefore had to go. After a few setbacks the CIA invasion began in earnest on 18 June 1954. "No State, or group of States has the right to intervene directly or indirectly, for any reason whatever, in the internal or external affairs of any other State."²⁰⁰ The CIA's army crossed into Guatemala from Honduras and aeroplanes dropped bombs on ports, military buildings, a school, the international airport and several cities. In addition the CIA broadcasting team spread the rumour that rebels were everywhere and advancing.²⁰¹ While the Guatemalans were appealing to the United Nations for help some of Arbenz's officers threatened to resign or defect to the other side. Arbenz stood with his back to the wall. He tried to arm supportive civilians but army officers stopped the disbursement of weapons. The CIA left nothing to chance and even sunk a British freighter that had come to pick up coffee and cotton and was docked in Guatemala. After all, it could have been fuel for Arbenz's army. In the end the propaganda was crucial: The Guatemalan belief that the enemy was invincible greatly helped the invading forces under Castillo Armas. In the end Arbenz was forced to resign.

Even after Arbenz had been overthrown the propaganda was not over. In an event that reminds one of the reporting on the 1991 Golf War foreign correspondents were taken on a tour through Arbenz's former residence where they could find rooms filled with school textbooks published in the Soviet Union.

The new Guatemalan Government stopped the land reform and expropriations that had already been carried out were declared invalid. United Fruit not only received all its land back, but the new government banned the banana worker's union as well. Seven active labour organisers were found mysteriously murdered in Guatemala City. An Argentinean doctor who

¹⁹⁹ Hinckle and Turner, p. 41

²⁰⁰ Charter of the Organization of American States, Article 15. Ratified at Bogotá in 1951.

²⁰¹ The psychological warfare over the radio was directed by E. Howard Hunt, later of Watergate fame, and David Atlee Philipps. Philipps, a newcomer to the CIA had asked his superior Tracy Barnes a sensible question when he had first been briefed on the Guatemalan project: "But Arbenz became President in a free election. What right do we have to help someone topple his government and throw him out of office?" Later, of course, he overcame this critical period and helped the CIA in its fight against Communism. David Atlee Philipps: *The Night Watch: Twenty-five Years of Peculiar Service* (Athenaeum, New York, 1977) pp. 34-5. Quoted in William Blum, p. 79

had lived in Guatemala since sometime 1953 had tried unsuccessfully to organise armed resistance against the invading forces. His name was Ernesto "Che" Guevara.

And the United Nations? A complete failure. The Security Council met on June 20 1954 and Mr. Lodge for the United States declared that this was "a revolt of Guatemalans against Guatemalans." It, of course, "caused grave concern to the United States Government" which had "no connection whatever with what is taking place." For those who were not convinced, Mr. Lodge submitted a character study of the highest United States official:

"To anyone who knows President Eisenhower, and many of you in this room know him, it must be crystal clear that he is a man who is utterly devoted to the principles of democracy, to the rights of man, who abhors all forms of imperialism. He is a man ... who has shown ... since the day when he was a small boy in Kansas, that his heart is always on the side of the little man who is trying to get by in life."²⁰²

Against the protests of Guatemala and the Soviet Union, an old trick was played by the United States: The issue was handed over to the OAS. And the Organisation of American States not coincidentally took a long time to act. Guatemala had almost been completely overrun when it appealed to the Security Council again on June 25. Then the United States argued that the Council should not even consider the matter as the OAS was now in charge. The Soviet Union protested and urged that it was the duty of the Council to protect an attacked state. Yet the question was not put on the agenda. Besides the Soviet Union only Denmark, New Zealand and Lebanon had supported the claim that the matter should at least be considered. France and Britain, on whom Eisenhower and Dulles "had come down hard"²⁰³, abstained, knowing well that this would mean that there were not enough votes for inscription. The one to suffer from this was Guatemala. The OAS fact-finding body had only arrived in Guatemala on June 30, just after Arbenz had resigned.

United Nations Secretary Dag Hammarskjöld was so upset with the American machinations that he confided that he had "to reconsider my present position in the United Nations."²⁰⁴ And even UN historian Evan Luard who is generally moderate in his comments admits: "There has perhaps been no episode in the organisation's history to discredit to its reputation as this. Instead of acting as an organisation to defeat aggression, it acted in a way carefully calculated to allow aggression to succeed. The fact was that the United States ... did not wish that the UN should in this case take action to halt, or even to condemn, the

²⁰² United Nations Security Council Official Records. 675th meeting, paras. 158, 159 and 161

²⁰³ Blum, p. 79

²⁰⁴ Brian Urquhart: *Hammarskjöld* (1972), pp. 91-94. Quoted in Blum, p. 80

invasion."²⁰⁵ Looking back from 1995, Anthony Parsons concludes that generally little of the suffering of Latin America "has reached the agenda of the Security Council."²⁰⁶

A few years after 1954, another nation complained to the Security Council about US aggression. It was Cuba. In July 1960 its representative made it quite clear that Cuba knew about the 1954 staging, "but Cuba is not Guatemala and history will not repeat itself without catastrophic consequences for the United States."²⁰⁷ In January 1961, the same representative complained again to the Security Council. This time he said "it should be stated here that if the United States manages to invade Cuba, we shall not be alone and they may meet not another Guatemala but their Waterloo."²⁰⁸

At this point of my discussion I shall broaden the specific analysis to a more general reflection. In his book "What Uncle Sam really wants" (1992) Noam Chomsky of the United States MIT institute claims that the main interest of US foreign policy is to protect US business interests abroad. The main enemy were the poor. If the protection of US interests could be achieved through democracy and human rights, this was acceptable. If not, even aggression would be used to secure business interests.

As a young student I do not feel entitled to comment in an entirely competent manner upon Chomsky's thesis as it spreads over a vast field of which I have analysed only two cases. But for these two cases, Guatemala and Cuba, I can state that they clearly support Chomsky's claim. I equally have to think of what U Thant said at a press conference in Helsinki in July 1962: "If one reads the history of mankind thoroughly and closely and deeply, one comes to the conclusion that no country in the world had permanent friends or permanent enemies, but only permanent interests." And at a dinner party for the United Nations Association of Great Britain and Northern Ireland he said in 1968: "In today's world no country's national interests

²⁰⁵ Evan Luard calls his first history of the United Nations pointedly *Years of Western Domination*. Luard, (Volume I) p. 300

²⁰⁶ Parsons, p. 153

²⁰⁷ United Nations Security Council Official Records. 874th meeting, para. 27

²⁰⁸ United Nations Security Council Official Records. 923rd meeting, para. 151. It was not compelling to choose Guatemala. Arthur Schlesinger euphemistically speaks of "the Indonesian adventure" and says it would have been an even closer parallel to the Bay of Pigs invasion than Guatemala: "The Indonesian adventure - a far more exact model for the Bay of Pigs than Guatemala - was a total failure." (Schlesinger (1978), p. 457). For an unsuccessful UN, Nicaragua might be an even sadder example than Guatemala. In the 1980's, the Reagan administration vetoed eight resolutions relating to Nicaragua. It is not exactly encouraging to think that many examples exist, but they do.

remain within its own frontier."²⁰⁹ This goes certainly for almost all countries and is clearly increasingly true in the 90's. Robert Gregg, speaking on a recent example, relates that "a bumper sticker seen on US highways asserted that there would have been no hue and cry, much less an Operation Desert Storm, had Kuwait's principal export been broccoli."²¹⁰

2.10 Operation MONGOOSE

Kennedy had been very embarrassed about the Bay of Pigs invasion. Not embarrassed that it had taken place, for after all he had authorised it, but embarrassed that the American hand had for once been openly exposed and especially embarrassed that the invasion had failed. After the invasion Kennedy had said to Nixon: "It was assured by every son of a bitch I checked with - all the military experts and the CIA - that the plan would succeed."²¹¹ But the plan didn't succeed and consequently those who were responsible had to go. Allen Dulles, the CIA chief who had been in office for eight years had to go. Richard Bissell, former Yale professor and architect of both Guatemala 1954 and the Bay of Pigs, was fired, too. John F. Kennedy now needed someone for the post that he could trust for he didn't want to face a similar embarrassment again. First he thought that his brother could be chief of the CIA. But Robert thought that this was a bad idea "because I was a Democrat and a brother." Thus they settled on John McCone as the new head of the CIA, "neither a brother nor a Democrat but a properly hard-boiled Republican industrialist" as Schlesinger wittily remarks.²¹² And Robert Kennedy quietly received an informal watching brief over the intelligence community. If it was informal and quiet it surely couldn't clash with democratic virtues.

The failure of the Bay of Pigs invasion meant in no way that US aggression against Cuba would now stop. On the contrary: It was to be stepped up.²¹³ On November 4 1961, there was another secret meeting in the White House in which US policy towards Cuba was discussed. Robert Kennedy's idea was "to stir things up on island with espionage, sabotage,

²⁰⁹ Both quotations are contained in the excellent United Nations publication: *Portfolio for Peace. Excerpts from the writing and speeches of U Thant, Secretary General of the United Nations, on Major world issues 1961-1970*, pp. 14, 19

²¹⁰ Gregg, p. 112

²¹¹ Quoted in Hinckle and Turner, p. 96

²¹² Schlesinger (1978), p. 459

²¹³ Geoff Simons made the wise remark that "it is important to remember that what was to emerge as the Bay of Pigs fiasco was not an isolated aberration of Washington strategists but derived from a principal theme in traditional US foreign policy." (Simons (1996), p. 292)

general disorder, run & operated by Cubans themselves".²¹⁴ Another man who some described as "the Ugly American himself" was present at that meeting as well: Air Force Major General Edward Lansdale who had guided the Diem regime in Vietnam.²¹⁵ A secret document stated that "the need for General Lansdale in the Far East had been recognised but it had been decided that for the time being his responsibility would be Cuba."²¹⁶ Lansdale's idea was to "take a very different course" from the CIA "harassment" operations of the summer and to "use our available assets" to crack the Castro regime from within.²¹⁷ The overthrow of Cuba from within was much to the President's liking as he had stressed, as Taylor described it, that "all actions should be kept in low key" since "anything big was going to be charged to the United States".²¹⁸ Lansdale's plan promised a low noise level and thus a good chance to conceal the American hand. Thus it came that Lansdale was assigned Chief of Operations and MONGOOSE was born.

In February 1962, while Cuba was one more time unsuccessfully asking for help at the United Nations, Lansdale presented the new plan that this time should guarantee the overthrow of Castro. By being active on six fronts - the political, economic, psychological, military, sabotage and intelligence front - the plan promised to be highly effective. And it was well within the tradition: "The operational plan for clandestine US support of a Cuban movement inside Cuba to overthrow the Communist regime is within policy limits already set by the President." Only one dimension would again have to be decided by the president: "A vital decision, still to be made, is on the use of open US force". Lansdale made a fair comment when while urging for secrecy he noted on his draft: "Any inference that this plan exists could place the President of the United States in a most damaging position."²¹⁹

The newest US effort to topple Castro, OPERATION MONGOOSE, started in March 1962. In retrospect one element of the plan now seems almost unbelievable, especially with the missile crisis in mind. The timing of the six phases of operation MONGOOSE was such that it was planned to culminate exactly in October 1962. The timing reads: "Phase V, Revolt, first two weeks of October 1962. Open revolt and overthrow of the Communist regime. Phase VI,

²¹⁴ Robert Kennedy's handwritten notes. Quoted in Schlesinger (1978), p. 476

²¹⁵ Hinckle and Turner use the description in allegation to Eugene Burdick's title, p. 110

²¹⁶ Minutes of Operation Mongoose meeting with Attorney General Robert Kennedy, December 1, 1961. Contained in Chang and Kornbluh as Document 4

²¹⁷ Quotations from Schlesinger (1978), p. 476

²¹⁸ Schlesinger (1978), p. 477

²¹⁹ Chang and Kornbluh, Document 5, p.26

Final, during month of October 1962. Establishment of new government."²²⁰ According to OPERATION MONGOOSE and US intentions, there would therefore have been a crisis in Cuba in October 1962 anyway, without the Soviet missiles. And most probably there would have been some speeches. In his television address to the world on Monday, 22 October 1962, President Kennedy made the following statement: "Neither the United States of America nor the world community of nations can tolerate deliberate deception and offensive threats on the part of any nation."²²¹ I need not explain that he was *not* speaking of operation MONGOOSE. For if the October 1962 crisis in Cuba had been caused directly by MONGOOSE with no Soviet missiles involved at all, then the above passage would certainly have been dropped and replaced with something like: "The brave Cuban people have finally toppled their oppressive dictator who made their life sour." Without mentioning MONGOOSE, of course.

Operation MONGOOSE was not a small-scale, but an enormous undertaking. General Lansdale himself described it unambiguously as "a combat situation", US combat against Cuba, by implication. Without a declaration of war.²²² The Miami CIA station, headquarter of the operation, became for some time the largest CIA station in the world operating on a budget well over \$50 million a year and employing more than 300 American personnel. The station was located on the South Campus of the University of Miami using the code designation JM/WAVE and operating under the dummy front "Zenith Technical Enterprises". JM/WAVE leased more than 100 cars and had a private gasoline station to service them.²²³

The principal means by which MONGOOSE wanted to achieve the "internal Cuban revolt" was almost traditional: Make life in Cuba sufficiently sour. For if life was sufficiently sour, revolt would necessarily follow. To make life sour, Cuba's economy was attacked. First of all the United States openly imposed a total embargo on all trade with Cuba. Then there were the secret sabotages. These efforts were not lost, but produced effects. Already in July

²²⁰ Brig. Gen. Edward Lansdale, "The Cuba Project", February 20, 1962 (program review and basic action plan for OPERATION MONGOOSE). Contained in Chang and Kornbluh as Document 5, pp. 23 and 24

²²¹ Chang and Kornbluh, Document 28

²²² Lansdale is quoted in the *Assassination Report*, p. 265

²²³ Branch and Crile, p. 51. Taylor Branch and George Crile have made year-long investigations on the silent war of the CIA against Cuba. They published their revealing article "*The Kennedy Vendetta. How the CIA waged a silent war against Cuba*" in Harper's magazine already in 1975. I wonder why only so few authors have included it in their accounts of the missile crisis. I do not doubt the validity of their story. Neither does Arthur Schlesinger who in *Robert Kennedy and his times* quotes Branch and Crile, p.478

Lansdale had good news for Robert Kennedy: "The evidence is that Cuba's economy is suffering."²²⁴ One of the CIA officials offered this description of the Agency's efforts:

"There was lots of sugar being sent out from Cuba, and we were putting a lot of contaminants in it ... We would have our people pour invisible, untraceable chemicals into lubricating fluids ... Those fluids were going to be used for diesel engines, and that meant the parts would wear out faster than they could get replacements ... We convinced a ball-bearing manufacturer in Frankfurt, Germany, to produce a shipment of ball bearings off centre ... You're talking about big money when you ask a manufacturer to go along with you on that kind of project ... it is true that we were sabotaging the Leyland buses going to Cuba from England, and that was pretty sensitive business."²²⁵

The men needed for the continuous sabotage raids on Cuba were recruited by the CIA from the pool of refugees arriving in Florida. JM/WAVE organised the paramilitary missions against targets inside Cuba by summer 1961. There were times when those attacks that damaged the Cuban economy directly and forced Castro to divert money and manpower to the coastal defence took place at a frequency of one mission every two weeks. Some of them were huge. In December 1961 a seven man team blew up a railroad bridge and watched the train tumble down. Then they burned down a sugar warehouse. Other teams destroyed oil refineries, chemical plants and sugar mills. Lansdale in his July report remarks nevertheless that "In general, this has been a remarkably quiet operation, well within the 'noise' and 'visibility' limits imposed ... higher authority has been kept informed of progress."²²⁶

The most famous raid was probably the attack on the Havana Blaquita Hotel of August 24 1962. Six young Cubans piloted their boat within 200 yards of the hotel where Czech and Russian military advisers had gathered for a party. The attackers shelled the place and speeded off. The story went through the world press. In October 1962 one of the biggest operations was planned to be executed: the destruction of the Matahambre copper mines. An attack on the same target in late 1961 had failed. A second attack started when agents left Florida on October 16 1962. After having come close to the Cuban coast saboteurs left the mother ship on smaller boats and landed on the coast of Pinar del Rio Province to set the C-4 charges on the cable-car towers. The CIA employee Rolando Martinez waited near the shore for several nights to pick up the men of the commando. While waiting on the evening of

²²⁴ Lansdale, "Review of OPERATION MONGOOSE", Phase One, July 25 1962. Contained in Chang and Kornbluh, Document 7, p. 44

²²⁵ Quoted in Branch and Crile, p. 52

²²⁶ Lansdale, "Review of OPERATION MONGOOSE", Phase one, July 25 1962. Contained in Chang and Kornbluh as Document 7

October 22 1962 he turned the radio on. He heard President Kennedy who told the world that Cuba had now become a problem.²²⁷

At the Antigua Missile Crisis conference in 1991 Robert McNamara admitted that "MONGOOSE was stupid, I accept that."²²⁸ Most probably it was more than only stupid. At the Moscow Missile Crisis conference in 1989 it became clear that Cuba's extensive intelligence had found out about MONGOOSE activities almost immediately. Jorge Risquet explained "that we informed the Soviet Union that we were concerned about a direct invasion of Cuba by the United States and that we were thinking about how to step up our country's ability to resist an attack."²²⁹ Historian Lebow clearly sees that "Operation Mongoose risked sending the wrong message to Moscow ... If Castro and Khrushchev realised, as they were bound to, that Washington was behind the attacks, they would likely view them as a prelude to invasion."²³⁰ And Beschloss comes to a similar conclusion: "had Kennedy not provoked Khrushchev by ... suggesting through Operation Mongoose and military preparations that the United States might invade the island in 1962, it is doubtful that Khrushchev would have felt compelled to take his giant risk on Cuba."²³¹ Paterson in his frank manner writes: "It may be plausibly argued that, had there been no exile expedition, no destructive covert activities, and no economic and diplomatic boycott - had there been no concerted United States vendetta to quash the Cuban Revolution - there would not have been an October missile crisis."²³² British philosopher Bertrand Russell in 1963 had come to the same conclusion:

"It must be remembered that the cause of the crisis was America's attempt to destroy the Castro Government and replace it by one more favourable to American financial interests. There can be little doubt that, but for Russian intervention, America would have persisted in this course, thus committing exactly the same crime as Russia had committed in Hungary and East Germany. There is no logic in opposing such crimes when committed by one side and extenuating them if committed by the other."²³³

Before I close this chapter let me address a really sensitive issue. This concerns the question whether the United States would have invaded Cuba again, this time with its regular forces if there had been no Soviet missiles and no missile crisis. The Guidelines for Operation MONGOOSE of March 14 1962 read: "Operation Mongoose will be developed on the following

²²⁷ Branch and Crile, pp. 58-62

²²⁸ Quoted in Blight, Allyn, Welch: *Cuba on the Brink*, p.36

²²⁹ Ibid., p. 19

²³⁰ Lebow and Stein, p. 26

²³¹ Beschloss, p. 564

²³² Paterson (1989), p. 140

²³³ Russell, p. 71

assumptions: a) In undertaking to cause the overthrow of the target government, the US will make maximum use of indigenous resources, internal and external, but recognises that final success will require decisive US military intervention."²³⁴ Four months later, in his July report Lansdale confirms that "US military readiness for intervention in Cuba has been under continuing review within Defence, being improved wherever feasible" and states again that "firm US intention to help free Cuba is the key factor in assessing the Cubans themselves as an operational asset for Operation Mongoose."²³⁵ Then on August 2 1962, Lansdale asked the Pentagon to prepare a paper that considers "Consequences of (US) Military Intervention (in Cuba) to include cost (personnel, units and equipment), effect on world-wide ability to react, possibility of a requirement for sustained occupation, the level of national mobilisation required, and Cuban counteraction." Only six days later the report was ready. After all this was not a new issue for the Defence Department and the Joint Chiefs of Staff. Most of the plan that the Pentagon issued on August 8 1962 remains for me inaccessible. But already the declassified parts are stunning. After having listed the "major units involved in the initial assault" the document looks at "Castro Cuban Counteraction" and maintains that "the military capabilities of Cuba are oriented primarily toward defensive activities" but that "In the future the Castro-Cuban capability for counteraction will improve if Soviet's continue to provide the Cubans with additional military equipment and training. Thus, the urgency of the requirement to remove the Communist government from Cuba is made apparent by Castro's constantly increasing capabilities."²³⁶

I am in no position to answer the sensitive question of whether the United States would really have invaded Cuba a second time. On the one hand planning was obviously in progress, on the other hand the last word lay with the president. And official US representatives have ever since said that the United States didn't want to invade. Former Secretary of Defence Robert McNamara for instance said in the nineties: "we had absolutely no intention of invading Cuba." But he admitted: "So I state quite frankly again that if I had been a Cuban leader at that time, I might well have concluded that there was a great risk of US invasion."²³⁷ Given the communication between Havana and Moscow a Soviet leader, by implication, might well have concluded the same.

²³⁴ Chang and Kornbluh, Document 6, p. 38

²³⁵ Chang and Kornbluh, Document 7, p. 45

²³⁶ Defense Department/Joint Chiefs of Staff, projection of "Consequences of US Military Intervention in Cuba" (prepared for Special Group Augmented), August 8, 1962. Contained in Chang and Kornbluh, Document 8

²³⁷ Robert McNamara in his foreword to Chang and Kornbluh's *Cuban Missile Document reader*, Foreword, p. XII

2. 11 The OAS expulsion

Punta del Este is a seaside resort in Uruguay. And it is as well the place where the Organisation of American States voted at the end of January 1962 to exclude Cuba "from participation in the inter-American system."²³⁸ And the reason? Adherence to Marxism-Leninism, to which Castro had openly confessed already in December 1960, was "incompatible with the principles and objectives of the inter-American system."²³⁹ Cuba, although it had not received much protection from the OAS during the Bay of Pigs invasion and accordingly didn't estimate the independence of the OAS too highly, had protested. Prior to the vote, on January 30, Cuban President Osvaldo Dorticós Torrado had said: "you may put us out of the OAS, but the United States will continue to have a revolutionary and Socialist Cuba 90 miles from its shores."²⁴⁰

It is of course a significant step to expel a member from an organisation. A two third majority was required at the OAS. At the time the OAS had 21 members which means that at the very least 14 votes were required. And they were found. The four paragraphs of the resolution were voted on individually and the all-decisive third paragraph passed with 14 to 1 with 6 abstentions. Cuba was hence excluded. After the vote, Dorticos claimed that "The United States came [to the conference] with the offer of dollars for the Alliance for Progress and made it clear that the award of the United States dollars depended on the position adopted on Cuba."²⁴¹

Rostow, an American delegate at the conference, recalled that he and his colleagues had left for Punta del Este "under quite unambiguous instruction from Kennedy to effect the removal of Cuba from the OAS."²⁴² Chief of Operation MONGOOSE, General Lansdale, noted in his July 1962 report with satisfaction that "the Punta del Este conference was a major US political action to isolate Castro and neutralise his influence in the Hemisphere."²⁴³ Maybe choosing Punta del Este had not been a coincidence. The details of the Alliance for Progress had been set out at Punta del Este five months earlier.²⁴⁴ Journalist John Crosby, present at

²³⁸ *Facts on File*, p. 99

²³⁹ *Facts on File*, p. 99

²⁴⁰ *Facts on File*, p. 100

²⁴¹ *Facts on File*, p. 100

²⁴² Quoted in White, p. 57

²⁴³ Lansdale, "Review of OPERATION MONGOOSE," Phase One, July 25, 1962. Contained in Chang and Kornbluh as Document 7

²⁴⁴ The Alliance for Progress was a noble project. One observer had pointedly called it "enlightened anti-communism" (Quoted in Stephen Rabe, p. 122). As Arthur Schlesinger admits part of the Alliance

the conference, wrote that the essence of what the US delegation told the Latin American delegates was: "If you're not with us, you're against us. If you're against us, Congress is going to take a very cold view of any foreign aid toward your country." Crosby concluded that the Cuban expulsion occurred after "the most savage infighting behind closed doors."²⁴⁵

Given this situation it is almost negligible that from a legal perspective a few problems seem to arise, too. Gerhard Kutzner claims that the argumentation had not been sound: "Die die Resolution tragende Mehrheit hat jedoch jede präzise juristische Argumentation vermieden."²⁴⁶ Firstly the conditions on which the conference had been summoned were not given, the conference could not have been summoned under Article 6 of the Rio treaty. And, secondly, even if these conditions had been given, the exclusion of a member could not have been achieved lawfully through Art. 8 of the Rio treaty. Kutzner concludes that the expulsion of Cuba at Punta del Este had been based on an inadmissible procedure: "Zusammenfassend ist zu sagen, dass das Verfahren, in dem der faktische Ausschluss Kubas aus dem interamerikanischen System erfolgte, unzulässig gewesen ist."²⁴⁷ The Punta del Este conference is an example of the dominant influence of the United States in the OAS. "Die Art, wie die [Cuba] Frage von der OAS gelöst wurde, zeigt den dominierenden Einfluss der USA als Führungsmacht des [Amerikanischen] Kontinents."²⁴⁸

It is even more problematic that Haiti that had cast the decisive fourteenth vote had probably been bought with a several million dollar credit from the United States. The Punta del Este daily, *El Día*, wrote on a February morning in 1962: "Ambassador [De Lesseps] Morris [of the US] has turned in his expensive account for the day: Breakfast, \$ 1.50; Taxi in the morning, \$ 2; Lunch, \$ 2.50; Afternoon taxis, \$ 3; Dinner with the foreign minister of Haiti, \$ 5.000.000."²⁴⁹ Haiti, to enter the jet age, needed an airport in Port au Prince.

was to answer Castro's challenge. (Schlesinger: *The Alliance for Progress*, p. 59) Yet the Alliance in the final analysis failed. Why? I think Hugh Brogan gives the two central reasons. The Alliance failed "in part because Kennedy's insistence on schemes for training soldiers and police officers in counter-insurgency ran contrary to the ostensible ethos of the Alianza ... and in part because it was too ambitious." (Brogan, p. 122).

²⁴⁵ Quoted in White, p. 58

²⁴⁶ Kutzner, p. 173

²⁴⁷ Kutzner, p. 176

²⁴⁸ Kutzner, p. 114

²⁴⁹ Quoted in Hinckle and Turner, p. 127. Mark White, p. 58 says as well that Haiti had been bought. Stephen G. Rabe also says that Haiti had been bought to exclude Cuba from the OAS (Rabe, p. 116). So does Kutzner who claims that even Uruguay might have been bought, p. 116. He quotes three more authors that claim as well that Haiti had been bought: Jerome Slater: *The OAS and United States Foreign Policy*, Columbus (Ohio) 1967, p. 156. R. Macdonald: *The Organization of American States in*

In 1992, the Cuban missile crisis was discussed again in Havana by participants and scholars. Carlos Lechuga, Cuba's ambassador at the Punta del Este conference in January 1962, recalled: "... Brazil, Mexico, Argentina, Chile, Bolivia and Ecuador ... did not agree with the US petition to punish Cuba, and the US managed to get Haiti out of this group by buying the Haitian ambassador. This was done openly; everybody knew about it." Jorge Risquet who had been with Che Guevara in Guatemala in 1954 backed Lechuga and said: "For many years, the OAS was the Ministry of Colonies of the United States". Edwin Martin for the US had rejected these charges. The editors of the 1992 Havana transcripts remark: "the temperature had risen suddenly and dramatically."²⁵⁰

In his Castro biography, Szulc maintains that "there is no question, however, that Cuban-Soviet negotiations over significant Kremlin support for the revolutionary regime began in earnest in the spring of 1962 ... in January the Organisation of American States [had] expelled Cuba from membership ... This was seen in Havana as political preparation for an invasion."²⁵¹ Now there were only nine months left until a world audience would get interested in the Cuban problem under the clear and present danger of nuclear annihilation. Many who heard about the Cuban case for the first time in those days in October 1962 must have thought of it as a new problem. They were wrong.

And maybe all could have been averted. Behind the scenes of the Punta del Este conference that had been held in August 1961 to discuss the Alliance for Progress a promising meeting had taken place. At an open house hosted by a Brazilian delegate, Richard N. Goodwin, Kennedy speech writer and Latin America expert, was beckoned into a private room by Che Guevara, who signalled a willingness to negotiate without preconditions and "declared that Cuba had no political or military alliances with anyone and would make none if the United States promised not to launch a second invasion."²⁵² The meeting broke up after an hour. Goodwin carried the promising overture to Kennedy. Yet the President rejected the suggestion: "it came too soon after the humiliating Bay of Pigs, would likely disturb some Latin American governments, and would legitimize a Marxist government."²⁵³ Thus it came that a promising initiative died an early death at President Kennedy's desk.

Action. In: *The University of Toronto Law Journal*, 1964, p. 395. Byung Koo Pak: *The Cuban Problem in the OAS: A Model for Collective Decision-Making*. Diss. Florida University 1965, pp. 34-35.

²⁵⁰ Blight, Allyn and Welch: *Cuba on the Brink*. 1993, pp. 141-153

²⁵¹ Szulc, p. 574

²⁵² Say Hinckle and Turner, p. 129. Branch and Crile also report parts of the Guevara-Goodwin meeting, p. 61

²⁵³ Paterson (1989), p. 140. Paterson gives the source on which he bases his summary: Goodwin quoted in memorandum for the President, August 22, 1961 Box 115, POF, JFKL.

2.12 Cuba complains to the General Assembly: February 1962

Cuba had been excluded from the OAS. But it was still a member of the United Nations. Therefore on February 5 1962 Cuba raised a complaint in the political Committee of the General Assembly that it had already handed in six months earlier. The United Nations had passed soft resolutions or had done nothing at all before as far as the Cuban case was concerned. This time again it decided to do nothing at all. I wonder whether Cuba in all sincerity had expected anything else.

Garcia Inchaustegui, not Raul Roa, had this time tried to convince the Committee of the reality of United States aggression. In his opening speech he declared that

"there could be no point of conflict between the worker, the student and the honest intellectual of the United States and the makers of Cuba's liberating revolution, for their aspirations were identical; friction existed only with those who pursued certain narrow, egoistic and illegitimate interests."²⁵⁴

He then reminded the assembled representatives that the US had promised not to carry out attacks against Cuba and that nevertheless the attack had occurred in April 1961. He said that after the Bay of Pigs invasion the illegal activities had not stopped, but increased. Further, raids were continuously being carried out by saboteurs and small groups of infiltrators working for the CIA and that Cuba had proof of this. Reynold Gonzalez, Pedro Lopez Perez and Isaias Iglesias Pons had been taken prisoner and had confessed that they had been equipped and paid by the United States. Furthermore Garcia Inchaustegui said that mercenaries were still being trained in many different camps and claimed that the United States, knowing that a mercenary invasion could not succeed, was even preparing intervention by its regular forces.

Inchaustegui criticised that Cuba's expulsion from the OAS had been a result of pressure and blackmail, that the legal preconditions for the expulsion had not been given and that every country had the right to choose its own social system. He asked

"Was [the United States] not ashamed of arming mercenary expeditions, training groups of saboteurs, unleashing campaigns of slander, turning the OAS into an annex of its Government and making preparation for unilateral intervention, all for the purpose of attacking the small, resolute, sovereign and independent island of Cuba?"²⁵⁵

²⁵⁴ United Nations General Assembly Official Records. Sixteenth Session. First Committee. 1231th meeting, para. 1

²⁵⁵ Ibid. para. 26

Inchaustegui closed by saying that Cuba had come to the United Nations before, that aggression had nevertheless taken place and that the United Nations could save Cuba.

Stevenson, who seemed to have recovered well from his uneasiness during the Bay of Pigs discussions, answered that "Cuba had repeated the charges, but had never produced a single shred of evidence to substantiate them."²⁵⁶ A rather strange remark indeed. Stevenson, and this was important for many members, assured the Committee that the United States were not planning to invade Cuba.

Another issue was the export of revolution by Cuba. Stevenson claimed that this was "the real threat to peace in the Americas."²⁵⁷ Inchaustegui before had said that "Cuba could not be blamed if it stood as an example to the peoples of the other countries of Latin America" declaring that "Cuba had no desire to change the form of government in any country."²⁵⁸ That latter claim was not true.²⁵⁹

Zorin, claiming that "the United Nations could not accept such attempts to settle disputes by economic pressure, political blackmail and military intervention, instead of by peaceful means"²⁶⁰, once again stressed the complete solidarity of his government with the Cuban people. Yet the Czech-Rumanian draft resolution that asked the United States to halt interference in the internal affairs of Cuba and to stop all action against Cuba's territorial liberty and political independence was not able to survive the vote. The crucial paragraph had been rejected by 50 to 11 with 39 abstentions.

²⁵⁶ Ibid. para. 39

²⁵⁷ Ibid. para. 29

²⁵⁸ Ibid. para. 20

²⁵⁹ Rather new first hand documents prove this. At the Havana conference in 1992 Castro had admitted that Cuba had been engaged in counterrevolutionary activity outside Cuba. On the African continent Cuba supported, as it is well known, Angola in its war against South Africa and the revolutionary movement in Ethiopia against Somalia. In Latin America, Cuba supported the opposition to Romulo Betancourt of Venezuela. But Cuba must be understood as an actor in its own right, not as a Soviet puppet. Castro emphasised "you can't imagine the reprimand the Soviets sent us because of our aid to the revolutionary movement in Venezuela." "The idea that the Soviets were using us to establish their global hegemony is nonsense. Sincerely. What there was was a great deal of discord, a great deal of criticism by the Soviets in connection with activities we were carrying out." And in Chile Cuba supported the opposition against Pinochet. In El Salvador "we've helped the Salvadorians" and in Nicaragua Cuba supported the opposition to Somoza. Castro: "I do not deny, nor do I intend to deny, the activities we carried out. We wanted changes, of course. We had a political position; We had an ideological position. We wanted revolutionary change." All Quotations in Blight, Allyn and Welch, pp. 268-234

²⁶⁰ 1233rd meeting, para. 42

On February 20 1962 the Cuban item moved from the Political Committee to the Plenary. But with the Czech-Rumanian draft resolution rejected the Committee had no recommendation to make. A very mild resolution recalling that "it is a permanent aim of the United Nations to develop friendly relations based on respect for the principle of equal rights and self-determination of peoples and non-interference in the internal affairs of any State" was submitted by Mongolia.²⁶¹ But not even this one survived as the Cuban charge was part of the text. The rejection came with 45 to 37 with 18 abstentions. Evan Luard comments that "the stage had been reached when no resolution which might appear, even in the most indirect way, to support a Cuban position, was allowed to carry."²⁶²

Before the vote Mr. Plimpton for the United States had described the Cuban charges as "baseless", "unfounded", "completely unproved", "worthless", "crude", "defamatory" and "false."²⁶³ After the vote Mr. Zorin for the Soviet Union stressed "that we no longer live in a period when any State could with impunity resort to the use of force against another State." And he stressed that the Soviet Government had repeatedly stated that "Cuba is not alone ... The Soviet Government's public warnings to the enemies of democratic Cuba remain in force today."²⁶⁴

²⁶¹ United Nations General Assembly. Sixteenth Session. 1104th Plenary meeting, para. 13

²⁶² Luard (1989), p. 389

²⁶³ 1104th Plenary meeting, paras. 22, 24, 25, 26

²⁶⁴ 1105th Plenary meeting, para. 107

2.13 Cuba complains to the Security Council: March 1962

Cuba had received no support from the General Assembly. So it turned to the Security Council. In its letter of February 22 1962, written only two days after the Assembly had decided to do nothing, Cuba had claimed that the United States had at the Punta del Este conference taken "enforcement action" insofar as it had expelled Cuba from the OAS because of its social system and insofar as it had imposed economic pressure, especially through the embargo. Cuba maintained that these acts were illegal and "a prelude to the large-scale invasion."²⁶⁵

Cuba first of all faced a difficult start; on February 27 the Security Council decided not to put the Cuban complaint on its agenda. Sir Patrick Dean for the United Kingdom said that "this Council is being asked to waste its time and effort" and Mr. Plimpton for the United States followed that line by expressing that the UN "should not be perverted and disrupted by constant repetition for propaganda purposes of groundless and self-serving charges."²⁶⁶ Zorin for the USSR had urged the adoption of the agenda saying that "If we want the United Nations to play a positive part in the matter, we cannot shun discussions of such questions merely ... because the United States is the guilty party. This is precisely what the United States does not want proved. This is the crux of the matter."²⁶⁷ After a vote and according to the rules of the Council Cuba had not been permitted to participate in the discussion on the adoption of the agenda. When the eleven representatives voted in the evening of the same day, none was against the adoption of the Cuban issue. Yet only four had affirmatively voted in favour. With the rest abstaining the Cuban complaint was not carried and thus seemed predestined to die an early death.

But Cuba did not give up. It reformulated and handed in a new letter which now asked that the International Court of Justice should judge the legality of the Punta del Este resolutions and its implications. Thus the Security Council on March 14 met again and this time Garcia Inchaustegui was present at the Council table to verbalise Cuba's complaint. He claimed that at the Punta del Este Meeting illegal decisions had been taken and that the United States were preparing for new acts of aggression. First of all the summoning of the OAS's Organ of Consultation under Article 6 of the Inter-American treaty had been illegal. The Organ of Consultation had been conceived as an instrument for collective defence. If it was to meet there had to be an attack or a situation of attack, effective aggression or a real and positive danger to the peace and security of the American continent. Yet this had not been the

²⁶⁵ United Nations Security Council Official Records. Supplement Document S/5080

²⁶⁶ United Nations Security Council Official Records. 991st meeting, paras. 7 and 95

²⁶⁷ 991st meeting, paras. 138 and 139

case.²⁶⁸ Therefore, without these preconditions, "the Meeting of Consultation was invalid from the start."²⁶⁹ Secondly it had been illegal to exclude Cuba on the ground that it had a Marxist-Leninist system as Marxist-Leninist regimes were not illegal. Thirdly the economic pressure that Cuba was faced with was illegal. The decision at Punta del Este to immediately suspend trade with Cuba in arms and implements of war of every kind contained the recommendations that states study the desirability of extending the suspension of trade to other items. On February 3 1962, the US President had promptly prohibited all Cuban imports into the United States and even in Europe states were urged by the USA to reconsider their trade-politics towards Cuba. All this amounted to clear "coercive measures" against Cuba which only the Security Council had a right to impose. Cuba therefore wanted the International Court of Justice to consider the matter: "we are so deeply convinced of the validity of our reasoning that we are requesting the advisory opinion of the court."²⁷⁰ Dorticos explained:

"twenty-one States met at Punta del Este and the only State which was condemned there was the State which in April 1961 was the victim of an invasion organised by the Central Intelligence Agency, an organ of the United States Government. And everybody is aware of this."²⁷¹

Stevenson who tried to defend the United States expressed that Cuba, of course, "was not excluded because of its social system; it was excluded because of its violations of the Charter of the Organisation of American States as ... [Cuba had] ... conducted aggressive and subversive activities against other American Republics ... It was on the basis of these violations that the members of the Organisation of American States at Punta del Este" had expelled Cuba.²⁷² Stevenson must have truly recovered magnificently from the Bay of Pigs shock to base his reasoning on this argument. It is not surprising that he saw no economic aggression, no "enforcement action" thus and came to the conclusion that "nothing remotely resembling a violation of the United Nations Charter is here involved", clearly "no question which merits submission to the International Court of Justice."²⁷³

The Soviet Union's protest had never been clearer in all United Nations discussions of the Cuban issue than in this March meeting. Morozov thought the situation to be "very serious." He stressed

²⁶⁸ Kutzner, the reader will remember, had come to the same conclusion.

²⁶⁹ 992nd meeting, para. 27

²⁷⁰ 992nd meeting, para. 111

²⁷¹ 992nd meeting, para. 120

²⁷² 993rd meeting, paras. 103, 104 and 998th meeting, para. 63

²⁷³ 993rd meeting, paras. 117 and 118

"For our part we deem it necessary to stress with all emphasis that those preparing a new military invasion of Cuba should know full well that in its just struggle the Cuban people is being and will be supported ... As for the Soviet Union, its warnings to the advocates and organisers of a new military adventure against Cuba are extremely clear ... Cuba is not alone. It has many friends ... among them the Soviet Union."²⁷⁴

Stevenson had later replied "I want to comfort him [Morozov] by the reassurance once again - I think for the eleventh time - that the United States is not planning any armed attack on Cuba."²⁷⁵

After an agitated debate about the voting procedures the Cuban draft resolution asking the International Court of Justice to give its opinion on the matter was put to the vote. First paragraph three was voted on which read: "Can the expression 'enforcement action' in Article 53 of the United Nations Charter be considered to include the measures provided for in Article 41 of the Charter? Is the list of these measures in Article 41 exhaustive?". The question seems innocent - but it was nevertheless defeated by seven votes to four.²⁷⁶ If not even this paragraph could survive it was no wonder that later the whole resolution was rejected seven votes to two with Ghana and the United Arab Republic abstaining.

During the debate Sir Patrick Dean of the United Kingdom had given a good summary of Cuba's success at the United Nations:

"Cuba has taken many opportunities to voice grievances against the Government of the United States of America. These grievances have been given a very thorough hearing. What is remarkable is that the relevant organs of the United Nations have repeatedly decided to make no recommendation, to take no action on these complaints."²⁷⁷

Dean himself had voted against taking any action this time, too. Maybe he thought that this would enable him in a future meeting to refer to the even more "remarkable" fact that again no UN action had been taken upon the Cuban complaint. That the Cuban case would soon become "remarkable" in a very different way was a thing that he didn't anticipate.

After the vote had been taken and the result was known Morozov couldn't conceal his frustration and anger. He stated it that the group of seven headed by the United States had

²⁷⁴ 993rd meeting, para. 24

²⁷⁵ 994th meeting, para. 22

²⁷⁶ *In favour:* Ghana, Rumania, USSR, United Arab Republic

Against: Chile, China, France, Ireland, GB, USA, Venezuela

²⁷⁷ 995th meeting, para. 7

"refused to accept that last compromise, that last gesture of the goodwill which the Cuban representative showed here over and over again ... these circumstances exclude the very possibility that the seven ... have any intention of upholding international law and order or maintaining international peace and security in this specific case. Indeed, they have once again paralysed the activities of the Security Council."²⁷⁸

Mozorov continued:

"If I am speaking of this now, it is merely in order to stress that the struggle of the Cuban people ... and the corresponding support .. will not, of course, be stopped or even held back in any way by this decision, which is so discreditable to the Council ... I should like, finally, to repeat a passage from the statement made by the Soviet Government on 18 February 1962: 'Cuba is not alone. It has many friends ... among them is the Soviet Union.'"²⁷⁹

This was the second time within only one week that Mozorov had made this statement with all emphasis. Whatever the other members of the Council thought, this was no coincidence. And neither was it a coincidence that he had raised these very serious complaints at the very end of the Council's discussions. The Soviet Union was frustrated with the United Nation's handling of Cuba's complaints. With the ending of the Security Council's March 1962 meeting the superpower clash was more than only outlined, it was already happening.

Years later, a commentator was to write in his biography that that "rejection was a tragedy. Cuba was justified in proposing ... that a request be addressed to the International Court of Justice ... Cuba was acting in strict conformity with ... the Charter." The commentator was a very moderate and modest man but the incredible case forced him to make the same point yet again: "The failure of the Security Council in March 1962 ... was therefore most regrettable." That commentator was none other than Secretary-General U Thant.²⁸⁰

It was the last meeting of the Security Council to discuss "a missile free" Cuba. In May, Khrushchev would decide that nuclear missiles were the right solution for the Cuban problem and in October the Security Council was to consider in a dramatically changed atmosphere a Cuban problem that had become terrifyingly global.

2.14 Khrushchev's blunder

²⁷⁸ 998th meeting, para. 160

²⁷⁹ 998th meeting, para. 164

²⁸⁰ U Thant, pp. 160 and 173

In his autobiography Khrushchev remembers:

"Given the continual threat of American interference in the Caribbean, what should our own policy be? This question was constantly on my mind ... Everyone agreed that America would not leave Cuba alone unless we did something ... one thought kept hammering away at my brain: what will happen if we lose Cuba? ... If Cuba fell, other Latin American countries would reject us, claiming that for all our might the Soviet Union hadn't been able to do anything for Cuba except to make empty protests to the United Nations."²⁸¹

Khrushchev was worried about Cuba. Nobody can doubt this. He wanted to preserve the Cuban revolution.²⁸² In the context of my analysis especially the last sentence of the above quotation weighs heavily: "empty protests to the United Nations." Is that a correct summary of the events? Unfortunately it is. The evidence clearly shows that the Soviet representative had repeatedly protested both in the Security Council and in the General Assembly and had stressed that Cuba was not alone. Yet for all the protests there had been an invasion of Cuba. For all the protests the United Nations was unable to label the invader an aggressor. Neither

²⁸¹ *Khrushchev Remembers* (translated and edited by Strobe Talbott), pp. 545, 546. Edward Crankshaw in his introduction to Khrushchev's text maintained that "every reader must determine for himself the balance between self-deception and deliberate falsification. There is a good deal of both." I consider the above quotation to reflect a genuine feeling of Khrushchev.

²⁸² Zubok and Pleshakov confirm this. Khrushchev "was fervently dedicated to preserving revolutionary Cuba against a possible US invasion for the sake of the victorious march of communism around the world" (Zubok 1996, p. 260). Anatoli Gribkov, speaking of the missile deployment, mentions the "protection motive", too: "It was both an old Bolshevik's romantic response to Castro and to the Cuban revolution and an old soldier's stratagem for deploying Soviet force to defend an endangered outpost and ally." (Gribkov, p. 10). The almost incredible fact is that the US administration knew this. Already before the Bay of Pigs invasion their own American ambassador in Moscow had made Khrushchev's protection motive clear. Schlesinger remembers: "Ambassador Thompson's cables from Moscow reported Khrushchev's unusual preoccupation with Cuba." (1965, p. 233). Later the CIA confirmed this theory. Its special National Intelligence Estimate Number 85-3-61 "The Military Build-up in Cuba" of 19 September 1962 had explained that "the main purpose of the present military build-up in Cuba is to strengthen the Communist regime there against what the Cubans and Soviets conceive to be a danger that the US may attempt by one means or another to overthrow it." (Quoted in Lebow, p. 425). Ivanovich Mikoyan, a close friend both of Khrushchev and Castro, could not conceal his zeal and once told Dean Rusk: "You Americans must realize what Cuba means to us old Bolsheviks. We've been waiting all of our lives for a country to go Communist without the Red Army. It has happened in Cuba, and it makes us feel like boys again." (Quoted in Beschloss, p. 551)

was the United Nations able to stop the sabotage raids on Cuba. Nor did it react to the OAS expulsion or the effects of Operation MONGOOSE. The protests were, as Khrushchev rightly sees "empty."

In recent years, it has been confirmed that Khrushchev had the idea of secretly sending missiles to Cuba during his visit to Bulgaria in May 1962. Back in Moscow at a top level policy maker meeting on May 21 1962 it was decided to launch operation ANADYR, to deploy and install medium- and intermediate-range missiles in Cuba. Operation ANADYR was planned to be completed by early November.²⁸³ The May decision had therefore been taken after Cuba's July 1960 complaint to the Security Council, after its September 1960 complaint to the General Assembly and after its January 1961 complaint to the Security Council. It had been taken after the Cuban complaints to the General assembly both of April 1961 and February 1962. And it had been taken after the Cuban complaint to the Security Council of March 1962.

Ever since the missile crisis many interested persons have wondered why Khrushchev committed the irresponsible act of sending nuclear missiles to Cuba. How could he ever have thought that the CIA would not find out about these huge objects ninety miles off the Florida coast sooner or later and how could he ever have thought that Kennedy could have tolerated the missiles with all the Cubaphobia that existed in the US leadership? U Thant in his biography thinks that Khrushchev must clearly have been "out of his mind."²⁸⁴

A consensus has emerged that Khrushchev had *several* motives among which were: protect Cuba, gain strategic advantages, strengthen his Berlin position, signal strength to both China and the United States and teach the USA how it feels to have nuclear tipped missiles close to ones borders. No consensus has so far been reached on exactly which motives were crucial in the end. I would like to claim that the motive to protect Cuba was paramount and I base this claim both on Khrushchev's own words and the recent post-Soviet publications by Zubok/Pleshakov and Gribkov.²⁸⁵ Not that Khrushchev was interested in Cuba alone. Cuba

²⁸³ Gribkov, p. 8. For the timing see also: *Khrushchev remembers*, p. 546

²⁸⁴ U Thant, p. 156

²⁸⁵ Many distinguished authors have taken the strategic motive as paramount (See for instance Raymond Garthoff, pp. 9-12). Thus I am in some opposition here. Yet I feel somewhat backed by Zubok/Pleshakov who say: "It was not the temptation to use the Cuban Revolution as a chance to improve the Soviet position in the strategic balance of the superpowers that brought the Soviet missiles to San Cristobal" (p. 260). Yet it seems that strategic motives came right after the protection motive. Khrushchev himself remembers: "The main thing was that the installation of our missiles in Cuba would, I thought, restrain the United States from precipitous military action against Castro's government. In addition to protecting Cuba our missiles would have equalised what the West likes to call "the balance of power" (p. 547). Gribkov gives the same sequence: "[missiles to Khrushchev

was a crucial territory for the whole struggle for supremacy in the Latin American area. In the final analysis it was this wider territory that made the survival of Castro's revolution so important to Khrushchev.

I must stress that for the evaluation of the role of the United Nations it is essential to know which of Khrushchev's motives was paramount. If the strategic argument was strongest, then he might have used Cuba anyway, no matter what UN resolutions against the United States had achieved. But if the protection motive was, as I want to claim, crucial then the United Nations with its own duty to protect Cuba as much as all other member states faces a heavy responsibility.

This raises a serious question: Could a more effective United Nations have prevented Khrushchev from sending his missiles? One can not give a definite answer to this question. But the possibility obviously exists. If Khrushchev had seen a United Nations that protected Cuba's interests efficiently instead of a United Nations that outvoted "empty protest" maybe he would have never committed the unforgivable and sent nuclear missiles to Cuba, a decision which had serious consequences. If indeed the failure of the United Nations was an essential element that made Khrushchev deploy the missiles then the United Nations, or more precisely, some members of the United Nations carry a heavy responsibility for the missile crisis of October 1962.

2.15 Dorticos complains to General Assembly: October 1962

Cuba had complained many times to the United Nations. Yet its address to the Plenary Meeting of the General Assembly of October 8 1962 disrupted the chronology of complaints because it took place before a completely new background and because this completely new background influenced the wording of the address substantially. During the last five months operation ANADYR had strengthened the Cuban military capacities; with the installation of nuclear missiles the operation was now in its final phase. At the very moment when Dorticos was speaking in New York, Soviet soldiers were working on the missile sites in Cuba. The significance of Dortico's statement, as U Thant explains in his memories, "cannot be overemphasized."²⁸⁶

One part of Dortico's two-hour speech addressed a field that the reader is well acquainted with by now. Dorticos condemned the acts of sabotage that were being carried out against his country, condemned the continuous violations of Cuba's territory and airspace and he

seemed] the soundest means of protecting Cuba ... a third attraction for Khrushchev [was that] in one stroke he could redress the imbalance in strategic nuclear forces" (Gribkov, p. 13).

²⁸⁶ U Thant, p. 167

condemned the Bay of Pigs invasion that had taken place despite the United State's promise not to invade. He condemned the economic pressure that had been extended even to Europe and was now trying to suffocate Cuba's economy. In this context Dorticos used two words that would gain world fame exactly two weeks later: he spoke of a "naval blockade" and wondered whether the UN could allow this to happen. He concluded that the United States "sole objective" was "the downfall of the Revolutionary Government of Cuba."²⁸⁷ Dorticos had to interrupt his speech several times because of disturbing shouting that came from the public gallery. UN guards removed 20 demonstrators from the Assembly hall.²⁸⁸ The issue had clearly strong emotional connotations. Dorticos continued to stress that Cuba was not a problem of the hemisphere, that rather under-development, hunger and illiteracy were the problems of the hemisphere and that "the problem of the hemisphere is interference by the United States in the domestic affairs of the countries of this continent."²⁸⁹

Another part of Dortico's speech was markedly different. It was different from Cuba's renewed complaints and different in fact from all Cuban statements at the United Nations since 1959. It started with that by now familiar phrase "Cuba does not stand alone; it has friends"²⁹⁰ and then built on the September resolution of the US Congress which according to Dorticos contained clear signs of US aggressive intent.²⁹¹ Dorticos asked rhetorically: "What shall we say in reply to this? We shall say that Cuba has indeed armed itself; that it has the right to arm itself and to defend itself."²⁹² To the attentive analyst this passage already signals a completely new element of Cuba's complaints. The question of arming Cuba is deliberately foregrounded. But the new character was to become even more obvious. Dorticos continued:

"The important question is: Why has Cuba armed itself? ... We have armed ourselves against our wishes ... because the people of Cuba have a legitimate right ... to defend their sovereign decisions ...

²⁸⁷ United Nations General Assembly Official Records. 1145th plenary meeting, para. 23

²⁸⁸ *Facts on File*, p. 103

²⁸⁹ 1145th meeting, para. 75

²⁹⁰ 1145th meeting, para. 45

²⁹¹ He quoted the relevant paragraphs a) and c) of the resolution. They are: "That the United States is determined

a) To prevent by whatever means may be necessary, including the use of arms, the Marxist-Leninist regime in Cuba from extending, by force or the threat of force, its aggressive or subversive activities to any part of this hemisphere.

c) To work with the Organisation of American States and with freedom-loving Cubans to support the aspirations of the Cuban people for self-determination."

²⁹² 1145th meeting, para. 53

Playa Giron [= Bay of Pigs] ? ... we wiped out this invasion ... because we had exercised in time the right to strengthen our defensive military capability ... That is why we have armed ourselves. We hope to be able one day to throw these armaments overboard."²⁹³

Dorticos continued

"We have been obliged to arm ourselves ... If the United States could give assurances, by word and by deed, that it would not commit acts of aggression against our country, we solemnly declare that there would be no need for our weapons and our armies .. We shall continue, as long as the tragic circumstances so require, to strengthen our military defences for our own protection."²⁹⁴

Then Dorticos claimed that Cuba had always been willing to negotiate with the United States but that the US had refused to negotiate several times and that "the situation today is the deplorable outcome of this contempt."²⁹⁵ After that Dorticos once again stressed the issue of Cuba's arms:

"If ... we are attacked, we shall defend ourselves. We are, I repeat, well equipped to defend ourselves, for while we can of course rely on our unavoidable weapons - weapons that we wish we did not need and that we do not want to use - we can also rely on ... the solidarity of other peoples."²⁹⁶

This paragraph is revealing and I don't think that this is only because today's reader knows the further development of events. For instance "well equipped": What weapons would a country need to claim that it would be "well equipped" against US military power? Surely a few guns, a few tanks and a few planes wouldn't justify such a qualification. And the "weapons that we wish we did not need and that we do not want to use." Must not everybody living in the Atomic age seriously consider the possibility that the reference might be to atomic weapons? For those who didn't yet see Dorticos lifted even more of the secret:

"We sincerely hope that the United States Government will not commit any further error ... If however, to our greatest regret and against our wishes, it does commit such an error, then we put the United Nations on notice here and now that we are determined to fight. If this error is committed, we give warning that the aggression against Cuba, despite ourselves and against our will, could, as has been

²⁹³ 1145th meeting, paras. 53, 54, 55 and 56

²⁹⁴ 1145th meeting, paras. 56, 58 and 60

²⁹⁵ 1145th meeting, para. 67

²⁹⁶ 1145th meeting, para. 80

pointed our here, become the starting point of a new world war ... We only wish to give warning of the risks which we have brought to the attention of the world through the United Nations."²⁹⁷

At the United Nations Cuba was warning the world of the possibility of a new world war. And it had done this with all emphasis. True, Dorticos had not said that Khrushchev had committed the irresponsible act of putting missiles on Cuba but apart from that he had loaded his speech with such a lot of talk about Cuba's regret about its armament and the incredible risks entailed that serious analysts should not have been mistaken. I therefore think that Walton is plausible when he claims: "Assuming normal competence by the high-powered team called together by Kennedy to consider policy, and assuming that if its members had somehow overlooked the speech, lower-level people would have called attention to it, the Kennedy administration could hardly have missed its significance."²⁹⁸

Yet even if the United States or the world through Dorticos had found out one week earlier about the missiles, the problem of "untying the knot" would have remained. In the final analysis, Dortico's speech must therefore be seen more as an explanation for an existing situation than as a suggestion how this specific situation might be solved. The best way to untie the knot would probably have been a private approach. U Thant argues that Dortico's October 8 appeal "made President Kennedy's ultimatum [expressed on TV on Monday October 22] unnecessary, and it [Kennedy's ultimatum] only brought the world to the brink of a nuclear war."²⁹⁹

In his reply Mr. Stevenson had implied that Dorticos had abused the podium of the United Nations and said that Dortico's speech contained "unparalleled calumnies, slanders and misinterpretations."³⁰⁰ The President of the Assembly, Mr. Zafrulla Khan from Pakistan, had after Dortico's speech remarked somewhat enigmatically: "the Assembly has listened with attention to the address and I have no doubt will draw from it such guidance as it may be capable of yielding with reference to the subjects which the Assembly will be called upon to consider."³⁰¹

2.16 Conclusions on the prelude to the missile crisis

²⁹⁷ 1145th meeting, para. 81 and 83

²⁹⁸ Richard Walton, p. 114

²⁹⁹ U Thant, p. 168

³⁰⁰ 1145th meeting, para. 89

³⁰¹ 1145th meeting, para. 85

I come to three conclusions concerning the prelude to the missile crisis. The most general and very important first conclusion that must be stated here is that the historiography of the Cuban missile crisis must necessarily include the prelude. A two-weeks approach can in the light of the evidence not be justified any longer.

More specifically as regards my question of the role of the United Nations in the process a twofold conclusion arises. First of all it is obvious that during the three years considered the General Assembly and the Security Council were not able to mitigate the tensions that existed between the United States and Cuba. One can see that it was always one party, i. e. Cuba, that brought the conflict to the attention of the United Nations but that the United Nations on the other hand were never able to react to Cuba's complaints adequately. Cuba repeatedly feared aggression, even suffered real aggression, and the United Nations were not able to take steps that could have assured Cuba that its sovereign rights were not endangered. One cannot help but come to the conclusion that the United Nations therefore failed in its obligations towards Cuba during this prelude to the missile crisis.

The third conclusion is directly related to the second conclusion. The United Nation's efficiency to react to Cuba's complaints during the prelude to the missile crisis had clearly been complicated through the position adopted by the Government of the United States of America.³⁰² It is established beyond doubt that the Government of the United States had organized, paid and equipped the Bay of Pigs invasion, that the Government of the United States through Operation MONGOOSE and other programs had encouraged, trained, paid and equipped sabotage raids on Cuba, that the Government of the United States had tried to assassinate Cuba's leadership and that the Government of the United States had put pressure on Cuba's economy. Yet at the United Nations it never admitted its policy and pursued a tactics of deliberately misleading the voting nations. Some, admittedly, didn't need to be misled but knew and did nothing anyway. Therefore the third and final conclusion is that the Government of the United States took aggressive action against Cuba illegally, while simultaneously impeding the efficiency of the United Nations. The United States Government thus carries a heavy responsibility. Especially in connection with the Missile Crisis.

³⁰² I deliberately distinguish here between the Government of the United States and the people of the United States.

3. The Missile Crisis

14 October 1962 - 28 October 1962

Heidegger has plausibly argued that man lives in the house of language: "Der Mensch wohnt im Hause der Sprache."³⁰³ Language is an ordering system for observations that human beings make. Language therefore *structures*. In this context, it is interesting to see that what the Anglo-Saxon literature calls "The Cuban missile crisis" has been classified differently by other parties. In Cuba the same events are known as "The October Crisis" and in the Soviet Union the events were called "The Caribbean Crisis." This is more than just a superficial and unimportant difference because language *structures*. The Cuban structure by stressing the temporal element implies that the October events were a crisis *inter alia*, the Soviet structure by equally omitting the word "missiles" and instead stressing the geographical component seems to imply that the crisis did not start with the missiles. The Anglo-Saxon tradition finally takes the missiles as the crucial element. By pointing out the technical element this has the advantage of indicating the possible destructive force involved. Yet the language structure "Missile Crisis" should not and may not exclude the wider context which is included in the language structures "Caribbean Crisis" and "October Crisis."

In following the Anglo-Saxon tradition I have titled my second chapter "the missile crisis". In this chapter I shall thus deal with the period starting with the moment when the missiles were first discovered by the United States and ending with Khrushchev's promise to withdraw them. This period is only fourteen days long. Yet for many directly involved these must have been the longest days of their life.

3.1 The private week of the ExComm

Sunday, October 14 1962 is a date that has gained world fame through the missile crisis. On that day a high flying United States U-2 plane entered the Cuban airspace and photographed the missile sites. The pictures that were developed and analysed on Monday and presented to the President on Tuesday morning confirmed what some - like CIA chief

³⁰³ Quoted in Rainer Hoffmann's excellent essay: *Vernunft und Leben. Zur Neubestimmung von Rationalität*, p. 65. Hoffmann points out: "es gehört zu den heikelsten Aufgaben der neuen Vernunft, ein Vokabular zu entwickeln, dass die gewonnenen Einsichten linguistisch einlösen kann" and thus stresses the delicacy that is involved in the creation of new terms.

McCone and Republican Senator Kenneth Keating - had suspected for several weeks already: that Cuba was being armed with nuclear missiles.³⁰⁴

On the same day President Kennedy called a meeting in which some fourteen advisers participated. This group was to become known as the "ExComm", the Executive Committee of the National Security Council. Its central concern was to advise the President about possible reactions to the missile provocation. Members of the ExComm were among others the President's brother Robert, Vice President Lynden Johnson, CIA Director McCone, Secretary of State Dean Rusk, Secretary of Defence Robert McNamara and UN ambassador Adlai Stevenson. John F. Kennedy chaired the meetings. He showed a good understanding of group psychology insofar as he left the room at instances to allow the members to express their minds more freely and he showed as well a good understanding for historians because he secretly tape-recorded the meetings. On the basis of the ExComm transcripts good and detailed analyses of the US decision making process have been written. Thus it is clear that no attempt can or shall be made here to say anything new or additional on this well researched field. Besides some general remarks for the sake of continuity only reflections insofar as the United Nations are concerned shall therefore find a place here.

A central feature of the first week of the ExComm discussions was that they were held in strict secrecy; this week of the missile crisis might therefore rightly be called "the private week." Neither Castro nor Khrushchev knew that the United States had found out. Until Monday, October 22 not even the NATO allies and the US Congress knew and even the United State's press didn't find out until Saturday, October 20.³⁰⁵ To keep the secrecy the ExComm members of course had to make many efforts among them some funny ones. On Thursday night, for instance, Kennedy happened to call them again to the White house. Not wanting to attract attention by the sudden arrival of several black limousines at the late hour nine of them piled into a single car.³⁰⁶

Together with the ExComm members, the President basically took two decisions. One of them very quickly and the other one only after extensive discussions. The first and quick

³⁰⁴ McCone strongly suspected nuclear missiles in Cuba because the Soviet Union had given Castro Surface to Air Missiles (SAMs). To McCone these were most likely to be used to protect nuclear missiles. Kenneth Keating's source has remained something of a mystery. Hinckle and Turner claim that Keating got his information from the "Cuban Student Directorate" (CSD) which worked in the Cuban underground (Hinckle and Turner, p. 133).

³⁰⁵ James Reston of the *New York Times* phoned ExComm members George Ball and McGeorge Bundy on Saturday night to ask why there was such a flurry of activity in Washington. He was given a partial briefing and requested to hold the story in the interests of national security (Chang and Kornbluh, p. 363).

³⁰⁶ Abel, p. 81

decision, already taken on the same day that Kennedy got the news, was that the missiles had to go. He immediately decided that he could not tolerate them. That was the first decision. Important factors underlying this quick first decision were charges that had been raised especially by Republicans such as Keating that Kennedy had so far responded weakly to the Soviet build up in Cuba and, furthermore, public statements that Kennedy himself had made implying that he wouldn't tolerate offensive missiles in Cuba.³⁰⁷ At the Tuesday ExComm meeting Kennedy thought of his September statements and commented on them in the following way: "Last month I said we weren't going to [tolerate the deployment of Soviet missiles in Cuba]. Last month I should have said ... that we don't care. But when we said we're *not* going to and then they go ahead and do it, and then we do nothing, then ... I would think that our risks increase."³⁰⁸ Trachtenberg rightly comments: This "provided a straight forward rationale for the American decision to resist the deployment of the missiles, sparing the President from any need to resolve the perplexing issues of nuclear strategy."³⁰⁹ Secretary of the Treasury Douglas Dillon, an ExComm member in 1962, remembered at the Hawk's Cay Missile Crisis Conference in 1987:

"While everyone at our first ExComm meeting, specifically including the President, agreed that the emplacement of Soviet MRBM's and IRBM's [Medium-range ballistic missiles and Intermediate-range ballistic missiles] in Cuba was totally unacceptable and that they had to be gotten out one way or another, I do not recall any specific discussion then or at later meetings of the ExComm as to just why they were unacceptable. It just seemed obvious to all of us."³¹⁰

³⁰⁷ Both of Kennedy's statements were made in September. On September 4 1962, White House Press Secretary Pierre Salinger read a presidential message to journalists in which the following was stated: "There is no evidence ... in Cuba ... of the presence of offensive ground-to-ground missiles ... Were it to be otherwise, the gravest issues would arise. (Document contained in Larson, p. 17). On September 13 1962 the President himself read an even clearer statement: "... if Cuba should ... become an offensive military base of significant capacity for the Soviet Union, then this country will do whatever must be done to protect its own security and that of its allies." (Document contained in Larson, p.32) By the time these warnings were issued, Operation Anadyr was already in its fourth month. At the Tuesday October 16 meeting Kennedy had implied that the Soviets had been warned through his statements and had nevertheless deployed the missiles. With this claim he had of course mistaken the chronological development and his special assistant McGeorge Bundy had placed the issue in its proper perspective by pointing out that the Soviets had made their decision *before* the President had issued his warnings. (Trachtenberg, p. 248)

³⁰⁸ October 16 ExComm transcripts, II, p. 15. Quoted in Trachtenberg, p. 247

³⁰⁹ Trachtenberg, p. 248

³¹⁰ Blight and Welch: *On the Brink*, p. 49

Thus the first ExComm decision had been reached quickly. The second decision answered the question exactly *how* to remove the missiles. It was only after six days of consultation that the President decided that the first step towards the removal was to be the naval blockade. Originally several possible options had been open. On the military track the most intensive option would have been a massive airstrike followed up by an invasion. Less intensive then would have been the surgical airstrike pointed only at the missiles and a few strategic targets. Least intensive certainly was the third military option that did not directly require shooting or bombing: the naval blockade. It gave Khrushchev a bit more time to consider his reaction than an airstrike; a blockade could, if necessary, still be stepped up with airstrikes.

Besides the military track there would have been, at least theoretically, a diplomatic/political track to remove the missiles: private or open negotiations with Khrushchev. Yet the political track was never considered to be very promising. The ExComm discussions during the private week concentrated overwhelmingly on the military options wondering whether an airstrike or a blockade would be the better response.

To try to break this military reasoning with suggestions for the political track even created tense situations. On Saturday, October 20, when Adlai Stevenson, who had flown in from New York, entered the discussion late and proposed that the quarantine should be accompanied by a political track that would propose a settlement involving the withdrawal of US missiles from Turkey, the evacuation of Guantanamo and the issuing of a non-invasion pledge to Cuba, he was promptly attacked. Dillon, McCone and former Secretary of Defence Robert A. Lovett "were furious" and Robert Kennedy recorded in his notes for the meeting "We had a rather strong argument with him."³¹¹ Stevenson's close friend and biographer McKeever relates that the UN ambassador "was promptly, bitterly, and some say, insultingly attacked"³¹² on that Saturday; Elie Abel claims that "The bitter aftertaste of that Saturday afternoon in the Oval Room stayed with him until his death."³¹³

Coming from a United Nations perspective and knowing how Stevenson always advocated US foreign policy in what other UN members might have regarded as hard line one is somewhat surprised that in his own camp Stevenson was being attacked for being soft. Robert Kennedy, according to O'Donnell, felt Stevenson's performance in the ExComm showed that he was "not strong enough or tough enough to be representing us at the UN at a time like

³¹¹ Both White, p. 175

³¹² McKeever, p. 520

³¹³ Abel, p. 96

this."³¹⁴ It was therefore decided that a Republican, John McCloy, should accompany Stevenson to New York to watch over things.

Stevenson, as White maintains, "was the only American official to articulate a carefully conceived alternative to the strategies of a military attack upon or a blockade of Cuba."³¹⁵ It is sad to see that the only action that resulted from his noble effort was that he received a guard. When Stevenson not even a week later proved with his dramatic showdown with Zorin in the Security Council that he didn't need a republican watchdog he got yet another punch below the belt besides the applause.

In December when the missiles had been removed from Cuba a *Saturday Evening Post* article reported that Stevenson during one ExComm discussion had presented a plan for diplomatic settlement which was "soft". In the same newspaper another page featured a particularly damning headline: "An opponent charges, 'Adlai wanted a Munich. He wanted to trade US bases for Cuban bases'."³¹⁶ As one of the journalists who had written the articles, Charles Bartlett, was an intimate friend of Kennedy some people immediately wondered whether the story had been authorised by the President. Kennedy stressed his regret about the article, yet he didn't say he disagreed with it. Stevenson wrote to a friend: "This latest assault set a new record for malice and falsehood."³¹⁷ Historian Mark White, who has analysed the case, shows that John F. Kennedy, although having tried to distance himself in public, "was in fact the central figure in the attack on Stevenson."³¹⁸ Bartlett later admitted that JFK did feel "the article was accurate. I think he would have stood behind every aspect of the article."³¹⁹ And why had Kennedy landed this punch? White concludes that the "main goal was probably to prevent any future challenge by Stevenson for the presidency."³²⁰

The one man of the ExComm who had tried to keep the military risks lower by including a political element had thus been ostracised at the meeting on Saturday October 20 and had secondly received a punch below the belt through the December article. This clearly signals how attractive the political track seemed to many key officials during the private week. Yet exactly why was going to the UN not an attractive option? I see basically four reasons.

1) If the United States had argued in the Security Council that the Soviet Union had no right to put missiles into Cuba, then the general issue of foreign military bases would have

³¹⁴ Quoted in White, p. 176

³¹⁵ White, p. 170

³¹⁶ Quoted in White, p. 165

³¹⁷ Quoted in White, p. 165

³¹⁸ White, p. 166

³¹⁹ Quoted in White, p. 167

³²⁰ White, p.168

arisen. Now Cuba was the first and so far only foreign military base of the Soviet Union whereas the United States had foreign military bases in many parts of the world. In particular the United States had nuclear "Jupiter" missiles in Italy, it had nuclear "Thor" missiles in Great Britain and it had had nuclear "Jupiter" missiles equally close to the Soviet border in Turkey since 1961. A discussion in one of the ExComm meetings on exactly this parallel carries an almost funny note for today's reader: JFK: "Why does he [Khrushchev] put these [missiles] in there though? ... It's just as if we suddenly began to put a major number of MRBMs in Turkey. Now that'd be goddam dangerous, I would think." McGeorge Bundy: "Well, we did, Mr. President."³²¹ The members of the United Nations Security Council would hardly have missed that obvious parallel and as the US probably had no intention to follow a possible resolution prohibiting all nuclear bases on foreign territory going to the UN was not interesting for the United States.³²²

2) Secondly the Security Council would never have authorised the US to carry out an airstrike or establish a blockade as both were acts of war and Cuba was a sovereign nation. Therefore if the US intended to do either they had to do so without asking. This they realised. During the discussions Secretary of Defence McNamara had put it this way: "... once you start this political approach, I don't think you're gonna have any opportunity for a military operation."³²³

3) Then there was the time factor. When the missiles were discovered on October 14 Operation ANADYR was not yet completed. Thus work on the construction sites in Cuba was still in process, ships were still arriving at Cuban ports with further missiles. The ExComm members, who started each meeting with a CIA briefing on the state of readiness of the Cuban missiles, were well aware of the importance of the time factor. If the missiles in Cuba had once reached complete operational readiness, then the risk involved in a US airstrike

³²¹ ExComm transcript of October 16, 1962, 6:30 pm - 7:55pm. Contained in Chang and Kornbluh as Document 16. On this first day of the ExComm, McGeorge Bundy had reasoned that even convincing the OAS and NATO might be a problem: "the difficulties of organizing the OAS and NATO; the amount of noise we would get from our allies saying that, uh, they can live with Soviet MRBMs, why can't we;" (ExComm October 16, 11:50-12:57). One can infer that if NATO is problematic, advocating the case in the UN must be an even bigger problem.

³²² The CIA in its special estimate "Major Consequences of Certain US Courses of Action on Cuba" of October 20, 1962 pointed specifically to this point, too: The Soviets if approached by the US "would propose negotiations on the general question of foreign bases, claiming equal right". The same document reminded: "Direct action would still be required to bring down the Castro regime". (Chang and Kornbluh, Document 24).

³²³ ExComm transcripts of October 16, 1962, 6:30-7:55. Contained in Chang and Kornbluh as Document 16

would have increased considerably, the blockade option with all the arms already on the island would even have become useless. Thus the President, to keep his relative advantage of having discovered the yet uncompleted Operation ANADYR had to react in due time. Discussions at the UN could easily have been delayed by the Soviets. Therefore the time factor was a third point that made going to the United Nation definitively unattractive for the United States.

4) Furthermore it would have been impossible for Kennedy to negotiate *publicly* about an issue that he had said was not negotiable. The United Nations being among the most public of all negotiation places had therefore lost its chance to be of direct use during the private week of the missile crisis already with Kennedy's September statements.

The United States, one can conclude, had - partly even in consequence of its own actions - a poor hand to go to the United Nations. This is a very important finding. ExComm member George Ball was later to state: "On the diplomatic option, our bargaining position did seem to us to be very weak. We needed a *fait accompli* to meet theirs."³²⁴ Deputy Assistant Secretary for International Affairs Richard Gardner made a very honest and clear cut statement when he spoke on the Cuban issue in February 1963: "We in Washington ... look upon the United Nations in a hard and practical way as a means of promoting our national self-interest."³²⁵ This is certainly so, and true for all other states as well. We can therefore directly infer again that the United States did not go to the United Nations during the private week because it would not have promoted US interests which was to remove the missiles. Why then did the UN become useful for the US afterwards? The sequence of events gives a plausible answer. As soon as the naval blockade had been announced on Monday evening, thus after the *Realpolitik* action, the UN side was activated to advocate and gain world support for *the action taken*.

Not too surprisingly this procedure was not approved by some critical commentators. Britain's labour party spokesman Harold Wilson told a television audience that the US should have taken the Cuban problem to the UN first rather than taking unilateral action by imposing the blockade. In Parliament Wilson criticised that the United States with its blockade risked total war with Russia without even consulting its European allies.³²⁶ Brilliant English Philosopher Bertrand Russell thought that Kennedy's blockade of Cuba "was comparable to a Russian military blockade of Turkish ports."³²⁷ Russell had issued a public message criticising American double-standards: "If missile bases are intolerable in Cuba, they are intolerable in Great Britain ... It might be interesting to speculate on American reaction to spy-planes sent

³²⁴ George Ball at the Hawk's Cay Conference in March 1987. Quoted in Blight and Welch, *On the Brink*, p. 49

³²⁵ Gardner, p.477

³²⁶ Brugioni, p. 402

³²⁷ Russell, p. 31

by Cuba over Washington ... This blockade is the most irresponsible action we have seen for some time."³²⁸

3.2 Actors and Listeners

On Sunday October 21, with the US press understanding more and more of what was going on, the privacy of the first week started to crumble. On Monday the private week was definitively over: the NATO allies were informed, the US Congress was informed and President Kennedy held a television address to the nation. A markedly more public phase had started.

Already on Saturday, October 20, U Thant's military adviser, Mr. Rikhye, had informed the Secretary-General of the United Nations that Washington had "definite proof" of the presence of Soviet missiles in Cuba.³²⁹ On the same day, Philip Dean, the United Nations representative in Washington, told U Thant over the phone that Kennedy believed the evidence to be irrefutable. Until now the General-Secretary did not know how the United States would react. But he was soon to find out.

On Monday morning, Mr. Rikhye informed U Thant the Kennedy was reported to be preparing a very important statement on the crisis. U Thant sent for Ambassador Stevenson who at 4:30 informed the Secretary-General personally of the coming important address explaining that it was going to be on Cuba and "that it was going to be a very tough one."³³⁰ Stevenson was not able to provide U Thant with a text of the statement as it was being

³²⁸ Russell, p. 52. I consider Russell brilliant because he used his clear and independent thinking, combined it with information he received and thus already in September 1962 saw what in October was to become obvious to the whole world: "In late August the Cuban Ambassador to the UK privately informed me of his Government's anxiety about impending invasion and global crisis over Cuba. I said I should be willing to do what I could to bring caution to the great powers and , upon a second communication from the Ambassador on September 3, 1962, I issued the following statement to the *Guardian*: 'The situation of Cuba involves a serious threat to the peace of the world. The Cubans have every right to the Government they wish and if it is a communist Government it in no way justified American intervention. If the United States invades Cuba it may provoke dangerous warlike action from the Soviet Union. If Russia supplies arms and troops to Cuba the danger of unwise and warlike action by the Americans will be increased with the imminent risk of world war. The situation demands a definite undertaking by the government of the United States not to invade Cuba and by the Soviet Union not to give armed support to Cuba. Precipitate action by either may provoke world-wide disaster.' Needless to say, the *Guardian* did not consider this worth printing." (Russell, p. 28)

³²⁹ U Thant, p. 155

³³⁰ As U Thant in his memoirs remembers, p. 155

"revised over and over again."³³¹ The roles had thus been assigned: Kennedy was the actor, U Thant was the listener. And listen he did when Kennedy at seven o'clock in the evening in his address explained that there were missiles in Cuba and that therefore there was a missile crisis. The President claimed that the missiles constituted a threat and a "flagrant and deliberate defiance" of the Charter of the United Nations. Kennedy didn't say which article he was referring to.

It must have been most distressing to U Thant that Kennedy with his address didn't start a debate about possible reactions to the Cuban missiles but that he had already taken a decision, that he had already ordered a blockade. The address, in short, was to inform U Thant of a *fait accompli*. Kennedy said:

"I have directed that the following initial steps be taken immediately: First: To halt this offensive build-up, a strict quarantine on all offensive military equipment under shipment to Cuba is being initiated ... Second: Should these offensive military preparations continue ... further action will be justified. I have directed the Armed Forces to prepare for any eventualities ... Sixth: ... we are asking tonight that an emergency meeting of the Security Council be convoked without delay ... our resolution will call for the prompt dismantling and withdrawal of all offensive weapons in Cuba, under the supervision of UN observers."

I don't know how many people around the world wondered *why* "further activities" would be justified, how many wondered what "further activities" could be and especially what these activities would mean for their own life. Some thought that the blockade that had now been announced was already unjustified, let alone "further activities." Some thought that the blockade would greatly increase the danger of nuclear confrontation between the United States and the Soviet Union. Many were scared with all good reason.

Kennedy was well aware of the dangers that now lay ahead. He said: "Let no one doubt that this is a difficult and dangerous effort on which we have set out. No one can foresee precisely what course it will take or what costs or casualties will be incurred." How then did the President justify the risk taken towards the people of the world, especially towards the American people? He claimed that "the greatest danger of all would be to do nothing" and explained "The cost of freedom is always high - but Americans have always paid it."³³² That was how he justified it.

³³¹ Ibid. p. 155

³³² All quotes: "Radio-TV Address of the President to the Nation from the White House", October 22, 1962. Contained in Chang and Kornbluh as Document 28

In his address, Kennedy did not say much about the tensions that had existed during the past years between Cuba and the Government of the United States. He did not comment on the Bay of Pigs invasion nor did he mention the sabotage attempts. But he explained to the "captive people of Cuba" that he has "watched and the American people have watched with deep sorrow how your nationalist revolution was betrayed .. But this country has no wish to cause you to suffer or to impose any system upon you."

One must remember that the listener U Thant was a very modest and controlled man. Coming from Burma U Thant was a devoted Buddhist. Each morning he devoted time to meditation, sitting alone, calm.³³³ Ramses Nassif, his friend and press spokesman, described U Thant as kind and tolerant. U Thant himself wrote: "I was trained to be tolerant of everything except intolerance. I was brought up ... to cherish moral and spiritual qualities, especially modesty, humility, compassion and, most important, to attain a certain degree of emotional equilibrium. I was taught to control my emotions through a process of concentration and meditation."³³⁴ The United Nations gained immensely in having this modest and at the same time sharp thinking man as its Secretary-General in such a moment of crisis. To journalist Gertrude Samuels U Thant explained: "I believe it is one of my proper functions to try to harmonise or reconcile different viewpoints of member states in regard to many important issues." And he continued with what I think is a very sensible statement: "No knowledgeable person can be neutral. He must have views one way or another. But whatever his views the Secretary-General must be impartial in the discharge of his functions."³³⁵ It was in this sense that U Thant thought that "moderator" would best describe his function.

Yet this moderate and controlled man could, as he remembers, "scarcely believe my eyes and ears" upon hearing that the United States had decided to react with a blockade. "If the United States were at war with the Soviet Union, such a violent public accusation could be understandable." U Thant wondered whether it would not have been wiser to ask Khrushchev privately to withdraw the missiles. For U Thant it was clear: "In my memory, it was the grimmest and gravest speech ever made by a head of state."³³⁶

While Kennedy was speaking Adlai Stevenson had delivered to the President of the United Nations Security Council, who for the month of October happened to be Valerin Zorin of the Soviet Union, a formal request for an emergency meeting including a proposed resolution calling for the immediate dismantling and removal of the missiles. Cuba, too, on Monday evening had requested an emergency meeting of the Council to consider "the act of war

³³³ Gertrude Samuels, p. 32

³³⁴ Quoted in Nassif, p. 20

³³⁵ Quoted in Samuels, p. 115

³³⁶ U Thant, pp. 155 and 156

unilaterally committed by the United States in ordering the naval blockade of Cuba."³³⁷ Also on Tuesday morning the Soviet Union requested an urgent meeting of the Security Council whom it asked to examine "The violation of the Charter of the United Nations and the threat to peace by the United States of America."³³⁸ Thus the peculiar situation arose that now all three parties directly involved, not only Cuba alone as in the past years, were asking for an emergency meeting of the Security Council. And thus the Council met on Tuesday at 4 pm.

3.3 The Security Council meets on Tuesday, October 23

The Security Council on that late Tuesday afternoon and evening featured a Cold War Superpower clash. The three nations that had asked for the meeting each made a speech. Stevenson spoke for the United States, Garcia Inchaustegui for Cuba and Zorin for the Soviet Union. The United States insisted on the removal of the missiles, the Soviet Union together with Cuba insisted on the removal of the blockade. And while the speeches were made in the United Nations building in New York only a few hundred miles away real ships were moving and real armies were waiting. When the Council rose at 8:20 pm it was plain to everybody that the three speeches because of their antagonistic positions had achieved nothing that would have reduced the danger.

The analyst must of course ask: What was wrong with the missiles? What was wrong with the blockade? How did the speakers support their respective positions, which arguments did they present? Mr. Stevenson, who spoke first, explained after a lengthy excursus on the cold war that some missiles in some countries were acceptable while other missiles in other countries were not acceptable: "There is ... a vast difference between the long-range missile sites established years ago in Europe and the long-range missile sites established by the Soviet Union in Cuba during the last three months."³³⁹ When the United States had installed nuclear missiles in Europe this had been "consistent with the principles of the United Nations" whereas when the Soviet Union now, too, was installing missiles outside its territory this was "radically different."³⁴⁰ Where then did this "radical difference" lie?

Several arguments are more or less clearly woven into Stevenson's speech. Certainly a central argument was that the Soviet Union was an "expansionist Power" that now in Cuba had been given a "bridgehead" from which it would continue "the communist enterprise of

³³⁷ United Nations Security Council Official Records. Supplement Document S/5183

³³⁸ Ibid. Document S/5186

³³⁹ United Nations Security Council Official Records. 1022nd meeting, para. 63

³⁴⁰ 1022nd meeting, para. 61

world dominion."³⁴¹ Besides this classic example of Cold War reasoning other arguments were put forward. One more or less explicitly claimed that if missiles were deployed into a previously missile-free area then these missiles were unacceptable.³⁴² This argument, of course, implicitly attacked the US missiles in Europe, too, as Stevenson himself must have realised. Another argument tried to explain the "radical difference" by pointing out that US missiles in Europe were meant to deter the Soviet Union, whereas the Cuban missiles were clearly offensive.³⁴³

The whole semantic struggle over what was an *offensive* and what was a *defensive* missile played a central part in the next argument. The Soviet Union had repeatedly and publicly explained that it would not establish *offensive* missiles in Cuba as their missiles, so they claimed, were only meant to avert an invasion of Cuba. The Soviet tactic can not be called lying, but it must be called misleading. Stevenson built on this and argued that missiles that were secretly introduced into an area were unacceptable. The 'concealment policy' had indeed been raised by Kennedy in his television address as well to characterise the Cuban missiles as bad missiles. Maybe this was still the best argument in Stevenson's pitiful struggle to explain the "radical difference" between US missiles close to the Soviet border and Soviet missiles close to the US border.

The "concealment aspect" was in fact taken up again years later in a, thankfully, much more friendly atmosphere. At the Cambridge (Massachusetts) Missile Crisis Conference in 1987, Mikhail Gorbachev's General Secretary Georgi Shakhnazarov explained: "You speak of deception, and so on. But, according to international law, we had *no reason* to inform you beforehand. You did not inform us of your intention to put missiles into Turkey."³⁴⁴ And Sergo Mikoyan, son of Khrushchev's close associate and special envoy to Cuba Anastas Mikoyan, asked: "If we declared officially in September in the UN that we intended to defend Cuba with missiles, what would have been the American reaction?" McGeorge Bundy, a former ExComm member, answered: "Well, it would have been a totally different situation. It's very hard to say." Mikoyan wondered: "Might it have made it harder for you and easier for us?" Bundy: "That may very well be." Former ExComm member Theodore Sorensen added: "I think it certainly would have made it more difficult for us."³⁴⁵ However, an announcement would probably only have shifted and not solved the problem for the Soviets. Zubok and Pleshakov think it "unimaginable that the Soviet leader, given his view of Kennedy and his political

³⁴¹ 1022nd meeting, para. 58

³⁴² 1022nd meeting, para. 61

³⁴³ 1022nd meeting, para. 62

³⁴⁴ Blight, p. 247

³⁴⁵ Blight, p. 247

surroundings, could even contemplate a public announcement that he was sending missiles ... over an ocean dominated by the US Navy."³⁴⁶

Back in the Security Council Stevenson, as might have been expected, had to explain why the blockade that was being initiated was an acceptable step. As a matter of fact, Stevenson did not present any new arguments but only built on the "unacceptability" of the missiles which, as we have seen, he had tried to explain at length. He was therefore most probably relieved to get some backing from the OAS which had met simultaneously with the Security Council in an emergency meeting. At the end of his speech Stevenson could announce that the OAS had passed a resolution with 19 to 0 votes calling for the removal of the missiles and allowing member states "to take measures, individually and collectively, including the use of armed force, which they may deem necessary to ensure that the Government of Cuba cannot continue to receive from the Sino-Soviet Power military material."³⁴⁷ Kennedy had watched on television how his ambassador had performed and cabled: "Dear Adlai: I watched your speech this afternoon with great satisfaction. It has given our cause a great start."³⁴⁸

The OAS resolution was an essential element of the United State's case because it gave the blockade a legal footing. However, it is worth noting that this legal foundation came only one day *after* the blockade had been initiated. It was first decided to put a naval blockade around Cuba, then this blockade was publicly announced and initiated and only afterwards was the legal footing for the action provided through the OAS. The Latin American representatives had backed the US in a vital moment. After all "one or another of those [Latin American] governments could easi- , uh, could easily be overthrown."³⁴⁹ Thus the legal footing for the blockade had been established. It didn't matter that some people thought that the blockade was nevertheless illegal. U Thant, for instance, during his visit to Cuba had spoken very frankly to Castro: "My colleagues and I are of the opinion that the blockade is illegal. No state can tolerate a military or even an economic blockade." And U Thant gave his personal opinion: "If the CIA and the Pentagon continue having this power, I see the future of the world in a very bad light."³⁵⁰

³⁴⁶ Zubok and Pleshakov, p. 265

³⁴⁷ Stevenson, who was well aware of its importance, read the OAS resolution on the UN record. 1022nd meeting, para. 81

³⁴⁸ Quoted in McKeever, p. 524

³⁴⁹ Secretary of State Dean Rusk during the ExComm discussion of Tuesday October 16 in the context of possible problems the US could face with Latin America if Kennedy chose to bomb Cuba (Chang and Kornbluh, Document 16).

³⁵⁰ The record of U Thant's discussion with Castro of October 30 1962 was made public by Castro only at the Havana Cuban Missile Crisis Conference. See Blight, p. 218

Back at the Security Council on that Tuesday evening it was now Garcia Inchaustegui's turn to speak. He explained that Cuba had been "forced to arm for defensive purposes in the face of the repeated aggressions of the United States Government"³⁵¹; he quoted from Dorticos' October 8 speech that "If the United States could give assurances, by word and deed that it would not commit acts of aggression against our country, we solemnly declare that there would be no need for our weapons."³⁵² He reminded the Council that

"Cuba is a country that has seen its plantations set on fire from the air by United States aircraft ... a country that has seen its factories sabotaged and its workers killed ... a country that has seen its territory invaded by a mercenary force ... with the public acknowledgement of Kennedy ... a country that has suffered the economic boycott of the United States Government ... without there being a state of war."³⁵³

He said that now again the Cuban airspace and the Cuban waters were being violated and, maintaining that Cuba had the right to arm itself, asked the Security Council "for the cessation of the illegal blockade unilaterally decreed by the Government of the United States."³⁵⁴ Garcia Inchaustegui thought that the United States had done "a very strange thing" by first sending its ships and dispatching its airplanes and only then consulting the international organisations. "It is as though the international organisations and the Security Council had no reason to exist!"³⁵⁵ He asked: "Why did it [the United States] not accuse us before the Security Council and await its decisions? The United States did not do so because it has not a single legal or moral ground on which to justify the forceful measures taken."³⁵⁶ With this statement Garcia Inchaustegui was unknowingly very close to McNamara's above mentioned claim, made during one of the ExComm meetings, that if the US embarked on the diplomatic track, military actions such as the blockade would become impossible.

Garcia Inchaustegui in his speech had never directly affirmed that Cuba was now being armed with nuclear missiles. But as he had at no point challenged that claim one can speak of an implicit affirmation. Mr. Zorin, who was the last of the three to speak, also never directly affirmed the presence of nuclear missiles in Cuba and one more time exploited the semantic difference between "offensive" and "defensive" when he claimed that "the alleged presence of

³⁵¹ 1022nd meeting, para. 90

³⁵² 1022nd meeting, para. 90

³⁵³ 1022nd meeting, para. 91

³⁵⁴ 1022nd meeting, para. 125

³⁵⁵ 1022nd meeting, para. 106

³⁵⁶ 1022nd meeting, para. 110

'offensive' Soviet rockets in Cuba" was a "manifestly false and slanderous story."³⁵⁷ Zorin, like Garcia Inchaustegui before him, quoted Dorticos' October 8 speech, stressing that "the Soviet Union's assistance to Cuba ... is exclusively to improve Cuba's defensive capacity" and that "Soviet assistance in strengthening Cuba's defences is necessitated by the fact that, from the outset of its existence, the Republic of Cuba has been subjected to continuous threats and acts of provocations by the United States."³⁵⁸ The latter claim was indeed not unfounded. Zorin furthermore explained that the assurances of the US not to invade Cuba had been proven valueless with the Bay of Pigs invasion.

Zorin asked for the removal of the blockade. How did he argue that it was unacceptable? He said it was illegal, that it was a violation of the rules governing the freedom of navigation on the high seas, and amounted to a violation of the principles of the United Nations Charter. For this he quoted Article two, paragraph four: "All members shall refrain in their international relations from the threat or use of force against the territorial integrity or political independence of any State, or in any other manner inconsistent with the Purposes of the United Nations." He did not say whether he considered establishing missiles as a "threat of force", an interpretation which accordingly would have made the Soviet missile deployment to Cuba inconsistent with the Charter. On the contrary, Zorin concentrated on the blockade and argued that this constituted a "threat or use of force" and was therefore a flagrant violation of the Charter. Zorin asked the rhetorical question why the US had first acted and then come to the Security Council and came to the indeed convincing conclusion that "only someone who was already sure that the Security Council would not support - as indeed it could never support - aggressive action could act in this way."³⁵⁹ The Soviet representative ended his speech by once again pointing out that "Cuba is not alone. It has many friends ... and among them is the Soviet Union."³⁶⁰ It was by then late at night and the Council decided to adjourn and to meet again early on Wednesday morning 9 am.

McKeever relates that on Tuesday evening "the signs were that pressure would be put on the United States to lift the quarantine."³⁶¹ Yet on the whole this first meeting of the Security Council during the missile crisis had not been able to ease any tension. And some listeners might have considered one of the OAS resolutions that Stevenson had read out particularly

³⁵⁷ 1022nd meeting, para. 151. The UN transcript has the word "offensive" in quotation marks. It is unclear to me how the speaker could have signalled this, but according to the transcript he must have done so.

³⁵⁸ 1022nd meeting, para. 155

³⁵⁹ 1022nd meeting, para. 161

³⁶⁰ 1022nd meeting, para. 183

³⁶¹ McKeever, p. 524

disturbing or even incredible. It read: The OAS resolves "To recommend that the member states ... take all measures ... including the use of armed forces ... to prevent the missiles in Cuba with offensive capability from ever becoming an active threat."³⁶² The ExComm had never given up the airstrike option.

It is evident that the United States had tried to give its blockade a touch of legality by having the OAS pass resolutions. The OAS was after all flexible with respect to US wishes. Or as U Thant puts it: "President Kennedy sought OAS action, for he knew such action would be in line with his own wish."³⁶³ This, however, should not deceive anybody to assume that the US Government was too concerned about the legal situation. On Monday evening October 22, shortly before his TV address, Kennedy held a leadership meeting in which Senator Saltonstall had "asked whether a blockade would be legal if the OAS did not support it. The President answered that it probably would not; however we would proceed anyway."³⁶⁴ This last sentence was also the crux for the United Nations: It didn't matter too much what concerns some countries had - the United States would proceed anyway.

3.4 The Security Council meets on Wednesday October 24

When Mr. Sosa Rodriguez from Venezuela began the first speech in the Security Council on Wednesday October 24, Cuba was in fact under military blockade. The "quarantine", as the US euphemistically called it, consisted of a line of ships off Cuba's north-east coast that had orders to stop, board and search every foreign ship heading for Cuba. If a ship had offensive military cargo the plan was to send it back. If it refused to follow orders, the plan was not to sink it immediately but to fire a shot into the rudder and thus to cripple it. If these plans failed, complications could result in nuclear war.

It all depended on whether the Soviet ships would stop or whether they would proceed and run the blockade. And it looked very bad. On the previous evening Soviet submarines had unexpectedly been found moving into the area. At 10 o'clock on Wednesday morning McNamara told the ExComm that Soviet ships approaching the blockade line showed no indication of stopping. Naval intelligence furthermore reported that a Soviet submarine had moved into a position between two Soviet ships that now were within a few miles off the blockade line. The ExComm meeting of that morning seemed, according to Robert Kennedy

³⁶² 1022nd meeting, para. 81. The same OAS paragraph, as quoted above, also legitimised the blockade.

³⁶³ U Thant, p. 172

³⁶⁴ CIA Director McCone's Memorandum for the File of the "*Leadership Meeting on October 22nd at 5:00 pm*," 24 October 1962. Contained in: *The Secret Cuban Missile Crisis Documents* as document 80

"the most trying, the most difficult, and the most filled with tension."³⁶⁵ The world held its breath.

Most probably the Security Council of the United Nations has never met in a moment of similar clear and present danger. Every seat was taken and many delegates had to stand. The public gallery was filled to capacity. The atmosphere was tense.³⁶⁶ The principal parties involved, Cuba, the United States and the Soviet Union, had already spoken on the previous day. Now on Wednesday the remaining nine members took their stand.

And what was said was indeed interesting. There were basically two groups that emerged. One group was against the blockade and asked for its removal. The other group was against the missiles and asked for their removal. I think one cannot overemphasise the insights that the Wednesday discussion of the Security Council provides. Why were the missiles unacceptable or why was the blockade unacceptable? These two questions pinpoint the very centre of the crisis; they represent, in short, the Cuban missile crisis in a nutshell.

Such a discussion, it is important to notice, could only take place at the United Nations with its diversity of opinions and interests. The Kennedy camp did not feature that diversity and consequently featured no such discussion as all members of the ExComm were in agreement that the missiles were unacceptable. The Khrushchev camp neither featured that diversity and no such discussion as all its members agreed that the blockade was unacceptable. Only at the UN did the two camps and their supporters meet in direct discussion. Only at the UN, and this is of particular interest to the analyst as well as the interested observer, were the two parties forced to expose the reasoning underlying their respective positions.

Let me start with the group that considered the missiles unacceptable. One might expect that this group most clearly saw the danger connected with nuclear missiles stationed on foreign territories and that it therefore worked towards a resolution that would ask the superpowers to withdraw their offensive nuclear weapons from all foreign bases. But this was not the case. The group that thought that the missiles were unacceptable had very specific missiles in mind. They thought that the Soviet missiles in Cuba were unacceptable whereas the US missiles in Europe were absolutely acceptable. The Cuban missiles, as the representatives of the United Kingdom (Mr. Dean), France (Mr. Seydoux), China (Mr. Liu), Ireland (Mr. Aiken), Venezuela (Mr. Rodriguez) and Chile (Mr. Schweitzer) agreed, were offensive. Whereas other nuclear weapons in other countries were defensive. Sir Patrick Dean for Great Britain stressed that point most eloquently: "By no stretch of the Soviet imagination can a nuclear missile in Cuba with a range of over 2000 miles be called defensive"; NATO,

³⁶⁵ Robert Kennedy, pp. 67-72

³⁶⁶ As Ramses Nassif relates, p. 27

CENTO and SEATO on the other hand, equally equipped with long range nuclear missiles, were "three purely defensive alliances."³⁶⁷ This was an important point and therefore Dean repeated it: "These alliances are non-aggressive and threaten no one."³⁶⁸ The reasoning is clear and we have already seen it in Stevenson's speech. One party considered its own missiles to be purely defensive but accused its opponents missiles to be clearly offensive.

However, this equation lacks logical coherence. The Cuban missiles as the first group reasoned were not only unacceptable because they were offensive but as well because they upset a well established military balance. This was certainly so. It is a plain fact that before 1962 only the United States had nuclear missiles outside its territory, namely in Europe. The Soviet Union had no missiles outside its territory. As Mr. Aiken for Ireland put it, this situation should not be changed: "For several years now no new foreign military bases have been established throughout the world." He thought it "a great disappointment" that now the delicate balance had been upset.³⁶⁹ Mr. Dean was in full agreement declaring: "there must not be a significant change in the balance of military power."³⁷⁰

This second argument shows a noble concern for world peace as the stationing of nuclear missiles indeed always includes an upsetting of power relations and therefore risks world peace. On second thought one must however be careful not to overlook a certain double standard involved here. One side, it seems, had been allowed to upset the balance while another side was now attacked for upsetting it again whereas really all challenges to world peace should be condemned.

The third argument not so much concerned the missiles but the purpose behind them. The members of the first group were more or less in agreement that the Soviet missiles in Cuba first of all served as a beachhead for the spread of Communism and that secondly Communism was evil. This point was most eloquently stressed by the representative of (Formosa-) China.³⁷¹ Mr. Liu Chieh explained that the "similarity of fate that has befallen the Cuban people and the Chinese people on the mainland enables my delegation, perhaps more than others, to appraise and understand what is taking place in Cuba."³⁷² He was of course speaking of Communism and he had a very definite, although not a very differentiated opinion on the subject. He started by explaining that weapons could not be differentiated into good

³⁶⁷ United Nations Security Council Official Records. 1023rd meeting, paras. 24 and 26

³⁶⁸ 1023rd meeting, para. 26

³⁶⁹ 1023rd meeting, para. 86

³⁷⁰ 1023rd meeting, para. 35

³⁷¹ I do not write "China" but "(Formosa-) China" because I agree with President Kennedy who had said to Stevenson in 1961: "You have the hardest thing in the world to sell. It really doesn't make any sense - the idea that Taiwan represents China." (Quoted in Schlesinger (1965), p. 446)

³⁷² 1024th meeting, para. 17

ones or bad ones but persons could. He concluded: "Whether a person is a gangster or a peaceful citizen depends entirely on his record. And what a criminal record international communism has written for itself in recent years."³⁷³

Many citizens both in Western Europe and in the United States must have reasoned along these lines, though perhaps not exactly in this simplistic form. Citizens in America and Western Europe had made up their mind that the Cuban missiles were bad missiles because during the Cold War they were told over and over again that Communism was evil.³⁷⁴

The categorisation of systems into "wholly good" and "wholly evil" is none that can be accepted by a thinking person. And indeed the end of the Cold War has opened new possibilities for more sophisticated and differentiated approaches to political, economic and ideological systems.

Yet back in October 1962 the Cold War dominated more than ever. And therefore some missiles were good and some were bad. Therefore some military balances were good and some were bad. Therefore some parties had noble intentions and other parties had the intentions of gangsters. Or so the first group argued.

What was most striking in the first group's reasoning was the absence of a discussion of the "protection" motive. Thus not what was said, but what was *not* said should catche here our attention. For as all members of the Council knew Cuba had suffered aggression during the past years. This the members of the Council had specifically been informed of as Cuba had, as we have seen, complained to the United Nations on more than one occasion. Omitting a discussion of this issue could only undermine the credibility of the position taken by the group that declared that the missiles were unacceptable.

Ireland had tried to include a historical perspective of the tensions that had existed between Cuba and the United States since 1959. However, the summary was first of all highly selective and secondly contained some strange conclusions. Mr. Aiken rightly quoted the Soviet warning against a US invasion of Cuba which had been issued in July 1960. But he then did not mention the Bay of Pigs invasion nor the OAS expulsion but directly concluded that with such strong and reiterated Soviet warning Cuba did not need offensive missiles.

By contrast a second group of Council members thought the quarantine was unacceptable. This second group heavily stressed the historical approach pointing out that Cuba had repeatedly suffered aggression from the United States. All this US aggression, as Mr.

³⁷³ 1024th meeting, para. 20. Mr. Liu Chieh made his statement in English. The last sentence might be considered to be somewhat unclear. The French translation makes it obvious that the statement meant: 'and Communism has during the past years contributed heavily to its criminal record'.

³⁷⁴ Kennedy thought categorically that Communism in the area was not negotiable. A profound analysis of the Cuban crisis would have to discuss this central premise. I neither feel competent nor does my thesis require me to do this here.

Malitza for Romania, claimed "aimed at overthrowing the legal Government of Cuba."³⁷⁵ Therefore Cuba had to arm itself as indeed every country had the right to arm itself as it deemed necessary. There was no offensive intention. Ghana and the United Arab Republic equally stressed that every state had the right to arm itself and to choose its own political and social system. This, it is plain to see, was a crucial and marked difference to the "offensive" and "Communist subversion" claims of the first group.

As its most distinctive feature the second group considered the US blockade unacceptable. On what was this claim based? In its essence it was based on the law. The blockade, as the group agreed, was enforcement action. Mr. Quaison-Sackey from Ghana who, I am unable not to mention it, approached the issue with a clarity of thinking and firmness of principles which had not been part of all speeches to such a degree, pointed out that the United States themselves had in previous debates expressed the view that "enforcement action" consisted of coercive measures involving the use of air, sea or land force. Cuba was now under a US naval blockade despite the fact that enforcement action was inadmissible in terms of Article 53 of the United Nations Charter without the authorisation of the Security Council. The representative of the Arab Republic, Mr. Mahmoud Riad, who equally showed a very moderate and sophisticated approach to the issue explained that "the United Arab Republic cannot condone the unilateral decision of the United States of America to exercise the quarantine in the Caribbean Sea." This action, he claimed, was "contrary to international law", was "pregnant with all the symptoms of the increasing world tension" and was "taken outside the United Nations, without authorisation from the Security Council."³⁷⁶

That the United States had taken coercive measures without asking the Security Council needs no further comment here. That this action threatened world peace was more than a plausible claim, considering that Soviet ships accompanied by Soviet submarines were about to be stopped by US blockade ships.

Mr. Malitza followed this line when he said that "a military blockade beyond the shores of a State may not be instituted unless war has begun between the parties to the dispute"³⁷⁷, upon which he quoted legal texts such as the Declaration on Armed Neutrality of 1780, the Paris Declaration of 1856 on Maritime Law, the Hague Conventions of 1899 and 1907 and the London Declaration of 1909 concerning the laws of naval war. He concluded that according to the "Conventions for the Definition of Aggression", the United States had committed an act of war against Cuba.

³⁷⁵ 1023rd meeting, para. 56

³⁷⁶ 1024th meeting, para 74

³⁷⁷ 1023rd meeting, para. 72

These were basically the reasons on which the second group rejected the blockade as unacceptable. It had of course been clear already from the outset of the discussions in the Security Council that neither group, the one following the United State's position and asking for the removal of the missiles, and the other following the Cuban and Soviet position asking for the removal of the blockade, would be able to pass a resolution. The interests were too opposed. The Security Council was therefore deadlocked. If under these circumstances a third track could not have been found the United Nations would have left the scene of conflict without having achieved anything at all. But luckily a third track was found.

3.5 U Thant speaks in the Security Council

When the Security Council adjourned after the speeches of Stevenson, Garcia Inchaustegui and Zorin on Tuesday night, the discussions at the United Nations continued. Forty-five members, feeling the immense danger of the situation, met outside the regular discussion forums and debated for three hours how a peaceful solution could be found. On Wednesday morning they resumed their meeting with the same purpose.

Among this group were Mr. Mahmoud Riad from the United Arab Republic and Mr. Quaison-Sackey from Ghana. Both as we have seen were also members of the Security Council. As a result of the two days of consultation with the large number of concerned members Mr. Mahmoud Riad and Mr. Quaison-Sackey initiated a third track. At the end of the Wednesday discussions of the Security Council, this third track was presented to the Council members by Mr. Quaison-Sackey in the form of a draft resolution.

We have seen that both the representative of Ghana and the representative of the United Arab Republic had been of the opinion that the blockade was unacceptable. However, they both knew well enough that a draft resolution condemning the blockade would lead nowhere. Therefore what they presented to the Council on that evening was in essence a quest to transfer the handling of the dangerous situation to U Thant, the Secretary-General of the United Nations. The resolution read:

"The Security Council ... 1. Requests the Secretary-General promptly to confer with the parties directly concerned on the immediate steps to be taken to remove the existing threat to world peace, and to normalise the situation in the Caribbean; 2. Calls upon the parties concerned to comply forthwith with this resolution and provide every assistance to the Secretary-General in performing his task; 3. Requests the Secretary-General to report to the Council on the implementation of paragraph 1 of this resolution; 4.

Calls upon the parties concerned to refrain meanwhile from any action which may directly or indirectly further aggravate the situation."³⁷⁸

Mr. Quaison-Sackey explained that this was a peace resolution calling for negotiations with the assistance of the Acting Secretary-General and that it should therefore receive the approval of the Council. The Council did not vote on the resolution. It was accepted in silence.

Besides this draft resolution, the concerned members states represented by Ghana and the United Arab Republic had also taken the step to inform the Secretary-General. It was thus that U Thant now actively and not only as a listener entered the scene of the Cuban missile crisis.

In the Security Council that Wednesday evening the atmosphere was still very tense. When U Thant spoke there was complete silence in the overcrowded gallery and one could hear the shuffling of paper or someone clearing his throat. All eyes and all cameras focused on the Secretary-General.³⁷⁹

"If today the United Nations should prove itself ineffective, it may have proved itself so for all time." U Thant was well aware of the possibility of nuclear war. He therefore expressed his "profound hope and conviction that moderation, self-restraint and good sense will prevail over all other considerations." Next to these moderating gestures he made factual remarks. To those who were able to read between the lines U Thant's remark on the blockade was clear. He said: "I cannot help expressing the view that some of the measures proposed or already taken, which the Council is called upon to approve, are very unusual and, I might say, even extraordinary except in wartime." He explained that he had been requested by permanent representatives of a large number of member governments to send two identically worded messages to Kennedy and Khrushchev. This he had done. In his "urgent appeal" he had asked that:

"... all concerned should refrain from any action which may aggravate the situation and bring with it the risk of war ... time should be given to enable the parties concerned to get together ... This involves on the one hand the voluntary suspension of all arms shipments to Cuba, and also the voluntary suspension of the quarantine measures involving the searching of ships bound for Cuba .. for a period of two to three weeks ... I gladly make myself available to all parties for whatever services I may be able to perform."

With this part of his letter U Thant had addressed both superpowers and had asked them to stop those activities which most endangered world peace and which most likely could lead

³⁷⁸ 1024th meeting, para. 113

³⁷⁹ As Ramses Nassif relates, p. 27. The Quotes from the U Thant speech are: 1024th meeting, paras. 116-126

to a situation that would end in nuclear war. Yet understanding that this was not only a superpower conflict, but a three dimensional conflict U Thant also addressed Castro in his address:

"I believe it would also contribute greatly to the same end if the construction and development of major military facilities and installations in Cuba could be suspended during the period of negotiations"

All things considered, Thant's initiative asked for three suspensions: 1. Suspension of arms shipments to Cuba. 2. Suspension of the quarantine.³⁸⁰ 3. Suspension of the erection of missiles in Cuba. With these three appeals Thant on the one hand respected the interests of the group that thought that the quarantine was unacceptable, while simultaneously offering on the other hand a missile building and supply stop to the group that thought that the missiles were unacceptable.

Viewing the history of Cuba after 1959 especially the following passage in U Thant's statement is of particular interest. He quoted what Garcia Inchaustegui had said in the Security Council the day before: "If the United States could give assurances, by word and deed, that it would not commit acts of aggression against our country, we solemnly declare that there would be no need for our weapons and our armies", to which U Thant added: "Here again I feel that on the basis of discussion some common ground may be found through which a way may be traced out of the present impasse." U Thant thus very discretely but at the same time clearly hinted not only at the possibility but at the desirability of a non-invasion pledge. With this reference he showed that he had an understanding both of Cuba's fears and of the hostility that Cuba had been exposed to since 1959.

U Thant closed his speech stressing that "there has never been a more dangerous or closer confrontation of the major Powers" and he expressed his hope that good sense and understanding would be placed over the anger and pride of nations . He knew that "The path of negotiation and compromise is the only course by which the peace of the world can be secured at this critical moment."

Immediately after U Thant had finished and upon prior agreement with him the representative of Ireland moved the adjournment of the meeting and thus the Security Council closed at 10 at night. Zorin, who realised that he had been deprived of the possibility to comment through this manoeuvre, was angry. He had expected a clear condemnation of the blockade by the Secretary-General. When he complained to U Thant after the meeting, the

³⁸⁰ One might argue whether Thant's comment on the quarantine that I have quoted above should be read as: "suspend the quarantine" or whether it should be read as "suspend searching ships but leave quarantine." According to my reading Thant meant the former.

latter is reported to have said that he was not primarily concerned about the legalities when he was trying to prevent an explosion.³⁸¹

3.6 The Security Council meets on Thursday October 25

Hypocritical misleading if practised always hampers the efficiency of the organs of the United Nations because hypocritical misleading always undermines the quality of discussions. This is a fact, no matter which party makes use of the deplorable technique to further its personal interests. On that late Thursday afternoon with the missile crisis still at its height the Security Council was to feature yet another effort in misleading in connection with the Cuban case. This time it was the Soviet representative's turn.

In resumed session, the Council addressed some of the important questions that had been raised by different members during the last two days. We have seen that one of the crucial question was why the United States had bypassed the Security Council and had established the blockade without UN authorisation. Another important question was how the blockade could be characterised as a legal act. Adlai Stevenson, who spoke first, judged rightly that quite a few members wanted answers to these questions and he therefore tried to give them.

In response to the question why the Security Council was bypassed by the United States who had established the blockade on its own initiative, Stevenson stated two arguments. The first was the time argument: "if we were to have delayed our counteraction, the nuclearization of Cuba would have been quickly completed. This is not a risk which this hemisphere is prepared to take."³⁸² Stevenson did not explain whether the thinking and living beings of the whole world were prepared to take the other risk of nuclear war which the blockade undoubtedly created .

Secondly, Stevenson argued that the US had had to act without UN authorisation because the Council wouldn't have passed a resolution enabling the US to establish a blockade: "Could we reasonably be expected to ... have waited ... while the Soviet representative in the Security Council vetoed a resolution ... ?"³⁸³ Maybe Stevenson himself felt that these arguments, although they undoubtedly had some ground, were not able to demonstrate the absolute necessity of US action and therefore enriched his reasoning with some emotional colouring: "One of these missiles can be ... pointed at New York, and landed above this room five

³⁸¹ Nassif, p. 30 and McKeever, p. 525. See also U Thant, p. 164

³⁸² United Nations Security Council Official Records. 1025th meeting, para. 12 and 13

³⁸³ 1025th meeting, para. 13

minutes after it was fired."³⁸⁴ With this statement Stevenson explained to the Council members the technical possibility of a Soviet nuclear attack on the United Nations headquarters.

The United State's ambassador referred in his speech to the fact that "some here have attempted to question the legal basis" of the blockade. Yet his comments on that point were disappointing: "I would gladly expand on our position on this, but ... perhaps this is a matter for discussion which, in view of its complexity and length, could be more fruitfully delayed to a later time."³⁸⁵

Besides these questions (of the legality and of the bypassing of the UN) the US-blockade raised a third question: The question whether a blockade was not an extreme reaction to the missiles. Stevenson explained: "Were we to do nothing until the knife was sharpened? Were we to do nothing until it was at our throats?"³⁸⁶ Here again, maybe for lack of more solid rational arguments, Stevenson took recourse to emotional metaphors which directly recalled the speech made by Mr. Liu Chieh from (Formosa-)China in the same room only the day before .

Certainly a deep insight into Kennedy's calculation was contained in the explanation that Stevenson gave to explain why doing nothing would have been unacceptable: "It would have discredited our will and our determination."³⁸⁷ To show strength had therefore been one of the reasons for the blockade. Towards the end of his speech Stevenson explained: "The one action in the last few days which has strengthened the peace is the determination to stop this further spread of weapons in this hemisphere."³⁸⁸ By this he really tried to advocate the blockade that was keeping millions of people around the globe fearing nuclear war as an "action which has strengthened the peace".

Garcia Inchaustegui speaking for Cuba made only a very short statement reaffirming the defensive nature of the weapons: "The weapons in Cuba's possession are exclusively of a defensive nature. They are weapons which we were compelled to acquire owing to the aggressive and interventionist policy of the United States Government towards Cuba."³⁸⁹

The representative of the Soviet Union, Mr. Zorin, who spoke next went in a similar direction when he explained that "the crux of the matter" were "the aggressive intentions of

³⁸⁴ 1025th meeting, para. 14

³⁸⁵ 1025th meeting, para. 20

³⁸⁶ 1025th meeting, para. 18

³⁸⁷ 1025th meeting, para. 18

³⁸⁸ 1025th meeting, para. 23

³⁸⁹ 1025th meeting, para. 26

the United States with regard to Cuba".³⁹⁰ This was a statement wholly consistent with the Soviet position of the past three years concerning the Cuban case. Zorin furthermore argued again that the blockade was an illegal act and that Stevenson had been unable to show why the United States could not have done otherwise than to declare the blockade.

Yet the Security Council meeting of that Thursday is not famous for the arguments that were raised in it. It is famous for the deliberate deception that was staged by Zorin and brilliantly exposed by Stevenson. Zorin, who most probably knew that the Soviet Union was at the very moment of the Council's debate establishing nuclear missiles in Cuba, had referred to Stevenson's charges repeatedly as "fake evidence."³⁹¹ When upon this Stevenson presented enlarged photographs of the Cuban missiles to the Council Zorin pursued his tactics and called the pictures "faked photographs."³⁹² This was a huge effort in hypocritically misleading the Council. The moment when Stevenson directly asked Zorin whether there were nuclear missiles in Cuba has ever since gained world fame and is most probably the most quoted and therefore best known passage of all Official Records of the United Nations:

Stevenson: "Mr. Zorin, I remind you that the other day you did not deny the existence of these weapons ... let me ask you one simple question: Do you, Ambassador Zorin, deny that the USSR has placed and is placing medium and intermediate-range missiles and sites in Cuba? Yes or no? Do not wait for the interpretation. Yes or no?"

Zorin: I am not in an American court of law, and therefore do not wish to answer a question put to me in the manner of a prosecuting counsel. You will receive the answer in due course in my capacity as representative of the Soviet Union.

Stevenson: You are in the courtroom of world opinion right now, and you can answer "Yes" or "No". You have denied that they exist - and I want to know whether I have understood you correctly.

Zorin: Please continue your statement, Mr. Stevenson. You will receive the answer in due course.

Stevenson: I am prepared to wait for my answer until Hell freezes over, if that is your decision."³⁹³

³⁹⁰ 1025th meeting, para. 31

³⁹¹ 1025th meeting, para. 35 and 42. I am somewhat unsure as to the exact point in time when Zorin was informed by Khrushchev about the Soviet missiles in Cuba. U Thant in his biography is convinced that still on Wednesday "Zorin had been completely in the dark about the presence of Soviet missiles in Cuba." (View from the UN, p. 166). I work here on what seems to me to be the most plausibility premise, i.e. the premise that Zorin knew by Thursday midday.

³⁹² 1025th meeting, para. 83

³⁹³ 1025th meeting, paras. 49-53

Stevenson never got a clear and definite answer. But what he got was the chance to show that Zorin was deliberately and hypocritically misleading the Council. Stevenson could thus discredit Zorin and this was of great benefit to the position of the United States. Listeners and viewers in many parts of the world would remember how Zorin had "lied" and they would not remember how convincing Stevenson's arguments about the legality of the blockade had been or wonder whether Garcia Inchaustegui had a point with his claim that there had been US aggression prior to the missiles. Stevenson on that Thursday scored the point, and an important one. There can be no doubt about this.

Yet, to make even more of the moment Stevenson had presented the enlarged photographs of the missiles in Cuba. With this action he had cleverly used the publicity of the United Nations to spread a message. No doubt, some members might still have wanted definite proof. But as Stevenson himself in his speech admits those must have been "very few."³⁹⁴ Most of the Council members knew what was going on. U Thant had not just spoken on the ground of vague suspicions. Those who therefore had to be convinced were not the UN ambassadors but the members of the wider world audience who had followed the debate through the media. U Thant had once told a group of students that the United Nations "enables its Member Governments to hold a simultaneous conversation with the rest of the world, which would not be possible through the normal channels of bilateral diplomacy."³⁹⁵ It is in this sense that the United Nations on Thursday afternoon had become useful to the United States: As a forum to gain world support. The Soviet Union had never brought photographs of US missiles stationed in Turkey to the Council nor had Cuba brought photographs of the Bay of Pigs invasion. Neither of the two had ever understood to use the Council as effectively as the US did on that Thursday afternoon. Kennedy was truly impressed with Adlai's performance. To Kenneth O'Donnell he said: "I never knew Adlai had it in him." At a dinner a few days later an exhilarated Stevenson would recall the Thursday show with "a twinkle in his eye". Kenneth Davis wrote that Stevenson's "mail in the next few days indicated that he had become something of a hero to that vast American audience whose daily TV diet is a compound of crude violence and sex-drenched commercial lying."³⁹⁶

After the Stevenson-Zorin exchange the representatives of Ghana and the Arab Republic recalled that it was the United Nations' job to save the peace and, understanding the superpower deadlock, stressed that U Thant with his "tremendous show of statesmanship and initiative"³⁹⁷ had through his appeals to Kennedy and Khrushchev made a promising step

³⁹⁴ 1025th meeting, para. 8

³⁹⁵ Address at Mount Holyoke College, South Hadley, Massachusetts, 2 June 1963. Quoted in: UN publications: *Portfolio for Peace*, p. 2

³⁹⁶ All quotes from Broadwater, pp. 212 and 213

³⁹⁷ 1025 meeting, para. 91

towards a peaceful solution of the crisis. Mr. Quaison-Sackey and Mr. Mahmoud Riad hoped that the parties directly concerned were to avail themselves to the Secretary-General and thus make the necessary discussions possible. With this hope they moved an adjournment of the Council. The case had thus more or less explicitly been handed over to U Thant.

Thus, Thursday, October 25 1962 had featured an effort in hypocrisy by Mr. Zorin who, by the way, was soon to be replaced by Moscow. But that Thursday was also the last time that the Cuban missile crisis was discussed in the Security Council. Therefore this seems an appropriate place to record the different attempts at hypocritical misleading that had occurred in connection with the Cuban problem during the years considered in this study both in the Security Council or in the General Assembly. I do not claim to offer a complete selection but even with this limitation there are unfortunately quite a few examples. Here are the most obvious ones in chronological order.

In July 1960, the US representative Mr. Lodge had explained in the Security Council: "Unnecessary though it most certainly seems to me, let me here and now give him [Castro] this assurance, heaped up and overflowing: The United States has no aggressive purpose against Cuba." Whereas in reality President Eisenhower together with the CIA was trying to sabotage the Cuban revolution and prepared an invasion.³⁹⁸

Half a year later, in January 1961, Mr. Lodge for the United States labelled the Cuban charge that the US were planning an invasion as "empty, groundless, false, fraudulent" and said that to refute the Cuban charges in detail "would be like making a point by point rebuttal of *Alice in Wonderland*." Whereas in reality the invasion preparations were already in their final phase.³⁹⁹

Three months later (in April 1961) Stevenson for the US presented faked photos to the Council and argued that Cuba had been attacked by its own airforce, whereas the planes in reality were under US command.⁴⁰⁰

In the same Committee, Mr. Alejos from Guatemala had said: "The forces which had landed in Cuba had not been trained in Guatemala and had not come from Guatemalan territory. Guatemala had never allowed and would never allow its territory to be used for the organisation of acts of aggression against its American sister republics." This was the grossest lie one could possibly utter. Everything in the statement is untrue.⁴⁰¹

³⁹⁸ United Nations Security Council Official Records. 874th meeting, para. 96. See above chapter 2.3.

For a similar performance of Mr. Lodge in another case see the chapter on Guatemala 1954, above 2.9

³⁹⁹ United Nations Security Council Official Records. 922nd meeting, para. 11. See above chapter 2.6

⁴⁰⁰ United Nations General Assembly Official Records. First Committee 1149th meeting, para. 6, 7 and 8. See above chapter 2.8

⁴⁰¹ United Nations General Assembly Official Records. First Committee 1154th meeting, para. 4. See above chapter 2.8

A year later, in March 1962, Garcia Inchaustegui claimed that "Cuba had no desire to change the form of government in any country." In reality, Cuba supported the opposition to Somoza in Nicaragua, supported the opposition to Pinochet in Chile, supported the opposition to Betancourt in Venezuela and supported the Salvadoreans in El Salvador.⁴⁰²

On the first day of the Missile Crisis discussions, on Tuesday October 23, Stevenson referred to the Bay of Pigs invasion and explained that "my Government ... sent no American troops to Cuba." In actual fact, the first to land on the Cuban shores had been US soldiers, although admittedly, they had not been sent by Kennedy.⁴⁰³

In the same speech Stevenson said that "If Cuba has withdrawn from the American family of nations, it has been Mr. Castro's own act. If Cuba is today isolated from its brethren of the Americas, it is self-inflicted isolation." In reality, the United States had bought votes to expel Cuba from the OAS.⁴⁰⁴

Three days later, Mr. Zorin of the Soviet Union claimed, as we have just seen, that Stevenson's charges about missiles in Cuba were based on "fake evidence" and said that the photos of the missiles were equally "faked evidence." In actual fact, Zorin knew perfectly well that the Soviet Union had deployed missiles to Cuba.⁴⁰⁵

It does not take much to see that all these hypocritical moves hampered the United Nations and hence played a significant role in making the Cuban missile crisis a crisis which brought mankind to the brink of nuclear war. Because of this the hypocritical moves are all deplorable. One is reminded of the wonderfully challenging work of Conor Cruise O'Brien who in 1968 characterised the United Nations as a "Sacred Drama." He suggested that all the United Nations did was play-acting, with the Council Chambers and the Assembly Halls as stage sets: "The scene remains mighty, even if the actors are not ... a ... theatre of the absurd. Suffused by nightmare in its form as well as in its content. On its common level it is a desperately serious farce, on whose continued run our live may depend."⁴⁰⁶

3.7 The noble efforts of U Thant

⁴⁰² United Nations General Assembly Official Records. First Committee 1231th meeting, para. 20. See above chapter 2.12

⁴⁰³ United Nations Security Council Official Records. 1022nd meeting, para. 50. See above chapter 2.7

⁴⁰⁴ United Nations Security Council Official Records. 1022nd meeting, para. 67. See above chapter 2.11

⁴⁰⁵ United Nations Security Council Official Records. 1025th meeting, para. 35 and 42

⁴⁰⁶ O'Brien and Topolski, p. 11

On Wednesday afternoon, October 24 when U Thant had sent identical messages to Kennedy and Khrushchev he in some way continued a tradition. For already in quite a few other contexts he had chosen the sending of identical messages as a means that might help to find a solution to a conflict.⁴⁰⁷

U Thant's plea had reportedly angered the US President. "There was little respect for the UN."⁴⁰⁸ After having received the appeal on Wednesday, Kennedy's advisers were therefore thinking how they could avoid any appearance of a rejection of U Thant's proposal while at the same time still keeping the blockade in operation. They had come up with the following reply which was delivered to U Thant on Thursday afternoon:

"I deeply appreciate the spirit which prompted your message of yesterday. As we made clear in the Security Council, the existing threat was created by the secret introduction of offensive weapons into Cuba, and the answer lies in the removal of such weapons ... You have made certain suggestions and have invited preliminary talks ... Ambassador Stevenson is ready to discuss promptly these arrangements with you. I can assure you of our desire to reach a satisfactory and peaceful solution to this matter."⁴⁰⁹

U Thant in his appeal had asked for "the voluntary suspension of the quarantine measures involving the searching for ships bound for Cuba."⁴¹⁰ Kennedy however in his reply now indicated that he was not prepared to move an inch. He first wanted the missiles out, only then would he lift the blockade. This of course must have been a disappointment for U Thant. The only positive aspect of the letter that remained was that Stevenson would be ready to hold further talks with the Secretary-General.

⁴⁰⁷ In December 1961 and again in January, February and May 1962, U Thant had sent several identical cables to Jan de Quay, Prime Minister of the Netherlands, and Achmed Sukarno, President of Indonesia. In December 1961, U Thant had also sent identical cables to Jawaharlal Nehru, Prime Minister of India, and Antonio de Oliveria Salazar, Prime Minister of Portugal. After the Cuban Missile Crisis, U Thant was to use the technique of sending identical messages in 1964 in the "Cyprus question" in March and July when he sent identical cables to the President of Cyprus, the Prime Minister of Greece, and the Prime Minister of Turkey. In the same year during the "Yemen question", U Thant sent identical messages to the Government of Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Republic. The technique had therefore a tradition with him.

⁴⁰⁸ Brugioni, p. 423

⁴⁰⁹ Larson, p. 153

⁴¹⁰ United Nations Security Council Official Records. 1024th meeting, para. 119

How then did Khrushchev answer U Thant's appeal in which the Secretary-General had asked for "the voluntary suspension of all arms shipments to Cuba"?⁴¹¹ Khrushchev wrote:

"I have received your appeal, and carefully studied the proposals it contains. I welcome your initiative. I understand your concern about the situation obtained in the Caribbean since the Soviet Government also considers this situation as highly dangerous and requiring an immediate interference by the United Nations. I am informing you that I agree with your proposal, which meets the interest of peace."⁴¹²

This statement, although characterised by an affirmative tone, is very vague. Khrushchev is not specific. I hope that I do not put too much weight on the accuracy of the translation when I observe that Khrushchev explains that he has studied Thant's proposals but that he agrees with his proposal. Using a plural here and a singular there might indicate that from the three proposals - lift blockade, return ships, stop missile build-up - Khrushchev only agreed with one, most probably with the lifting of the blockade.

U Thant, one can conclude, had received friendly words from the two heads of state. Yet none of the two had accepted his proposals. Thus U Thant wrote again. Already on the next day, on Thursday October 25 he made another effort to avert war. The two letters were this time not completely identical, yet still very similar in their content. U Thant together with the whole world feared that Soviet and US ships might clash in the Caribbean and thus start a new war. U Thant first wrote to Khrushchev and urged him to stop his ships:

In continuation of my message and my statement before the Security Council, I would like to bring to Your Excellency's attention my grave concern that Soviet ships already on their way to Cuba might challenge the quarantine imposed by the United States and produce a confrontation at sea between Soviet ships and United States vessels, which could lead to an aggravation of the situation. What concerns me most is that such a confrontation and consequent aggravation of the situation would destroy any possibility of ... discussions ... In the circumstances I earnestly hope that Your Excellency may find it possible to instruct Soviet ships already on their way to Cuba to stay away from the interception area for a limited time only, in order to permit discussions ... If I could be informed of the action taken by Your Government on the basis of this appeal, I could inform President Kennedy ..."⁴¹³

⁴¹¹ 1024th meeting, para. 119

⁴¹² Larson, p. 154. U Thant had received this answer of Khrushchev through the fastest communication channel: Ambassador Morozov read the Soviet original and translated it for U Thant at 3 pm on Thursday October 25. See: U Thant, p. 165

⁴¹³ Larson, p. 169

This urgent and decisive intervention by U Thant was beyond any doubt the most important action the United Nations took during the acute phase of the Cuban missile crisis. The Security Council discussions of Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday had been less significant than this letter. U Thant's Wednesday appeal had paved the ground but U Thant's Thursday letter to Khrushchev was the most direct and decisive. It therefore remains the most important action of the whole United Nations during the crisis.

The letter that U Thant had sent to Kennedy on the same day explained that he had asked Khrushchev to stop his ships in order to allow time for discussions. This time, most probably as a result of the answer he had already received, U Thant did not ask Kennedy to lift the blockade but first of all urged the President to do everything possible to avoid a confrontation:

"I would like to appeal to Your Excellency that instructions may be issued to United States vessels in the Caribbean to do everything possible to avoid direct confrontation with Soviet ships ... If I could be informed of the action taken by your government on the basis of this appeal, I could inform Chairman Khrushchev ... I would express the further hope that such cooperation could be the prelude to a quick agreement in principle on the basis of which quarantine measures could be called off as soon as possible."⁴¹⁴

It is interesting to note that U Thant still thought that the blockade should be lifted. It is furthermore relevant to notice that in his letter he makes no indication that he considers it reasonable that the lifting of the blockade should be connected with the removal of the Cuban missiles.

Kennedy replied on the same day, on Thursday October 25. He made it clear that if Khrushchev would stop his ships he would direct his vessels in the Caribbean to "do everything possible to avoid direct confrontation with Soviet ships in the next few days." Kennedy stressed that the matter was of great urgency as Soviet ships were still proceeding. The United States President said nothing about the lifting of the quarantine but only reiterated that "these offensive military systems in Cuba be withdrawn."⁴¹⁵

Khrushchev's letter was markedly different. U Thant received the reply on Friday October 26 and it contained the wonderfully relieving sentence: "we accept your proposal." Khrushchev had ordered his ships to stop. The crisis was far from over but with this good news many inhabitants of the blue planet must have felt hope instead of by fear as in the previous days. Khrushchev's words were:

⁴¹⁴ Larson, p. 168

⁴¹⁵ Larson, p. 169

I understand your anxiety for the preservation of peace, and I appreciate highly your efforts to avert military conflict ... We therefore accept your proposal, and have ordered the masters of Soviet vessels bound for Cuba but not yet within the area of the American warships' piratical activities to stay out of the interception area, as you recommend. But we have given this order in the hope that the other side will understand that such a situation, in which we keep vessels immobilised on the high seas, must be a purely temporary one ... I thank you for your efforts and wish you success in your noble task."⁴¹⁶

With this letter the first of the three appeals that U Thant had made on Wednesday - lift quarantine, return ships, stop missile build-up - had more or less been fulfilled. Everybody must imagine for himself what would have happened if not even one of the three appeals had been fulfilled.

The Cuban missile crisis was not a two dimensional but a three dimensional conflict. With the US controlling the blockade and the Soviets controlling the missiles the superpower element was of course in the foreground. Yet to neglect the very specific Cuban element of the Crisis for this reason would mean crippling the understanding of the whole conflict. Castro unlike Kennedy and Khrushchev had received no letter from U Thant on Wednesday. U Thant had addressed the Prime Minister of Cuba directly in his speech before the Council. There U Thant had said that it would help greatly "if the construction and development of major military facilities and installations in Cuba could be suspended during the period of negotiations."⁴¹⁷ Kennedy in his Thursday letter had informed U Thant that the construction of missiles in Cuba had so far not been suspended. Thus on Friday October 26, U Thant wrote directly to Castro addressing precisely this issue:

"Your Excellency can make a significant contribution to the peace of the world at this present critical juncture by directing that the construction and development of major military facilities and installations in Cuba, and specially installations designed to launch medium-range and intermediate-range ballistic missiles, be suspended during the period of negotiations which are now under way. It would encourage me greatly to have affirmative reply to this appeal very urgently."

Time was of course crucial. The tensions were far from over. Quite on the contrary, they were heightening. What is especially interesting is that U Thant in the same letter to Castro also included a statement that Dorticos had made in his October 8 speech at the United Nations. It was the famous passage:

⁴¹⁶ Larson, p. 170

⁴¹⁷ United Nations Security Council Official Records. 1024th meeting, para. 119

"Were the United States able to give us [Cuba] proof, by word and deed, that it would not carry out aggression against our country, then, we declare solemnly before you here and now, our weapons would be unnecessary and our army redundant."⁴¹⁸

U Thant could have simply asked for the suspension of the missile build-up. He did not necessarily have to include a statement on Cuba's fears of US aggression. However, the fact that he deliberately *did* decide to include the Dorticos passage shows that U Thant first of all had a good understanding of the roots of the missile crisis and that he secondly considered a US non-invasion pledge to be a possible way out of the crisis.

Castro replied on the next day, on Saturday October 27 to what he called U Thant's "noble concern" and explained that Cuba would stop the missile construction if the United States would lift the blockade and start negotiations:

"The Revolutionary Government of Cuba would be prepared to accept the compromises that you request as efforts in favour of peace, provided that at the same time, while negotiations are in progress, the United States Government desists from threats and aggressive actions against Cuba, including the naval blockade of our country."⁴¹⁹

Castro made it clear that this was a compromise he was only willing to make because of the grave danger to world peace that had arisen. He stressed that, in general, Cuba "flatly rejects the presumption of the United States to determine ... what kind of arms we consider appropriate for our defence." Cuba had victimised no one, it had violated no law. The United States, however, had carried out aggressive acts against Cuba and had with its blockade violated the law. Castro concluded: "Cuba can do whatever is asked of it, except undertake to be a victim and to renounce the rights which belong to every sovereign state."

U Thant must have appreciated Castro's willingness to compromise. Yet he must have regretted that this compromise to stop the missile build-up was not unconditional but connected with a US lifting of the blockade and a stopping of the aggressive acts of the US. U Thant through the letters that he had received from Kennedy knew that already the first of Castro's conditions would most probably not be met as the US President would not lift the blockade. Thus a missile build-up stop looked unlikely already on the basis of this information. What U Thant most probably did not know was that not even Castro's second condition, the stop of US aggressive actions, had been met. The CIA had not stopped its covert aggression. Operation MONGOOSE was still going on.

⁴¹⁸ Larson, p. 181

⁴¹⁹ Larson, p. 182

As early as October 4 1962, Robert Kennedy had expressed concern about the progress of the MONGOOSE program explaining that "more priority should be given to trying to mount sabotage operations" and urging for "massive activity."⁴²⁰ Not even two weeks later, with the U-2 missile pictures already taken, the CIA decided on October 15 that "considerably more sabotage should be undertaken" against Cuba and that "all efforts should be made to develop new and imaginative approaches with the possibility of getting rid of the Castro regime."⁴²¹ One might think this incredible but it came even better.

On Tuesday, October 16 1962, the ExComm met for the first time around noon to consider how they should react to the missiles of which they by now had definite photographic proof. Robert Kennedy was also present at this meeting. And here comes the incredible: Right after the Excomm meeting he went over to his office and convened a meeting on Operation MONGOOSE at 2:30 pm. In that secret meeting he expressed the "general dissatisfaction of the President" with Operation MONGOOSE. The operation had been going on for a year but Robert Kennedy felt that not enough sabotage had been carried out. He wanted more "push" in getting on with the acts of sabotage. He appealed for new ideas of sabotage that could be committed against Cuba and explained that he was going to give MONGOOSE more personal attention ordering that beginning tomorrow a meeting should be held every day.⁴²² Then in the evening of the same day, Robert Kennedy went to the evening meeting of the ExComm where he proposed another dirty trick to legitimise a US invasion of Cuba: "-one other thing is whether, uh, we should also think of, uh, uh, whether there is some other way we can get involved in this through, uh, Guantanamo Bay, or something, er, or whether there's some ship that you know, sink the Maine again or something."⁴²³ The suggestion might sound cryptic at first but to everybody familiar with dirty tricks the idea was clear: Simulate an attack on the US military base Guantanamo in Cuba or blow up a US ship in a Cuban harbour. Both to the world would look like Cuban sabotage and the US could then invade.

Only on Tuesday October 23, a day after Kennedy's TV address, did Edwin Martin at a meeting of State Department officials stress the importance of stopping the sabotage activities

⁴²⁰ Chang and Kornbluh, p. 357. Their source is: *Alleged Assassination Plots Involving Foreign Leaders* which I have quoted already above as an excellent source. I must repeat that nobody who seriously wants to understand the Cuban missile crisis can neglect these 100 pages. A memorandum of the October 4 MONGOOSE meeting is contained in: *The Secret Cuban Missile Crisis Documents*, pp. 153 and 154.

⁴²¹ Chang and Kornbluh, p. 358. Again their source is: *Alleged Assassination Plots*

⁴²² Richard Helms (Deputy Director for Plans CIA), Memorandum for the Record, "MONGOOSE Meeting with the Attorney General," 16 October 1962. Contained in: *Secret Documents* as document 49

⁴²³ExComm Meeting October 16, 1962, 6:30 - 7: 55. Contained in Chang and Kornbluh as Document 16

for the time period of the missile crisis. The issue of ending OPERATION MONGOOSE activities and controlling the actions of independent Cuban émigré groups does not, however, appear to have been seriously discussed in the ExComm sessions. It might seem incredible, but MONGOOSE activities were not in fact shut down until October 30 1962. This was too late to prevent a sabotage mission against Cuba from being carried out by CIA agents, who blew up a Cuban industrial facility on November 8.⁴²⁴ Another earlier CIA sabotage team that had tried to destroy the Matahambre copper mine in Cuba on October 25 could only just be stopped by Cuban authorities on site.⁴²⁵ But as I've suggested, although U Thant knew about the dirty actions of the CIA in general he was probably not aware that even right during the missile crisis such activity was going on. And of course the world community didn't know either. Had they known they might have gotten very angry that their lives were risked so recklessly by the United States Government as continued sabotage definitively increased the risk of escalation.

At the end of the day, U Thant saw that his initiatives had not led to a peaceful end of the missile crisis. He had had three hopes and had therefore made three appeals. He had hoped that the ships would stop. He had hoped that the quarantine would be lifted. He had hoped that the missile construction would be stopped. Yet only one of his appeals was met. One might have been met. And one was not met at all. Khrushchev had stopped his ships. Castro had signalled compromise by saying the he would stop the missile build-up if the quarantine would be lifted. And Kennedy had not lifted the blockade.

Above, I have spoken of noble efforts and said that the Cuban crisis was a three dimensional problem. A fourth dimension that I have so far neglected was the world community. And there too noble efforts were made. U Thant in his biography relates that his UN office was "deluged with cables and letters not only from heads of state and heads of government but also from organizations and private individuals."⁴²⁶ Let me here at the outset pick out three communications. In a letter to U Thant the Swedish Government protested against the blockade. Among private individuals, Dr. Linus Pauling cabled to U Thant curtly and forcefully: "I strongly urge that you strive to prevent the great immorality and illegality of an armed invasion of Cuba by the overwhelmingly powerful United States."⁴²⁷ Bertrand Russell was, of course outstanding. I fully agree with U Thant's judgement that "Bertrand Russell was no doubt among the greatest thinkers of our time, and in addition one of the most courageous and passionate activists for peace."⁴²⁸

⁴²⁴ Chang and Kornbluh, pp. 368, 383 and 387

⁴²⁵ Chang and Kornbluh, p. 373

⁴²⁶ U Thant, p. 168

⁴²⁷ Ibid. p. 169

⁴²⁸ Ibid. p. 169

During the crisis Russell had written to Khrushchev, Kennedy, U Thant, various newspapers and politicians in his efforts to avert disaster taking an uncompromising view of the blockade. To U Thant he appealed "for swift condemnation of tragic United States action" explaining that he would personally speak in such a way before the General Assembly if U Thant allowed. U Thant was sorry that the UN procedures would not allow for such an exception. To Khrushchev Russell wrote: "I appeal to you not to be provoked by the unjustifiable action of the United States in Cuba." Khrushchev replied with a long and friendly letter and U Thant remarked: "I felt at that time, and still feel, that Khrushchev's positive reply to my first appeal of October 24 was, at least in part, due to Earl Russell's repeated pleadings to him." To Kennedy Russell had written: "Your action desperate. Threat to human survival. No conceivable justification. Civilised man condemns it. We will not have mass murder. Ultimatums mean war. I do not speak for power but plead for civilised man. End this madness." Kennedy in his reply remarked: "While your messages are critical of the United States, they make no mention of your concern for the introduction of secret Soviet missiles into Cuba. I think your attention might well be directed to the burglars rather than to those who have caught the burglars." After the crisis Russell in his book *Unarmed Victory* took up Kennedy's remark. The British philosopher who had published classic works on logic had no difficulty analysing Kennedy's metaphor:

"As to President Kennedy's remark about burglars: it is singularly *mal à propos*. Nobody could accuse the Cubans of being burglars, since they had not left their own island. As for the Russians, they came at the invitation of the Cubans and were no more burglars than are the American forces in Britain and Western Europe. But in view of the repeated American threats of invasion of Cuba, the Americans were at least contemplating 'burglary'."⁴²⁹

3.8 Ships turn around

The Cuban missile crisis would certainly have taken a different course if the Soviet ships had not stopped but headed on through the United States blockade. Historians would have been appalled by the disaster, appalled by the recklessness of Soviet submarine captains, appalled by the recklessness of the United States to put up a blockade and thus risk a nuclear war. In fact the whole world, or what in that case would have remained of it, would have been appalled and people would have asked what the reason for their immense suffering was.

But luckily the disaster was averted. The Soviet ships stopped in 1962 and as a consequence the traumas of Hiroshima and Nagasaki were not to take place again elsewhere

⁴²⁹ All quotes from U Thant, pp. 169-171

in the world. The question that of course immediately arises is "Why did the Soviet ships stop?". The first answer to this question is very simple, the second one is however very hard to give. The Soviet ships stopped of course because Khrushchev as the supreme Commander in Chief had ordered them to stop. This is the first answer. If one then reformulates the above question somewhat to "Why had Khrushchev stopped his ships?" then one approaches the second answer which is indeed very hard to give.

In his Wednesday appeal, U Thant had asked for a "voluntary suspension of all arms shipments to Cuba." To this Khrushchev had given no precise answer. Therefore on Thursday, U Thant had reiterated the same appeal in the most urging way he could possibly allow himself by explaining that he earnestly hoped that Khrushchev "may find it possible to instruct Soviet ships already on their way to Cuba to stay away from the interception area." On Friday then came the relieving answer from Khrushchev: "I understand your anxiety for the preservation of peace ...We therefore accept your [= U Thant's] proposal and have ordered the masters of the Soviet vessels bound for Cuba but not yet within the area of the American warships' piratical activities to stay out of the interception area." It had been a tremendously important decision.

Some commentators of the role of the United Nations in the Cuban missile crisis have ever since argued that U Thant's appeal to Khrushchev had been a decisive factor for stopping the ships. What makes this argument plausible other than Khrushchev's Friday answer is that the Soviet Premier through U Thant's appeal had indeed received the famous "golden bridge" to go back not in reaction to Kennedy's threat, which would have signalled weakness, but to go back in reaction to U Thant's appeal which then signalled sanity and respect of the United Nations' endeavour to save world peace. The difference between backing down before an opponent and giving in to the reasons of a peacemaker is, of course, not marginal but enormous. As in his Friday letter to U Thant, Khrushchev had specifically said that he had acted according to U Thant's suggestions; he could explain to the world that he had *not* acted in reaction to Kennedy's blockade. During one of the most dangerous moments of the missile crisis the United Nations became a face saving device for Khrushchev. This is a very important contribution of the organisation.⁴³⁰

The importance of U Thant's "golden bridge" should certainly never be underestimated. But neither should it be overestimated to such a degree of assuming that U Thant's appeal

⁴³⁰ Khrushchev in his memories wrongly writes: "We didn't let ourselves be intimidated. Our ships, with the remainder of our deliveries to Cuba, headed straight through an armada of the American navy, but the Americans didn't stop our ships or even check them." (Talbot, p. 550). The Soviet leader didn't want to seem "intimidated", didn't want to "back down". He is unable to admit in his memories that during the crisis he stopped many of his ships. The importance of U Thant's "golden bridge" becomes obvious if contrasted with Khrushchev's distorted perception.

had also really been, as the Soviet Premier in his letter claimed, the reason for Khrushchev to stop his ships. Logically it is absolutely possible and even quite plausible that Khrushchev had first decided not to run the blockade, had only then received U Thant's appeal and had finally used the appeal as a face-saving explanation for a decision he had taken independently from it. In other words, it all boils down to the question: "Would Khrushchev have stopped his ships even if no United Nations had existed?". This question, as I have explained above, is hard to answer.

One possible way to find out would be a close analysis of the time structure. When did Khrushchev send his ships and how many? When did the ships stop? When did Khrushchev receive U Thant's appeal? If the Soviet ships had stopped *before* Khrushchev received U Thant's appeals then the United Nations did not have any influence on the stopping of the Soviet ships. If however the ships had stopped *after* U Thant's appeal of Wednesday October 24, then at least the possibility of a United Nations' influence remains.

The importance of this question for my study justifies a somewhat lengthier analysis. I shall therefore try to find out exactly when the Soviet ships halted on the basis of my accessible data. For the world it might be enough to know *that* they halted. For the evaluation of the role of the United Nations it is crucial to find out exactly *when* they halted.

Operation ANADYR started in May 1962 and relied completely on ship transport. There was of course no land route and flying the whole military and personal equipment to Cuba had not been an option either. The task for the Soviet planners was to deploy in secrecy and speed arms and men to the island.⁴³¹ Besides the 50'000 soldiers, airmen and sailors including their weapons, equipment and supplies which they would need for their prolonged stay the centrepiece of the deployment were of course the missiles: 36 R-12 medium range missiles (MRBMs) and 24 longer range R-14 missiles (IMRBMs). Thus a deployment to Cuba of totally 60 nuclear missiles together with their nuclear warheads was planned. The warheads and the missiles were shipped separately. All warheads reached the island. But not all missiles reached Cuba and this was precisely because some Soviet ships had stopped and returned to the Soviet Union.

To defend Cuban territory and Soviet rockets and troops alike the deployment of the missiles also included anti-aircraft weapons (SAM-75: surface-to-air missiles), helicopters,

⁴³¹ I follow General Anatoli Gribkov's account. He had been one of the five members of Moscow's General Staff planning operation ANADYR in 1962. He was also part of the Soviet high-level military inspection team that reached Havana on October 18, 1962. He was therefore in Cuba during the crisis. In 1992 Gribkov returned to Havana to attend the missile crisis conference. His comments there on Plev's Lunas were cryptic and have led to confusion (I will come to that in the next chapter). I do not think however that his Havana comments make him now generally problematic as a source. I shall follow his written account *Operation Anadyr*, pp. 23-59

bombers (IL-28 which in the aftermath of the crisis were to become famous), fighter planes, tanks, cars and trucks, which all had to be shipped to Cuba.

The ships left from eight different ports - Kronstadt, Liepaya, Baltiysk and Murmansk in the north of the Soviet Union and Sevastopol, Feodosia, Nikolayev and Poti on the Black Sea. From there the ships had to pass through NATO dominated areas such as Gibraltar or the Norwegian Sea. The first ship left on July 12 1962 and arrived exactly two weeks later in Cuba. The ship was unloaded and then returned to the Soviet Union to pick up new cargo. And so did the other ships. A total of eighty-five merchant marine passenger and freight ships made some 150 round trips between the Soviet Union and Cuba during the months of July, August, September and October 1962 in the service of operation ANADYR. And it was all top secret. If it was their first journey the ship captains and the troop commanders received a sealed envelope on embarking for Cuba which they were only allowed to read at specific coordinates in the Atlantic Ocean. The letter would order them to proceed to Cuba.

It was the idea not to leave the missiles defenceless against sabotage or invasion when being unloaded and installed in Cuba. Therefore the huge arms, sometimes concealed with planks to make them look like ship superstructures, were shipped only from September on to Cuba. The 36 R-12 medium range missiles which had all been fitted into two ships, the *Poltova* and the *Omsk*, all reached Cuba in mid-September and their warheads arrived on October 4. When Kennedy spoke on TV on Monday 22 October, about half of the 36 R-12s were ready to be fuelled - an eighteen-hour process - none of them had been programmed for flight. The nuclear warheads were in the storage bunkers.⁴³²

The case for the 24 R-14 longer range missiles was absolutely different. They had not arrived in Cuba. The 24 warheads were there, they had arrived together with the R-12 warheads on October 4 and were now stored in the hold of the Soviet ship *Alexandrovsk* lying in Cuba's port La Isabela. But the R-14s never came.⁴³³ Not that they had not left the Soviet Union: By mid October the *Poltava*, which had already brought part of the R-12s to Cuba, was bound for the island again. This time with all 24 intermediate range R-14 missiles on board. But as the R-14 missiles never reached Cuba one must conclude that the *Poltava* must have discontinued its journey to Cuba and turned back. This brings us closer to the question exactly when the first Soviet ships stopped.⁴³⁴

⁴³² Gribkov, p. 63

⁴³³ Gribkov, p. 45 and 63

⁴³⁴ The analyst faces a somewhat awkward task, of course, if he wants to know when certain ships stopped at certain points in the Atlantic Ocean. For there were few witnesses and the analyst himself of course was not present. But the ships had been watched by the CIA, which recorded its observations. These documents are available in *The Secret Cuban Missile Crisis Documents*, edited by Brassey's books in 1994. Hereafter referred to as "*Secret Documents*". Another text which has also helped me

The information that the CIA gathered for Kennedy is here especially helpful. On Monday October 22, Kennedy was told: "to date what we have actually seen are 30 and possibly 32 Medium Range Missiles [R-12]. We have not seen any Intermediate Range Missiles [R-14], although they may be in Cuba under cover or on the Soviet ship *Poltava*, which is due to arrive in Cuba in about five days."⁴³⁵ Another CIA report of October 22 stated: "There is no sign of a slow down in the military shipments; about 20 Soviet vessels are en route with probable military cargoes, and one or two are leaving Soviet ports almost daily."⁴³⁶ At a top level meeting on the afternoon of the same day at which Kennedy, McCone, Rusk and McNamara participated among others, the President said: "we have no idea how the [Soviet] Block will react but indications are, from unconfirmed sources, they will attempt to run the blockade."⁴³⁷ Two hours later Kennedy went on TV to announce the blockade.

The CIA continued its espionage flights over Cuba and the Caribbean Sea and reported several times a day. The evidence of the pictures of Monday, October 22 and of some pictures of Tuesday, October 23 stated that 3 Soviet ships that could carry missiles were currently en route to Cuba.⁴³⁸ Another CIA memorandum stated the same and gave additional information about further ships: "Survey of Soviet shipping shows 16 dry cargo and 6 tanker ships en route to Cuba. Of these 22, nine are in positions which would permit arrival by the end of October. Three ships have hatches suitable for missile handling."⁴³⁹ From these two sources one can conclude that on Monday 22 ships were en route and that of these 3 could carry missiles. No ship had stopped so far.

The CIA information based on the photographic evidence of Tuesday October 23 is highly interesting. The report states: "Three of the Soviet ships suspected of being possible ballistic

greatly on this still rather unclear question was Lebow and Stein's excellent *We All Lost the Cold War*, (1994) p. 117 and 433.

⁴³⁵ "DDI [Deputy Director for Intelligence = Ray Cline] notes for DCI [Director of Central Intelligence = John McCone] for NSC [National Security Council] Briefing at 3 pm in Cabinet Room." 22 October 1962. Contained in: *Secret Documents*, p. 272

⁴³⁶ CIA, Current Intelligence Memorandum, "Timing of the Soviet Military Build-up in Cuba," 22 October 1962. Contained in: *Secret Documents*, p. 271

⁴³⁷ McCone, Memorandum for the File, "Leadership Meeting on October 22nd at 5:00 pm", 24. October 1962. Contained in: *Secret Documents*, p. 276

⁴³⁸ Supplement 4 to Joint Evaluation of Soviet Missile Threat in Cuba, 24 October 1962. Contained in: *Secret Documents*, p. 294

⁴³⁹ Central Intelligence Agency Memorandum, "The Crisis, USSR/Cuba", 24 October 1962. Contained in: *Secret Documents*, p. 296

missile carriers en route to Cuba are reportedly altering their course."⁴⁴⁰ This is a very important first finding: The first three Soviet ships altered their course already on Tuesday and there is ample reason to assume that these three ships carried the R-14 missiles which never arrived in Cuba. This was clearly before U Thant's appeal.

At 10am on Wednesday morning October 23, the US blockade officially went into effect. The ExComm which was meeting simultaneously at that tense moment was informed already at 10:25 am, thus not even half an hour after the blockade had been established, that some Soviet ships have halted. McCone announced: "We have a preliminary report which seems to indicate that some of the Russian ships have stopped dead in the water." This gave occasion to Dean Rusk's famous statement: "We're eyeball to eyeball and I think the other fellow just blinked."⁴⁴¹ Now we have to count hours. U Thant made his appeal to Khrushchev also on Wednesday, but only at 2:00 pm.⁴⁴² If therefore the "preliminary report" was correct, and I work on the premise that it was, then at least some Soviet ships had definitively stopped *before* U Thant had issued his appeal. Whether the ships that had stopped were the three that carried missiles or whether these had not stopped but turned and others which had not turned had now stopped I do not know. But what remains clear is that some ships had stopped before U Thant had issued his appeal.

The CIA report on the situation on early Thursday morning October 25 shows that even more ships had now turned back: "As of 0600 EDT at least 14 of the 22 Soviet ships which were known to be en route to Cuba had turned back. Five of the remaining eight are tankers. Two of the dry cargo ships not known to have reversed course may be carrying non-military cargo ... Changes in course appear to have been executed in midday on 23 October, before the President signed the proclamation establishing the quarantine."⁴⁴³ This data contains two important pieces of information. Firstly that on early Thursday morning more than half of the Soviet ships had definitively turned back. Secondly, and this is even more important, that these changes in course had most probably been initiated already by midday on Tuesday. This furthermore confirms our above finding that Soviet ships turned *before* U Thant had issued his first appeal on Wednesday afternoon. The above quoted CIA report makes another interesting point: "There is as yet no reaction to the turn-around of Soviet shipping, which had

⁴⁴⁰ Supplement 5 to Joint Evaluation of Soviet Missile Threat in Cuba, 24 October 1962. Contained in: *Secret Documents*, p. 300

⁴⁴¹ Chang and Kornbluh, p. 370

⁴⁴² Chang and Kornbluh give the time, p. 371

⁴⁴³ Central Intelligence Agency Memorandum, "The Crisis, USSR/Cuba," 25 October. Contained in: *Secret Documents*, p. 304. The part which I omit (signalled by ...) is taped over with a black stripe also in the edition I have had access to.

not become publicly apparent. Attention remains centred on neutralist efforts in the UN to find machinery for easing tension." Thus the international community didn't know anything about this early change in course of Soviet ships. On the other hand the debates in the Security Council which I have discussed above were of course publicly accessible through the media and therefore absorbed much attention. Not the most important developments *per se* but only the most important developments which were *publicly accessible* were being observed by the wider public. Ships may turn, but the Security Council is on TV.

Another CIA report based on the interpretation of the Thursday photographs confirms: "The three Soviet ships suspected of being possible ballistic missile carriers continue their eastward course towards the USSR."⁴⁴⁴ These three are the same ships that had already turned as early as Tuesday October 23 and there is ample reason to believe that they carried the R-14 missiles.

The "non critical ships", as I would like to call them, proceeded and reached the blockade. On Thursday morning at 7 o'clock the Soviet tanker *Bucharest* was allowed to pass the blockade and to continue its voyage to Cuba.⁴⁴⁵ The pattern is simple: Khrushchev ordered the missile carrying ships to turn back and only let the oil carrying ones proceed. The CIA memorandum based on the Thursday photographs summarises: "Only two Soviet freighters - and five tankers, one of them [this must be the *Bucharest*] already past the quarantine line - still are headed for Cuba. The *Belovodsk*, with twelve MI-4 helicopters, is in the North Atlantic; the *Pugachev* appears to have slowed or stopped several days west of the Panama Canal. A total of 16 dry cargo ships now are carried as having turned back toward the USSR on 23 October."⁴⁴⁶

Here our analysis can conclude. The available evidence has shown that three Soviet ships probably carrying R-14 missiles had already turned on Tuesday October 23 and that in addition to these three thirteen other Soviet ships had most probably also turned on that same Tuesday.⁴⁴⁷ The only ships that continued towards the blockade were "non critical ships" such as the tanker *Bucharest*. U Thant on the other hand issued his first appeal only on Wednesday October 24 at 2:00 pm and again a more urgent one on Thursday October 25 at

⁴⁴⁴ Supplement 6 to Joint Evaluation of Soviet Missile Threat in Cuba, 26 October 1962. Contained in: *Secret Documents*, p. 314

⁴⁴⁵ Chang and Kornbluh, p. 372

⁴⁴⁶ Central Intelligence Agency Memorandum, "The Crisis, USSR/Cuba," 26 October 1962. Contained in: *Secret Documents*, p. 316

⁴⁴⁷ In *We All Lost the Cold War* Lebow and Stein come to the same conclusion through interviews which they conducted in Russia : "All sixteen vessels with military cargoes, including five carrying missiles and one suspected of transporting nuclear warheads, turned back after the quarantine was announced and before it went into effect." (p. 117).

2:30 pm. Both appeals had therefore been issued *after* the crucial Soviet ships had already turned. U Thant deserves credit for having offered Khrushchev a face saving explanation, yet Khrushchev's decision to return "critical" ships had definitively taken place *independently* of U Thant's appeals. In other words: Khrushchev would have stopped his ships even if no United Nations had existed.

3.9 Three times absent

We have seen that the United Nations through the Security Council on the one hand and the Secretary-General on the other hand played a part in the Cuban missile crisis. A balanced evaluation must however not only consider instances where the UN was present but also include in the analysis crucial moments in which the world organisation was *not* present, moments when important actions were taken but when the United Nations was *not* involved. Only by this contrasting can a balanced evaluation take place. From the different possible moments I have chosen three: The downing of the U-2, the Kennedy-Dobrynin Jupiter deal and Khrushchev's promise to withdraw the missiles. All three instances were crucial moments of the missile crisis and the UN was not involved in any of them.

First to the downing of the U-2. Before, during, and after the missile crisis the Cuban airspace had been violated continuously by the CIA. Only by repeatedly flying over and photographing Cuba could the intelligence be provided for Kennedy and the ExComm. Initially, high flying U-2 planes were used by the US for these missions. Castro with his artillery could not reach them. But then during the missile crisis the ExComm sent low level flights over Cuba. These planes, flying loudly at only two or three hundred metres over Cuban soil, were taken as a further provocation by Castro who on Saturday October 27 ordered his artillery to open fire on them. At noon of the same day a Soviet SAM artillery team downed a U-2. The US pilot was killed.⁴⁴⁸ In the afternoon one of the low flying US aircraft was hit by a most probably Cuban anti-aircraft shell but managed to return to its base.⁴⁴⁹ That Saturday was one of the very tense moments of the missile crisis. The United Nations had not been present as the organisation had of course never had the material means to hold back the ships, guns or planes of either of the three parties.

Speaking of arms and arms control this might be the moment to insert one paragraph on the Soviet nuclear battlefield weapons. In 1962 Khrushchev had not only deployed the famous *strategic* nuclear missiles to Cuba (the R-12 and the R-14 missiles) but also *tactical* short range nuclear battlefield weapons (so called "Lunas") to strengthen his isolated soldiers on

⁴⁴⁸ Szulc, p. 584.

⁴⁴⁹ Chang and Kornbluh, p. 377

Cuba who in case of a possible US invasion could because of the large distance not have been reinforced with conventional troops from the Soviet Union.⁴⁵⁰ The command for the tactical nuclear Luna rockets and the authority to use them in an emergency case such as a sudden US invasion had initially been delegated to the Soviet field commander in Cuba, General Issa Pliyev.⁴⁵¹ However, when the missile crisis started with Kennedy's announcement of the blockade on Monday, October 22 1962, Khrushchev immediately tightened his control also over the tactical Lunas and clearly and distinctly *withdrew* Pliyev's authority to use the tactical nuclear weapons. After Kennedy's speech Khrushchev was therefore again the Commander in Chief not only of the strategic but as well the tactical nuclear weapons in Cuba. He alone had the authority to command the firing of a nuclear weapon.⁴⁵²

The United Nations neither had any leverage on arms control nor any influence on secret diplomatic tracks. The Kennedy-Dobrynin deal was such a case. The deal was based on the fact that the US President clearly saw the indeed obvious parallel between Soviet missiles

⁴⁵⁰ I want to claim that the US knew of this dangerous deployment and must therefore have judged the risks connected with an invasion to be even higher. Blight, Allyn and Welch imply that the US didn't know (*Cuba on the Brink*, p. 55); McNamara also seems to imply that the US didn't know about the tactical missiles (Foreword to Chang and Kornbluh, xiii) and so did Raymond Garthoff when he stated at the 1992 Havana conference: "We have just learned *for the first time* [my emphasis] that it was intended to supply tactical nuclear weapons to the Group of Forces in Cuba." (Blight: *Cuba on the Brink*, p. 64). However the CIA "Supplement 7 to Joint Evaluation of Soviet Missile Threat in Cuba" of October 27 1962 stated very clearly: "Photography ... confirmed the presence of a FROG missile launcher in a vehicle park near Remedios. (The FROG is a tactical unguided rocket of 40'000 to 50'000 yard range, and is similar to the US Honest John)." Quoted in: *Secret Documents*, p. 325

⁴⁵¹ Gribkov, *Operation Anadyr*, p. 4

⁴⁵² After the 1992 Havana missile crisis conference there was some confusion about the authority to use the Lunas. Participating at the conference Soviet General Gribkov explained that Pliyev initially had had the authority to use the Lunas *in extremis*. This message came across clearly and caused surprise. What however did not come across clearly was that this authority had again been withdrawn by Khrushchev by Monday October 22. With his somewhat guarded and cryptic formulation (See Blight: *Cuba on the Brink*, p. 259 for the transcript) Gribkov shares part of the responsibility for the confusion that arose. Uncritical recipients had their part in spreading the false information and maybe even a translation problem was involved. In his later work *Operation Anadyr* (p. 62) Gribkov set the record straight. And Mark Kramer with his essay: *Tactical Nuclear Weapons, Soviet Command Authority, and the Cuban Missile Crisis: A Note* (1993) deserves credit for having clarified the discussion of the issue. In summary: The Soviet commander in Cuba *did not have the authority* to order the use of nuclear weapons independently.

close to the US border and US missiles close to the Soviet border.⁴⁵³ A fair trade would therefore have to involve not only the withdrawal of the Soviet missiles from Cuba but also the withdrawal of United States missiles from at least Turkey. And there was a second reason for the US to consider this a good deal: The Jupiter missiles in Italy and Turkey were obsolete anyway. The United States had planned to replace them with more modern missiles stationed off the shores of those nations on the mobile *Polaris* submarines. Dean Rusk in the eighties recalled: "It was clear to me that President Kennedy would not let the Jupiters in Turkey become an obstacle to the removal of the missile sites in Cuba because the Jupiters were coming out in any case."⁴⁵⁴ Kennedy in fact had indicated this at the ExComm meeting of October 27 1962 when he explained: "In the first place, we last year tried to get the missiles [the Jupiter missiles] out of there [Turkey, Italy] because they're not militarily useful, number one. Number two, it's going to - to any man at the United Nations or any other rational man it will look like a very fair trade."⁴⁵⁵ This is honest talk, much different from the flimsy arguing that Stevenson had had to put forward in the Security Council to explain that the Jupiters were such a completely different case. And as the US President honestly wanted to avert nuclear war he was prepared to throw the Jupiters into the deal with Khrushchev.

On Friday night, October 26, Robert Kennedy therefore met the Soviet Ambassador to the United States Anatoly Dobrynin in secrecy at the Soviet embassy, unknown to other ExComm members. Robert Kennedy touched on the Jupiter deal explaining: "the president said that we are ready to consider the question of Turkey, to examine favourably the question of Turkey."⁴⁵⁶ On Saturday then with the first US plane downed and the first pilot killed tension heightened. Thus on the evening of October 27, Robert Kennedy and Dobrynin met again, this time at the Justice Department. Dobrynin asked the legitimate question: "You installed these weapons near our borders. So how come you raise such a racket about missiles in Cuba?" According to Dobrynin, Kennedy replied:

"If that was the only obstacle to the settlement ... the President saw no insurmountable difficulties that could stand in the way. The main difficulty for the President was public discussion of the question concerning Turkey ... Nevertheless, President Kennedy was ready to come to terms with Khrushchev on this issue as well ... It would probably take four or five months for the United States to

⁴⁵³ For a good review of the American missile deployment to Europe see Lebow, pp. 42-45

⁴⁵⁴ Dean Rusk to James G. Blight, 25 February 1987. This is part of the letter which contains the "Rusk revelation" which I will look at in the next chapter. Quoted in Lebow and Stein, p. 127

⁴⁵⁵ Transcript of the Executive Committee meeting, October 27, 1962. Contained in Chang and Kornbluh as Document 49

⁴⁵⁶ Chang and Kornbluh, p. 375

withdraw its missiles from Turkey ... Right now, however, there was nothing the President could say publicly about Turkey in that context. Robert Kennedy warned that what he was telling me about Turkey was strictly confidential and was known in Washington to just another two or three people besides his brother and himself."⁴⁵⁷

Without any public announcement the United States withdrew its Jupiter missiles from Turkey in April 1963 and replaced them with Polaris submarines.⁴⁵⁸ The Jupiter deal had undoubtedly been an important element of the Cuban missile crisis. Its most characteristic feature is that it was a secret deal: The NATO members, the American people, Castro, the United Nations and even most of the ExComm members didn't know about it. Kennedy could not afford to appear weak in public. But he wanted to avoid military escalation. Secrecy such as displayed by the Robert Kennedy-Dobrynin deal was therefore the solution. This of course also gives essential insights as far as the UN is concerned: As we have seen above Kennedy pursued a "tough line" in the Security Council through his ambassador Stevenson. But behind the scenes Kennedy was ready to negotiate. It follows from this that the United Nations were for Kennedy simply not private enough to be of central importance when it came to solving the Cuban missile crisis.

A third and most central moment when the United Nations was not involved was finally the settlement of the Crisis. On Sunday October 28, Khrushchev informed Kennedy that he would withdraw the missiles: "The Soviet Government in addition to previously issued instructions on the cessation of further work at building sites for the weapons, has issued a new order on the dismantling of the weapons which you describe as "offensive", and their crating and return to the Soviet Union."⁴⁵⁹ The world was relieved. This was an extremely important message.

Above I have analysed the communications between U Thant, Kennedy and Khrushchev. They had of course their function in the crisis. This however should deceive no one to forget that the most important factor to solve the crisis had been quite another dialogue: The direct communications between Kennedy and Khrushchev. This dialogue had of course been completely independent of the United Nations. Thus if we evaluate the influence of the United Nations on the Cuban missile crisis we may not forget that the crisis was not only started by

⁴⁵⁷ Quoted in Lebow, p. 126. Robert Kennedy in his own memories of the crisis recalls that he had on that Saturday evening told Dobrynin: "President Kennedy had been anxious to remove those missiles from Turkey and Italy for a long period of time ... it was our judgement that, within a short time after this crisis was over, those missiles would be gone." Robert Kennedy, *Thirteen Days*, p. 108

⁴⁵⁸ Chang and Kornbluh, p. 395

⁴⁵⁹ Premier Khrushchev's communiqué to President Kennedy, October 28 1962. Contained in Chang and Kornbluh as Document 52

the superpowers but that it was also ended by the superpowers. U Thant at a conference in 1964 had said that the United Nations "is much more than a mere moral force, and at the same time it is in no way a big power."⁴⁶⁰ I think he was absolutely right in saying so.

It might seem paradoxical but an analysis of the events in which the United Nations was *not* involved is in the end almost as fruitful for the evaluation of the UN as an analysis of the United Nations' actions. For the shooting down of the U-2 showed that the United Nations in the missile crisis could never stop parties from using military action if those parties had decided to go ahead. Secondly the secret Robert Kennedy - Dobrynin deal showed that the United Nations were too public to be used by Kennedy. The exposure of the United Nations can thus prevent concerned parties from offering deals which might seem "weak" in the world forum . Such deals are therefore necessarily struck outside the UN. Thirdly, the Kennedy-Khrushchev communications show that in the end the superpowers themselves ended the missile crisis without the organisation that had been created to preserve peace . Finally, that the United Nations was not involved in three of the most crucial moments of the Cuban missile crisis shows furthermore that its role can only be described as marginal.

3.10 The "Cordier Ploy"

I have concluded the above chapter by anticipating some of my final conclusions, in particular that the role of the United Nations in the Cuban missile crisis had been marginal. Yet not too long ago, with new data becoming available, one was inclined to think that the United Nations might have become incredibly important if Khrushchev had not issued his Sunday letter and explained that he would withdraw his missiles from Cuba. The new data was information that former Secretary of State and ExComm member Dean Rusk had made accessible in 1987. For some years, historiography was thereafter influenced by "Rusk's revelation". Yet only recently, in 1996, new data emerged again that indicated that Rusk's revelation might be inaccurate. And if Rusk's revelation had given the United Nations in retrospect a privileged place in the history of the missile crisis, the new data of 1996 took that privileged place again away. The UN remained almost as marginal as it had been before. But let us consider the case in some more detail.

At the Cuban missile crisis conference in Hawk's Cay, Florida, in 1987, scholars as well as participants of the missile crisis were much surprised by a letter from Dean Rusk that was read out by George Ball. It took the audience back to that late Saturday night of October 27 1962,

⁴⁶⁰ U Thant at a conference of Non-Governmental Organisations, United Nations Headquarters, 28 May 1964. Quoted in: *Portofolio for Peace*, p. 134

on which Robert Kennedy had left the President's Oval Office for his meeting with Ambassador Dobrynin. Only Dean Rusk had stayed behind. His letter read:

"[T]here is a postscript which only I can furnish. It was clear to me that President Kennedy would not let the Jupiters in Turkey become an obstacle to the removal of the missile sites in Cuba because the Jupiters were coming out in any event. He instructed me to telephone the late Andrew Cordier [President of Columbia University; former United Nations parliamentarian], then at Columbia University, and dictate to him a statement which would be made by U Thant, the Secretary General of the United Nations, proposing the removal of both the Jupiters and the missiles in Cuba. Mr. Cordier was to put that statement in the hands of U Thant only after further signal from us. The step was never taken and the statement I furnished to Mr. Cordier has never seen the light of day. So far as I know, President Kennedy, Andrew Cordier and I were the only ones who knew of this particular step."⁴⁶¹

This of course is very interesting new data. Kennedy was seriously considering the Jupiter deal and U Thant would have been the man to offer, one more time, the face saving device. The offer would in this way not come from Kennedy but from the United Nations. Bundy explained: "The intention was to make it sound like a UN proposal, not an American one."⁴⁶² The parallel to U Thant's face saving offices for Khrushchev when it came to stopping the Soviet ships is obvious. Had Rusk's revelation been sound and had Khrushchev not offered to withdraw his missiles the next day, on Sunday 28, the United Nations through its Secretary General might well have celebrated a triumphant role in ending the Cuban missile crisis.

But besides the fact that Khrushchev offered to withdraw the missiles on Sunday and thus made the Cordier ploy unnecessary, the accuracy of Rusk's statement has also been doubted just recently. Mark White claims that Rusk's memory "was faulty."⁴⁶³ And the differences as White sees them were rather significant. White claims that the Cordier ploy did not involve the withdrawal of the missiles either from Turkey or Cuba but only intended to station UN observers in Cuba and Turkey to watch over the two missile sites. According to White furthermore Cordier was not contacted on Saturday October 27 but already before, most probably on Thursday 25.

On what basis, one of course wants to know, does White challenge Rusk's memory? White quotes a recently released document from British archives, a top secret telegram which Sir Patrick H. Dean, the permanent United Kingdom representative to the UN, had sent to the Foreign Office on October 25, 1962:

⁴⁶¹ Quoted in the Conference transcripts. Blight and Welch: *On the Brink*, p. 83

⁴⁶² Ibid. p. 84

⁴⁶³ White, p. 202

I have heard from a most reliable source that Cordier (lately United Nations Under-Secretary) has been in touch with top level persons in the United States Government about U Thant's statement on Cuba. Cordier says that if a United Nations Commission could be introduced to keep a watch on Russian bases in Cuba under satisfactory guarantees, the United States might be prepared to consider allowing a similar United Nations Commission to look at some bases elsewhere, e.g. the United States bases in Turkey.⁴⁶⁴

It is indeed plain to see that this Cordier ploy unlike the one offered by Rusk does not involve a removal of the missiles. The element of compromise however is still evident. To bring the Patrick Dean version of the Cordier ploy and the Rusk version of the Cordier ploy together several solutions are possible. The logical combinations then allow for an identical thesis or a separate thesis. The identical thesis would claim that the Rusk data and the Dean data refer to the same Cordier ploy. White took this as the most plausible explanation: "This [Dean document] plainly refers to the Cordier ploy described by Rusk at Hawk's Cay."⁴⁶⁵ With the two versions contradicting each other the written contemporary document of course wins over the personal memory that was formulated only in retrospect and therefore Rusk's version is the "faulty" one. The separate thesis would however also be imaginable. In this case there would have been two Cordier ploys: One on October 25 asking for UN inspection in Cuba and Turkey (Patrick Dean data) and one on October 27 asking for the trading of Turkey and Cuba missiles (Rusk data). There seem to be reasons for both the separate and the identical thesis. Without deciding for one or the other it is important to maintain here that a Cordier ploy, as confirmed by both sources, existed and that therefore the United Nations' Secretary General through his face saving devices might have become active in one way or another if the crisis hadn't ended on Sunday.

⁴⁶⁴ Ibid. p. 203. White gives his source as "Dean to Foreign Office, 25 October 1962".

⁴⁶⁵ Ibid. p. 203

3. 11 Conclusions on the missile crisis

I take the term "missile crisis" to refer here to the events from October 14 until October 28 1962. Let me start with a general remark on the crisis that is not in connection with the United Nations. The nuclear missiles of the superpowers in Cuba as well as in Turkey were in both cases *provocative rather than protective*. The provocation is deplorable in both cases as the risks involved for the blue planet cannot be justified. Another form of provocation that had in a bad way already influenced the period before the missiles came, the CIA sabotage raids, continued even during the two week period in which mankind feared nuclear disaster. This cannot be justified either.

Now specifically to the United Nations, which had been active during these two weeks through two organs: The Security Council and the Secretary-General. The debates in the Security Council had provided a wider world public with the reasoning and justifications of the three respective parties Cuba, USA and USSR. Thus the Security Council had had an *information function*, which the United States had been able to use effectively in particular by presenting photographs. Apart from this information function, however, the Security Council had little to no influence on the outcome of the missile crisis. The opposing superpower interests, i.e. the removal of missiles on the one hand and the removal of the blockade on the other hand, had soon deadlocked the Council. Closing its chamber already on Thursday with the tensest moments of the crisis still ahead the organ whose primary responsibility was the maintenance of international peace and security performed pitifully.

It remains however the fundamental principle of the Security Council, indeed the whole United Nations, that it can only be as effective as its members decide to make it. The Security Council has no "independent life." It is what its most powerful members want it to be. And with the United States bypassing the Council by initiating the blockade without UN support and deceiving the council members about covert activities against Cuba and with the Soviet Union deceiving the council members about the reality of missiles in Cuba the outcome must necessarily have been pitiful. As U Thant himself had said months before the crisis at his very first Press conference: "The United Nations can be only what its Member countries choose to make it."⁴⁶⁶

Not through the Security Council but only through the noble efforts of Secretary-General U Thant could the United Nations influence the crisis to some degree. One must admit that the evidence here is limited. U Thant might have been more important behind the scenes than the available evidence suggests. Judging on the evidence, however, one must conclude that U Thant's function was primarily to offer a face saving device for the world leaders. After he had

⁴⁶⁶ First Press conference held by U Thant as Acting Secretary-General, United Nations Headquarters, 1 December 1961. Quoted in *Portofolio for Peace*, first sentence, first page.

stopped his ships Khrushchev had used this device and Kennedy through the Cordier route might have used it for his Turkey deal if the crisis had not ended on Sunday. These efforts of U Thant are noble and important. However, it is important not to lose sight of the limited effectiveness of the United Nations in the crisis. The three main hopes of U Thant - building stop in Cuba, lifting of US blockade and stopping of Soviet ships - were not met in two cases and, in one case, were taken independently of the Secretary-General. Kennedy didn't lift the blockade, Khrushchev didn't stop the building of the missiles in reaction to U Thant. Khrushchev stopped his ships, but not in reaction to U Thant's appeal. On the whole the influence of the Secretary-General was therefore moderate. The superpowers created the crisis - and they solved it without the United Nations.

Taking together the actions of both the Secretary-General and the Security Council and comparing them to the role of the superpowers we can conclude that the role of the United Nations during these two weeks of the Cuban missile crisis was marginal.

4. The Aftermath

29 October 1962 - 7 January 1963

Khrushchev's decision of Sunday October 28 to withdraw the Cuban missiles meant that the most imminent dangers of an armed superpower confrontation had thus been averted. However, the crisis did not end on that Sunday. The decision remained to be implemented. And the United States, still keeping Cuba under a military blockade, asked for the removal of nuclear capable Ilyushin bombers from Cuba. In that sense the events had changed from a missile crisis to a bomber crisis. In the end Khrushchev also withdrew the bombers and in January 1963 the United Nations was informed that the case need not occupy the Council's agenda any longer. To conclude my study I shall hereafter briefly consider how the United Nations performed during this final phase of the conflict.

4.1 U Thant in Havana

The Security Council never met in the aftermath of the crisis. If the United Nations acted it was through its Secretary-General. U Thant, as we have seen above, had in his second attempt to ease tensions on Friday October 26 sent letters not only to Khrushchev and Kennedy but also to Castro. The Cuban Premier had reacted positively to U Thant's efforts and in his reply of October 27 invited the General-Secretary to visit Cuba for direct discussions on the crisis.

But U Thant had not yet left New York for Havana when Khrushchev's decision of Sunday morning ended the acute phase of the missile crisis. Before U Thant and Castro had even started their talk to ease tensions the two big players above them had reached an agreement and the Soviet missiles were being dismantled. The situation was thus almost symbolic for the subordinate roles U Thant as well as Castro played in the solution of the conflict. They were informed, not consulted. Similarly the UN Security Council had been informed, not consulted of the US blockade. It was clear where the real power lay.

Castro after having heard about the US-Soviet settlement went into a rage. He was totally upset about Khrushchev bypassing him like that. To Tad Szulc he confessed even twenty-two years later that "this incident, in a certain way, damaged the existing relations between Cubans and Soviets for a number of years."⁴⁶⁷ Havana on the evening of Sunday 28 1962 had received a lengthy telegram from the Kremlin. Explaining the reasons for the withdrawal of the missiles the message argued that any other move would have meant "global conflagration and

⁴⁶⁷ Szulc, p. 585

consequently the destruction of the Cuban revolution." In the face of US sabotage and embargo activity Castro most probably feared exactly this destruction of the Cuban revolution most. Yet another passage of the telegram assured him that "the Soviet government under no circumstances would refuse to fulfil its international duty to defend Cuba."⁴⁶⁸

If Castro had gone into a rage upon hearing about the settlement, U Thant for his part was much relieved and thankful for the vital step towards peace. Soviet First Deputy Premier Vasily V. Kuznetsov personally confirmed Khrushchev's decision to the Secretary General on Monday October 29. On the same day U Thant, ever the mediator, briefed Adlai Stevenson and John McCloy on his meeting with Kuznetsov. U Thant thought that now the blockade should really be suspended for good. It was his third appeal to the US to do so. But he could again not achieve a general suspension. Stevenson and McCloy linked the lifting of the blockade with the actual removal of the offensive weapons from Cuba. They agreed however to suspend the blockade and stop their aerial surveillance of Cuba for the period of U Thant's visit to Havana.⁴⁶⁹

When U Thant then finally left for Havana on Tuesday morning October 30, much had therefore changed since Castro had invited him on Saturday. Most importantly Castro's mood had changed. Being extremely bitter about the removal of the missiles the Cuban Premier had not much left to negotiate with U Thant. The missiles were on their way out and Castro could do nothing about it. This was a particularly bad moment to ask any further. But U Thant, who in reaction to the new circumstances, now hoped to leave an UN inspection team behind in Cuba to verify the dismantling wanted exactly that: another favour of Castro. It was destined to go wrong.

The unusually large group that U Thant had with him on the plane consisted of seventeen people including security officers and radio operators who, it was planned, were to supervise the withdrawal of the missiles from Cuba. Back in New York a second group of nineteen people including military staff, radio engineers, telex operators, interpreters and information officers waited, ready to leave on a second charter plane on U Thant's orders. The green light for their transfer was never given.

Twenty-eight large cases containing communications equipment, supplies, typewriters and other paraphernalia all intended for the "UN mission" were also on board the plane with which the Secretary-General flew to Havana. However, in the rush of the preparations these boxes had not been cleared with U Thant. At the airport there was maximum security, yet Foreign Minister Raul Roa was able to make it a friendly reception. While they were driving from the airport to Castro, Roa asked U Thant about the boxes, carrying the UN emblem, which had been unloaded from the plane. U Thant, extremely embarrassed, said he didn't know about

⁴⁶⁸ Quoted in Chang and Kornbluh, p. 381

⁴⁶⁹ Ibid. p. 381

them. He called his staff and it was decided to return the boxes to the plane. The crucial talks with Castro were only one hour away. Ramses Nassif remembers: "Although U Thant did not show any anger, for he was always able to control his feelings, he was furious".⁴⁷⁰ In a nutshell, the episode of the boxes illustrates that the visit was a failure.

U Thant remembered that when they were driving from the guest house to Castro's palace along the deserted but scenic road skirting the seashore "we could clearly see a United States destroyer patrolling just outside Cuban territorial waters (three miles)."⁴⁷¹ The danger was far from over. The talks on Tuesday lasted two hours. U Thant made a strong plea for a United Nations supervision of the withdrawal of the missiles but Castro wouldn't agree, reiterating his charges against the aggression of the United States. Castro explained that Cuba's interest was not to buy peace *now* at any price, but to have it secured forever.⁴⁷² One of U Thant's aids passed the Secretary-General a note saying "we're not getting anywhere - do you wish to propose to meet Castro alone tomorrow?"⁴⁷³ U Thant made the proposal and Castro immediately agreed.

Fortunately there was at least one positive aspect for U Thant on that Tuesday. The Soviet General in charge of the missiles came to see the Secretary-General and informed him that the dismantling of the missiles and their bases had started and would be completed by Friday. According to Nassif, U Thant was "elated with the news"⁴⁷⁴ and U Thant's military adviser Mr. Rikhye said that their visit to Havana had been extremely worthwhile - for that information alone, from a completely unexpected but authentic source, if for nothing else.⁴⁷⁵

On Wednesday morning October 31, U Thant had his second meeting with Castro. This time in privacy. Since Castro and U Thant had decided only to release the full text of the previous, but not of the second meeting, "this meeting was far more frank than the previous one."⁴⁷⁶ Castro was still angry both with Kennedy and Khrushchev and although U Thant told him that this was "a test case for the efficiency of the United Nations" he was not even able to get Castro's permission to leave one or two UN observers behind as a link between the UN and Havana. The Cuban Premier said that "he was sorry he could not permit anybody to stay behind in Cuba. He explained that such a presence would be interpreted by the people of Cuba

⁴⁷⁰ Nassif relates the "box story" in his biography of U Thant, p. 33

⁴⁷¹ U Thant, p. 188

⁴⁷² Ibid. 184

⁴⁷³ Nassif. p. 34

⁴⁷⁴ Ibid. p. 34

⁴⁷⁵ U Thant, p. 188

⁴⁷⁶ As U Thant remarks (p. 187). I base my text here on U Thant's "Notes on my second meeting with Premier Fidel Castro of Cuba in Havana on the 31st of October, 1962." It was for the first time published by Ramses Nassif and is contained in his biography of U Thant, pp. 38-48

as dealing with inspection, and the issue of inspection was rejected by everybody in his country."⁴⁷⁷ Castro however made, as U Thant reports, "one very important and totally unexpected proposal ... His government would accept United Nations inspection on Cuban soil if similar inspections could be made in the 'invasion camps across the seas, including Florida."⁴⁷⁸ Castro explained that everybody knew where the training for the Bay of Pigs invasion had taken place.

In the light of Operation MONGOOSE, the Bay of Pigs invasion and continuing sabotage raids which all aimed at nothing less than the overthrow of the Cuban Government, Castro was of the opinion that the United States should stop these subversive activities. A sensible claim. In view of the illegal economic pressures, especially the US embargo, Castro saw it vital for the survival of the Cuban economy to ask for the removal of such measures. The continuous violations of the Cuban airspace and territorial waters was one more thing that Castro, understandably, was not ready to accept. Furthermore he resented the occupation of Cuban territory and asked for the withdrawal of the US from Guantanamo naval base. These five claims were not new. Castro had always resented the sabotage, the embargo, the violations of airspace and territorial waters and the US military presence on its shores in Guantanamo. But on Sunday October 28, after having heard how the superpowers had settled the conflict, Castro had reiterated his position in a formal letter to U Thant. The letter has become known as "Castro's five points."⁴⁷⁹ For those interested in a *lasting* peace, Castro's position must have been sensible.⁴⁸⁰

Now during the Wednesday discussion Castro reiterated his position based on the five points and explained that his government would not discuss any other plan as the five points proposal "was based on logic and reality."⁴⁸¹ Castro explained that "even now the United States' invasion of Cuba could not be ruled out, there were many aggressive elements in the United States whose main purpose was to topple him and install a government friendly towards Washington."⁴⁸² Castro knew of course that the United States were unlikely to allow bilateral inspection and thus at least for the moment the inspection issue had died. This in effect meant that U Thant had to take his whole inspection crew back to New York.

Castro wanted U Thant to carry back to New York one impression above all: "that the Cuban people were determined to protect their national sovereignty by every means at their

⁴⁷⁷ Nassif, p. 44

⁴⁷⁸ U Thant, p. 188

⁴⁷⁹ Contained in Chang and Kornbluh as Document 62

⁴⁸⁰ I completely agree with Simons (1996, p. 316): "It is hard to imagine anyone who wanted peace not agreeing to Fidel Castro's five points."

⁴⁸¹ Nassif, p. 47

⁴⁸² Ibid. p. 48

disposal."⁴⁸³ Then U Thant left with his whole crew. When he arrived in New York in the evening of Wednesday October 31 he could confirm to the assembled press that he had been "reliably informed that the dismantling of the missiles and their installations was already in progress and that this progress should be completed by Friday, November, 2." Castro had also agreed on humanitarian grounds to return the body of the US pilot that had been shot down over Cuban airspace on Saturday. Thus there were two positive results of U Thant's efforts in Havana. However, when the Secretary-General said "I return from Havana after fruitful discussions with the leaders of Cuba" he had certainly given too good an impression of the whole trip.⁴⁸⁴ For the main intention, i.e. the UN supervision of the missile withdrawal, had not been achieved. And therefore the trip had in its essence been a failure.

4.2 Inspection of the missile withdrawal

The agreement to withdraw the missiles had been reached. But it remained to be implemented. The United States wanted to be absolutely sure that all the missiles would be removed from Cuba and therefore demanded that the withdrawal process be inspected. Under normal circumstances this would have been a classic field for the United Nations to become active. For with the superpowers in agreement now more room for UN activities existed. Or so one would have thought. U Thant's visit to Havana had already indicated that difficulties lay ahead. In the end the United Nations could not carry out the task and the inspection issue became a disappointment from a United Nations perspective.

Castro was thinking in long terms and did not only want the present problems to be removed - missiles and bombers, which were essentially problems in the eyes of the United States - but he also wanted the possible future problems removed - sabotage and invasion training camps in Florida and other parts of America - which were of course essentially problems for Cuba. As explained above Castro therefore made inspection of Cuba dependent on inspection of sabotage camps in Florida and other parts of America. In the light of the Bay of Pigs, burning sugar fields, bombs in factories and Operation MONGOOSE Castro's demand was well founded. Or as U Thant put it: "There was logic in Castro's demand."⁴⁸⁵

On November 12, U Thant therefore presented a strictly confidential working paper to Stevenson in which he proposed the establishing of a UN observation group consisting of eminent personalities from non-aligned countries. The primary task of that team would be the

⁴⁸³ As U Thant reports, p. 188

⁴⁸⁴ Ibid. p. 36

⁴⁸⁵ U Thant, p. 192

verification on the ground of the dismantling and the return of the Cuban missiles to the Soviet Union. "The Group will also have authority to investigate complaints that offensive preparations are being made in any part of the Caribbean or Central America with view to launching an invasion against the territory of any other country in the Caribbean or in Central America."⁴⁸⁶ This was U Thant's diplomatic way of saying that Cuba feared US-led aggression. Yet such a bilateral inspection as outlined in the working paper stood no chance with the United States. They insisted on unilateral inspection. On November 20, at a luncheon that U Thant gave to both United States and Soviet delegates, Stevenson took the General-Secretary aside and told him that the bilateral inspection was not acceptable to the US Government.⁴⁸⁷ This of course was a disappointment for U Thant. He remembers: "I saw no point in pursuing the matter any further. Thus, the long-term problem in the Caribbean still remains."⁴⁸⁸ He was right.

Castro for his part could not have been too surprised that the US didn't agree to an inspection of their sabotage camps. The Cuban Premier had therefore from the beginning known that there would be no inspection on Cuban soil. And James most probably catches part of the truth when he comments that Castro "was making up for the blow which his country had suffered by being awkward with the UN."⁴⁸⁹

In fact already before such a bilateral inspection proposal was put forward other ways had been sought to supervise the missile withdrawal. After U Thant and his team of observer had come back from Havana the idea of aerial inspection by the UN arose. It was thought less provocative if the United Nations and not the United States flew into the Cuban airspace to photograph and thus control the dismantling of the missiles. CIA director McCone however "had a low opinion of U Thant and the UN and argued vehemently that neither the U-2 nor the

⁴⁸⁶ The full text of the "*Confidential Working Paper of November 12 to Adlai E. Stevenson*" is contained in: U Thant, p. 467

⁴⁸⁷ Ibid. p. 192. At the November 5 ExComm meeting, the bilateral inspection issue was discussed. Unfortunately I have not had access to the verbal transcripts as that would certainly be interesting. Three days before, on the evening of November 2, a US delegation including Adlai Stevenson met a Soviet delegation including Anastas Mikoyan. When the conversation turned to the inspection issue and Mikoyan mentioned training activities he was, according to Stevenson's report, "assured that there were no such camps any longer and that US was not engaged in such activities." (*Adlai Stevenson's report on New York meeting with Anastas Mikoyan, November 2, 1962*. Contained in Chang and Kornbluh as Document 62). These were words. The deeds showed the real policy: Not even a week after the meeting, on November 8, a six-man CIA sabotage team went to Cuba and blew up a Cuban industrial facility. (Chang and Kornbluh, p. 387). No wonder the US wanted no inspection.

⁴⁸⁸ Ibid. p. 192

⁴⁸⁹ Alan James, p. 125

U-2 photography should be made available to the UN."⁴⁹⁰ And the United Nations, always depending on the equipment of others, thus faced a problem. In the end McCone's suggestion that the older RB-66 airplanes be offered to the UN was adopted. Even the US insignia were painted out and replaced with the white and blue insignia of the UN. But in vain for the UN aerial inspection scheme fell flat.

I do not exactly know why the UN aerial reconnaissance was not carried out. One claim is that the Secretary-General had difficulty in finding politically acceptable pilots. I wonder whether that was the real problem. Another claim is that Castro's attitude towards inspection led to the abandonment. This seems more plausible.⁴⁹¹ In the end again US and not UN low-flying reconnaissance planes were in the Cuban airspace to provide maximum information on the final stages of the dismantling process.

An alternative for UN inspection that had been initiated before U Thant had proposed the bilateral inspection involved the Red Cross. On October 29, Kuznetsov had informed U Thant that while Moscow would not object to a UN inspection team it would prefer verification of the removal of the missiles by the International Red Cross. U Thant had the UN office in Geneva contact the International Committee of the Red Cross which answered on the same day that it would undertake the assignment if the Cuban government consented. After the Havana trip U Thant knew about Castro's "bilateral or no inspection" position and therefore with the US opposing bilateral inspection a Red Cross inspection on Cuban soil was out of the question. An option that remained was to inspect Soviet ships that had left Cuba at sea in international waters. U Thant had to this effect almost daily discussions with a member of the Red Cross Committee to work out the modalities of verifications of dismantled Soviet missiles on the high seas.

The International Committee of the Red Cross, while solely Swiss in composition, is international in function. When US General Curtis Le May heard of the proposed inspection of Soviet ships by the Red Cross he had said: "Jesus Christ, what in the hell do a bunch of grey ladies know about missiles?"⁴⁹² Le May was indeed a rather strange figure. After Khrushchev had promised to withdraw the missiles on Sunday, Le May had on the same day had suggested to "go in and make a strike on Monday anyway."⁴⁹³ What should the historian say here? He could say "No comment" as the quotes speak for themselves. Or he could say "What a fool".

⁴⁹⁰ Brugioni, p. 510

⁴⁹¹ Both claims reported by James, p. 125

⁴⁹² Quoted in Brugioni, p. 501

⁴⁹³ Quoted in Chang and Kornbluh, p. 380

In the end neither the UN nor the Red Cross carried out the inspection of the missile withdrawal. The USA did the job themselves. On the high sea they inspected the returning Soviet ships from helicopters and planes or with warships drawing alongside Soviet ships. The United Nations, one more time, was not involved.⁴⁹⁴

4.3 "It has not been possible to resolve all problems"

On Sunday October 28, when Khrushchev had promised that he would withdraw his missiles, the world was relieved. The ExComm, which met on the same day, was, however, not yet completely satisfied. Based on Kennedy's October 22 speech, they decided to label the Soviet IL-28 bombers as "offensive". President Kennedy indicated that he did not want to get "hung up" over these planes, which were twelve years old and obsolete as strategic weapons.⁴⁹⁵ Nevertheless the United States demanded the Soviet Union on November 3 specifically also for the removal of the IL-28s, threatening that if the Soviets failed to do so, they would face "renewed action by the United States."⁴⁹⁶ The US letter caused extreme consternation in Moscow and Havana. Khrushchev immediately replied to the US:

"I must confess, the approach of the American side to this matter has seriously worried me. In such a move, I will say frankly, I see a wish to complicate the situation ... it is being done at a moment when we have already agreed with you on the main questions and when we on our part have already fulfilled what we agreed upon - have dismantled rocket weapons, are loading them now on ships ... The demand ... - I would wish, Mr. President, that you understand me correctly - can lead not to the betterment of our relations but, on the contrary, to their aggravation. As for us, we view the

⁴⁹⁴ The Red Cross had almost received another assignment. As the US blockade was still in effect until November 20, ships that were bound for Cuba had according to US decisions to be inspected. Washington, Moscow and Havana had agreed for inspection of Cuban bound ships to be conducted by the Red Cross. The Red Cross, however, somewhat embarrassed, was unsure whether such a task would be within its humanitarian mandate. In the end it agreed to provide some 30 inspectors who would probably have been recruited from among Swiss Army officers. But the offer was not taken up. The Red Cross, somewhat relieved, re-examined the propriety of its use in such situations and as a consequence of the Cuban crisis established firm criteria for its future guidance. (James, p. 126).

⁴⁹⁵ Chang and Kornbluh, p. 233

⁴⁹⁶ Ibid. p. 234

introduction of additional demands as a wish to bring our relations back again into a heated state in which they were but several days ago."⁴⁹⁷

Kennedy in his reply assured Khrushchev of his good intentions but stating that the bomber issue was "indeed of great importance" to the US insisted on the removal of the IL-28s.⁴⁹⁸ On November 11, Khrushchev rejected Kennedy's "incomprehensible argument" and by referring to the blockade and to the non-invasion pledge explained that "now it is your turn, it is for your side to carry out precisely your obligations." But luckily Khrushchev made a further significant step towards peace by giving "a gentleman's word" that the planes "although not now but later" would be removed.⁴⁹⁹

It still didn't please Kennedy. The US President wanted the planes out not later but immediately. On November 19, he informed his NATO allies Charles de Gaulle, Konrad Adenauer and Harold Macmillan that the United States might have to use "renewed action."⁵⁰⁰ If Kennedy had incorporated a very sane position with his "I don't want to get hung up over the planes" attitude at the beginning of November, then this "renewed action" intention, which most probably meant a US airstrike on Cuba, had clearly left that sane position in exactly the opposite direction. Before the November 19 warning to NATO allies an ExComm contingency paper had proposed as a last resort that US aerial reconnaissance might be used "as a means of provoking attack on our planes, which could in turn justify retaliation from the air on Cuban targets (including the IL-28's on the ground)."⁵⁰¹ This is not sanity, but the opposite.

Luckily Khrushchev with the consent of Castro made as well the extra step and on November 19 informed Kennedy that he would also remove the planes within a month or even sooner. Upon that the US blockade was finally lifted.

The bomber problem was thus resolved. But another problem remained unsolved: the US promise not to invade Cuba. This is rather incredible because the US non-invasion plea had been an *explicit* condition of the Kennedy-Khrushchev deal. On October 27 Kennedy answered Khrushchev's proposal to end the crisis by clearly stating: "1. You would agree to remove these weapons systems from Cuba ... 2. We, on our part, would agree ... a) to remove promptly the quarantine measures now in effect and b) to give assurances against an invasion

⁴⁹⁷ Premier Khrushchev's letter to President Kennedy, regarding the list of offensive weapons in Cuba, November 4, 1962. Contained in Chang and Kornbluh as Document 66

⁴⁹⁸ President Kennedy's letter to Premier Khrushchev, November 6, 1962. Contained in Chang and Kornbluh as Document 67

⁴⁹⁹ Premier Khrushchev's letter to President Kennedy, November 11, 1962. Contained in Chang and Kornbluh as Document 69

⁵⁰⁰ Quoted in Chang and Kornbluh, p. 234

⁵⁰¹ *Ibid.*, p. 234

of Cuba."⁵⁰² Condition 2b was very explicit. Khrushchev in his answer explained: "I regard with respect and trust your statement in your message of October 27, 1962, that no attack will be made on Cuba, that no invasion will take place" and Khrushchev thus promised the withdrawal of his weapons. In the same letter, however, Khrushchev noted that presently aggression was being carried out and referred to a new sabotage incident: "The shelling of Havana took place from a piratic ship. It is said that irresponsible Cuban émigrés did the shooting ... Mr. President, I want to say clearly again that we could not be indifferent to this."⁵⁰³ Kennedy, who replied immediately to Khrushchev's ending of the acute phase of the missile crisis, did not mention the shelling of Havana in his letter but reaffirmed that he considered the "letter to you of October twenty-seventh and your reply of today as firm undertakings on the part of both our governments which should be promptly carried out."⁵⁰⁴ Thus implicitly Kennedy reaffirmed that the US would "give assurances against an invasion of Cuba".

Yet however much it promised, the US government never gave its assurance not to invade Cuba. It's a rather sad story. To Khrushchev the US explained that they could not make the non-invasion promise because the United Nations had not inspected the missile withdrawal on Cuban soil as planned by the Kennedy-Khrushchev agreement. This is a totally flimsy argument. First of all the US had been allowed by Khrushchev to verify the complete withdrawal personally by flying over and drawing close to Soviet ships leaving Cuba. On November 29, the CIA therefore concluded in its memorandum: "The Soviet claim to have delivered only 42 missiles to Cuba, and to have now withdrawn these, is consistent with our evidence."⁵⁰⁵ So the United States knew that the missiles were gone. As they themselves had furthermore by opposing the bilateral inspection made the UN verification together with Castro impossible, they now couldn't honestly complain that they would have preferred the UN to have done the job. Such was the flimsy character of their argument.

The genuine reasons why the Government of the United States did not live up to its word and did not give Khrushchev the non-invasion promise were of course of a different nature. Kennedy initially seemed to have been willing to give the non-invasion promise. In the ExComm meeting of November 7 he reportedly said that they "might make a formal

⁵⁰² President Kennedy's letter to Premier Khrushchev, responding to proposal to end the crisis, October 27, 1962. Contained in Chang and Kornbluh as Document 51

⁵⁰³ Premier Khrushchev's communiqué to President Kennedy, accepting an end to the missile crisis, October 28, 1962. Contained in Chang and Kornbluh as Document 52.

⁵⁰⁴ President Kennedy's letter to Premier Khrushchev, confirming terms to settle the crisis, October 28, 1962. Contained in Chang and Kornbluh as Document 53.

⁵⁰⁵ Central Intelligence Agency Memorandum, "Deployment and Withdrawal of Soviet Missiles and Other Significant Weapons in Cuba," 29 November 1962. Contained in: Secret Documents, p. 357

commitment not to invade when the Soviet comply fully by removing the IL-28 bombers and we have assurances that there will be no reintroduction of strategic missiles ... our posture with the Soviets should be such as to avoid the appearance of holding back in the light of the rapid withdrawal of Soviet missiles."⁵⁰⁶ Already by November 20, however, Kennedy had retracted this position.

Documents declassified in 1992 show that US officials who saw the missile crisis as a great opportunity to overthrow Castro lobbied hard against any non-invasion promise as this would inhibit US actions. On November 7, thus still before the crisis was over, the State Department's Policy Planning Council submitted a long-term strategy paper, which called for "a maximal US strategy ... directed at the elimination ... of the Castro regime."⁵⁰⁷ These were the real reasons, sad as they are. On November 17 a State Department report concluded that a settlement would mean that "the Castro regime would be substantially safeguarded from invasion, and by implication, at least, from other US actions against it." The report smartly pointed out that the United States "could refuse to issue a non-invasion guarantee ... The US would be spared the problems which a guarantee for Castro would create for US policy in Latin America." If Castro since 1959 and Khrushchev since March 1962 had wanted exactly this respect for Cuba's sovereignty then the United States had clearly opposing interests. The report therefore concluded "that a stalemate in the Cuban talks might actually be more beneficial to US interests in Latin America, in Cuba and in broader negotiations with the USSR than a settlement."⁵⁰⁸ Or as Secretary of State Dean Rusk put it: "Our interest lies in ... avoiding the kind of commitment that unduly ties our hands in dealing with the Castro regime while it lasts."⁵⁰⁹

Against the background of these reflections, the United States government in the end decided not to issue at the UN a formal pledge not to invade Cuba. Despite the promises that Kennedy had made in his letters and despite the fact that Khrushchev had lived up to his promises and had withdrawn the missiles. Or one should maybe say more correctly that the United States *after* the missile crisis decided not to make *another* promise not to invade Cuba. For Mr. Lodge for the United States had already gone on the Official Record of the Security Council in July 1960: "Unnecessary though it most certainly seems to me, let me here and now give him [Castro] this assurance, heaped up and overflowing: the United States has

⁵⁰⁶ Bromley Smith, "Summary Record of NSC Executive Committee", November 7, 1962. Contained in Chang and Kornbluh as Document 68

⁵⁰⁷ Quoted in Chang and Kornbluh, p. 236

⁵⁰⁸ Roger Hilsman, State Department Bureau of Intelligence and Research memorandum, "Negotiations on Cuba: The Advantages of Stalemate," November 17, 1962. Contained in Chang and Kornbluh as Document 74

⁵⁰⁹ Quoted in Chang and Kornbluh, p. 236

no aggressive purpose against Cuba."⁵¹⁰ If one furthermore contrasts the Bay of Pigs invasion with this statement of the US representative then it is somewhat difficult to understand what Rusk had meant with his remark that certain official statements would "tie the hands" of the United States.

When on January 7 1963 Stevenson and Kuznetzov in a letter to the United Nations expressed the appreciation of their governments for the efforts of U Thant during the Cuban missile crisis and concluded that "it is not necessary for this item to occupy further the attention of the Security Council at this time" one sentence fitted only oddly into the text. It read: "While it has not been possible for our Governments to resolve all the problems that have arisen in connection with this affair...". To all those with some insight the reference was clear.

4.4 Conclusions on the aftermath of the missile crisis

The conclusion on the aftermath of the missile crisis is very simple: The United Nations was not successful. First of all there was the issue of supervising and controlling the missile withdrawal. But as Castro didn't want UN personnel in Cuba and as the USA likewise refused to accept UN inspection of its training camps the United Nations could not become effective. True, the missile withdrawal was in the end controlled and supervised. But the UN had not been given the chance to do the job and therefore the issue of the missile withdrawal must be described as unsuccessful from a UN perspective.

Secondly there was the non-invasion pledge. The importance of a non-invasion pledge becomes especially obvious if one considers the long range of hostility between Cuba and the United States in which Cuba had so often been on the receiving end. A non-invasion pledge given by the United States in the United Nations Security Council to Cuba could have been a signal for a new start. This signal was not given. That the United States used the absence of the United Nations in the missile inspection as a pretext for not living up to its non-invasion promise must not be blamed on the United Nations. On the whole this aftermath of the missile crisis confirms the central truth about the world organisation once more: The United Nations can only be as effective as its members concerned want it to be. Especially if the members concerned are powerful members.

⁵¹⁰ United Nations Security Council Official Records. 874th meeting, para. 95

5. Conclusion

In this study I have treated the Cuban missile crisis as an event that does not stand alone but is essentially embedded in an aftermath and especially in a prelude. According to this reading I have structured the natural continuum into three blocks each of which was followed by a conclusion in which the role of the United Nations in the respective block was evaluated. These evaluations are hereafter complemented as a conclusion to my study by a final evaluation that spans all three blocks and assesses the whole role of the United Nations in the Cuban crisis.

5.1 My evaluation of the UN's role in the Cuban Missile Crisis

A final evaluation must include all parts of the United Nations and it must span the whole problematic period, thus all three blocks covering in effect almost three years. To evaluate only one part, as for instance the Secretary-General, or only one period, as for instance Thursday October 25, 1962, is nothing a final evaluation can afford.

After a detailed analysis of the evidence and a careful balancing of the positive and negative elements I have come to the following final conclusion: *The United Nations played a role in the Cuban missile crisis but this role was modest and the overall performance of the United Nations was insufficient.* Each of the three blocks clearly shows this overall feature. During the prelude the United Nations was not able to take an active role in the ongoing conflict between the United States and Cuba especially because of the non-cooperation of the United States. This is particularly disturbing because the issue was brought repeatedly to the attention of the UN: Three sessions in the Security Council, another two sessions in the General Assembly and furthermore two speeches before the General Assembly on exactly this topic, all within less than two and a half years.

With the addition of the missiles the crisis developed into a superpower conflict which was resolved bilaterally including private diplomacy. Against this background the United Nations could only play a secondary role during the two weeks of October 1962. This role was most obvious when the military blockade against Cuba was imposed without the consent or even consultation of the United Nations Security Council. After the Security Council ended in a deadlock after only three days, U Thant's noble efforts certainly provided a golden bridge for Khrushchev. It is, however, important to recall that Khrushchev had stopped his ships independently of the Secretary-General's efforts and that therefore here too the United Nations played a secondary role. Only if the Cordier ploy had become reality could the United Nations have changed its secondary role for a primary role. But the Cordier ploy never became reality.

The aftermath showed the same characteristics as the two preceding blocks. The United Nations was not involved in controlling and overseeing the missile withdrawal and could not ensure either that a non-invasion pledge was formulated. An unsatisfactory performance.

In the nineties, with the fiftieth anniversary of the United Nations, many studies were initiated on how to make the United Nations better. It goes without saying that in a changing world, the UN must change and that reforms are therefore necessary. The extension of the Security Council, the introduction of mechanisms that guarantee the financial health of the UN, the inclusion of environmental issues into the Charter, the assignment of a new role to the Trusteeship Council and many other sensible suggestions have been made and should be realised. As this study has shown, however, the United Nations, also a reformed United Nations, can always and will always only be as efficient as its strongest members want it to be. The most important reform to make the United Nations better therefore lies with the member states themselves who must strive to live up to the principles of the Charter.⁵¹¹ If the United Nations performed unsatisfactory in the Cuban crisis it was because of its members. And even if the United Nations only played a secondary role in the Cuban crisis it is still the best organisation we've got to work despite all obstacles towards the aims of the Charter: Peace and security.

One other conclusion must be drawn here that does not directly concern the United Nations but the understanding of the Cuban crisis in a more general sense. Historiography of the crisis has, as I see it, correctly noted that Khrushchev's stationing of missiles was a reckless and deplorable gamble and a main aspect of the Cuban crisis. The more recent historiography has also correctly taken into account that the crisis started in 1959 and that

⁵¹¹ I am in complete agreement with Carlson who states in his essay "*The UN at 50: A Time to Reform*": "If the United Nations has failings, if it is unable to do the tasks it is given, if corruption and waste go uncorrected, then this is the responsibility of its owners - the 185 member states and, most especially, the major powers with their seats on the Security Council." (p. 3). He concludes: "It follows that many of the real solutions to the problems faced by the UN system must come from a process of change that begins in national behaviour, national decision making, and national policies - not in the 38 floors of the UN building in New York or in smaller buildings in Geneva, Vienna, and elsewhere." (p.15). Georg Kreis maintains in his essay "*Systeme der kollektiven Friedensicherung*" that this fundamental truth is not only valid for the UN today but was also valid for the UN in 1945 and was also valid for the League in 1919: "1945 wurde in den Debatten um die Vor- und Nachteile der beiden Organisationen [UN and League] zu Recht betont, dass es letztlich weder auf die materielle noch auf die juristische Basis der Organisation ankomme, sondern auf die Einstellung der Akteure, die sich im gegebenen System bewegen ... [Diese Lehre] entsprach durchaus dem, was man bereits 1919, ja sogar schon vor 1914 wusste. Und über diese theoretische Einsicht ist man auch in der Zwischenzeit nicht viel weiter hinausgelangt." (p. 34)

Castro was an actor in the conflict. The historiography, with the exception of recent publications, has however often not fully depicted the role of the United States. It has always been acknowledged that the US were a main actor in the crisis. But by neglecting the impacts of the Bay of Pigs invasion, OPERATION MONGOOSE, the assassination attempts, the economic embargo and the sabotage raids the overall presentation of the US role in the crisis has often been far more positive than the facts allow for. Here the historiography of the crisis must work towards a more balanced evaluation. And the United States should instead of passing such acts as the Helms-Burton Act⁵¹² try to work towards a normalisation of the US-Cuban relations.

⁵¹² The economic embargo by the United States against Cuba was implemented even before the missile crisis and is still effective today. With the collapse of the Soviet Union, Cuba lost massive Soviet subsidies and starting in 1989 a six-year economic crisis set in. From 1989 to 1993, Cuban earnings from exports dropped from \$ 5.4 billion to \$ 1.7 billion. And as exports and foreign earnings decreased, imports also declined, from \$ 8.1 billion in 1989 to \$ 2.2 billion in 1993. Confronted by the desperate situation Castro in 1993 made concessions which also included the possibility of foreign investments in Cuba. European, Canadian, Mexican, Australian and other firms started to invest in Cuba again and the economy started to recover. The US reacted against this recovery. In March 1996, President Clinton, investing a tremendous amount of political capital, signed the Helms-Burton act which in its essence tightens the US economic embargo against Cuba by providing legal recourse against the non-compliance of third parties such as Canada or European states. Title two of Helms Burton openly asks for the removal of Castro, title three speaks of punishing those foreigners who invest in Cuba. Helms-Burton for instance has already punished nine Canadians and their families by barring them from entering the United States because their firm had invested in Cuba. This extraterritorial extension of national legislation and latest unilateral action of the United States to bring down Castro caused grave concern in the EU, Canada, Mexico and elsewhere and led to outspoken criticism. The official US euphemism finally for the Helms-Burton act, the "Cuban liberty and democratic solidarity act" is maybe one of the most wonderful recent examples of George Orwell's *Newspeak*. (See: Stephen A. Lisio: *Helms-Burton and the point of diminishing returns* (1996); August Reinisch: *Widening the US embargo against Cuba extraterritorially* (1996))

6. Bibliography

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