

**Afterword:
The Cuban Missile Crisis in Post-Cold War Consciousness**

The October Crisis is over. The Caribbean Crisis. The missile crisis. To name huge things is to begin to kill them. Words are small, meager . . . I want to preserve the clean and empty vision of the days of the crisis . . . Go beyond words. Get closer to the reality.

—Edmundo Desnoes, *Memories of Underdevelopment*

Ten years after the Havana conference—and forty years after the world stood on the nuclear precipice—the Cuban missile crisis continues to exert a powerful influence on the public imagination. But already we are beginning to see the inexorable process by which historical events, when they recede far enough into the past, take on an antiquarian quality and gradually lose their visceral potency. Consider the American Civil War—an event that rent the very fabric of American society, left 600,000 dead, and changed forever the lives of those who survived. In a very real sense, the United States is still grappling with issues that gave rise to the Civil War, and with issues that arose because of it. But with every passing year, we look upon the Civil War with greater and greater detachment. For all but the recalcitrant, the nostalgic, and others obsessed with what they take to be a braver, bolder era of the mid-19th century, the American civil war has lost its immediacy, its poignancy, its passion. We can now take it up, turn it around, and examine its various angles in a cold analytical light. We have come so far from the psychological reality of the Civil War that Northerners and Southerners alike can now see both Grant and Lee as great men of a particular place and time.

This process is hardly surprising. No one living today was alive during the Civil War. What we know of it we know from a distance—a distance not only of time, but also of context. We know it through the retelling, not the experience—or, as Bertrand Russell put it, by “description,” not by “acquaintance.”ⁱ It continues to fascinate us, and we continue to recognize its importance; but we see it more as relic than as reality. It is a matter of time before the Civil War takes its place alongside the Battle of Hastings in 1066 as an historical event worth noting, but utterly incapable of conjuring up strong feelings.

So it will be with the Cuban missile crisis. Already the number of people with clear personal memories of the event is dwindling. Those of us who teach international politics know this only too well. Today’s undergraduate cannot even recall the 1991 Persian Gulf war, let alone the Cuban missile crisis, and every year it gets harder and harder to explain to people who have no living memory of the Cold War how it was that the United States and the Soviet Union could maneuver themselves into a position where they almost destroyed the world in order to preserve the essential conditions of nuclear deterrence on whose threat of mutual destruction they believed the very safety of the world depended. Every year, when students learn what happened in 1962, they react more with puzzlement than with fright. “I don’t understand why it took so long for Kennedy and Khrushchev to communicate with each other during the crisis,” one student recently asked. “Why didn’t they just send a fax?”

Distance and detachment have their advantages, to be sure. We can only lament that Allied statesmen in 1918 did not have our current perspective on the outbreak of the First

World War. We can only regret that they directed their passions toward assigning war guilt and exacting reparations instead of toward avoiding the circumstances that led to war in the first place—circumstances that we can only now see clearly precisely *because* we can look at the First World War dispassionately. But distance and detachment come with a cost. A detached understanding is a partial understanding. If we could empathize with Harold of England;ⁱⁱ with Abraham Lincoln and Jefferson Davis; with Kaiser Wilhelm and Tsar Nicholas, we would see more clearly than we do that the past is not as remote from the present and future as time alone would lead us to believe. We would see better that, although the circumstances of crises change and change radically, the phenomenology of crisis—the human experience of dealing with high stakes, shortness of time, and imperfect information—does not. It is more or less the same amalgam of responsibility, fear, uncertainty, and confusion in all times and places.

It is healthy for political leaders to know this in advance, for it dashes the novice's dangerous illusion of invincibility and control. Every young driver should have a brush with disaster soon after acquiring his or her driver's license, for this is the surest cure for recklessness and exuberance behind the wheel. Those fortunate enough to have had a near miss will know how much their driving improved as a result of it—for a while, at least. As the memory fades, though, so also does the effect. And if there is no memory—if the experience was someone else's, merely related in speech—the beneficial effect is likely to be mild and fleeting.

The Cuban missile crisis was a spectacular near miss with enduring, even timeless relevance. Its central lessons—of the dangers of political and cultural myopia; of failing to communicate; of misperception, misjudgment, and inadvertence; of failing to make an effort to see the world as one's adversaries see it; of putting too much faith in the efficacy of threat; of assuming that one's own motives are transparently benign—are as germane today as they were in 1962, and will be no less germane as we move forward into a 21st century world characterized by increasing complexity, unprecedented technological change and diffusion, rising interdependence and interpenetration of states, the proliferation of non-state actors, environmental stresses, and the uncertainties that arise from the chaotic, nonlinear interactions among all of these various things.ⁱⁱⁱ It is therefore to be regretted that the Cuban missile crisis is destined to lose its visceral punch.

We will probably see, with the benefit of greater historical distance, that the end of the Cold War marked the point at which the Cuban missile crisis finally became a genuinely "historical" event. The crisis was, after all, the Cold War's most dangerous hour. The Cold War epoch in which the missile crisis occurred, and at the conclusion of which the January 1992 Havana conference took place, is over.^{iv} We have moved on to a new phase. Speaking very personally for a moment, we hope that our efforts to understand the crisis will not prove inadvertently to have hastened its retreat into history. But there is a danger of this. The Havana conference was a watershed—a liminal event that took place just as the dust of the Cold War was beginning to settle—ushering in a new phase in the study of the crisis by finally putting into place, as it were, the remaining edge pieces of a large and complicated jigsaw puzzle: the Cuban and Soviet pieces. It would be the cruelest of ironies if our efforts, a central purpose of which has been to bring into bold relief and to stress the importance of the phenomenology of international

crisis, served instead merely to make it more remote in this respect. But it is possible that this is what has happened.

Interest in the Cuban missile crisis did not flag after the Havana conference, however. Far from it. The startling claims and riveting insights we first heard around the table from men such as Fidel Castro and Anatoly Gribkov, met initially with skepticism from many quarters,^v merely whetted the appetites of scholars around the world, and led directly to the opening of a number of Soviet archives, the unprecedented release of at least a few Cuban documents, and a spate of interviews and testimonials by means of which previously silent participants in the event from both countries finally had an opportunity to speak their piece. The conference energized American scholars, too, who were inspired enough by the suddenly changing story of an event we thought we already knew to take advantage of the ongoing process of declassification in the United States to broaden and deepen our understanding. Havana led directly also to a critical oral history of the Bay of Pigs, which of course was integral to the genesis of the missile crisis itself.^{vi} As a result of all this activity, the picture of the crisis as a whole that first came into view in Havana in 1992 has come into sharper and sharper focus.

But while we have learned a few new things, corrected a few mistakes, filled in a number of blanks, and been able to see more clearly some nuances and subtleties that were earlier obscured from view, the story we first heard in Havana has not changed in important respects. Everything we have learned in the last ten years reinforces our basic understanding of the dynamics of the crisis, an understanding the Havana conference itself revolutionized. As with all interesting and important historical events, of course, everything we learn, and every puzzle we solve, raises new questions and opens new avenues of inquiry.^{vii} We are therefore a very long way from having a complete and definitive picture. Indeed, as we saw in Havana, it is possible to tell radically different stories of the event with almost wholly incompatible frames. There is a dominant American construction of the crisis, a dominant Russian construction, and a dominant Cuban construction. They are rather different tales, as we attempted to show in chapter 4. In fact, it is obvious from the American historiography of the crisis that there are *many* American constructions, and that these, too, differ from each other in important respects.^{viii} No doubt, with time, we will come to see competing Russian and Cuban constructions. A definitive telling of the tale is as much a chimera as is the notion of historical objectivity. But the basic facts appear to be in place, and we are at least in the comfortable position now of pursuing details and haggling over interpretations.

The details that have surfaced in the past ten years have been fascinating, as have the arguments over their meaning and significance. Gribkov's comments at the Havana conference immediately stimulated a lively debate in Russian military circles over the numbers and types of weapons to be deployed in Cuba, their location and status at the time of the crisis, and Moscow's attempts to assert control over them. Gribkov himself prompted the debate in a series of articles to which we referred in chapter 4, and also in a fascinating book he later co-authored with Havana conference participant Gen. William Y. Smith, *Operation Anadyr: U.S. And Soviet Generals Recount the Cuban Missile Crisis*.^{ix} The debate has broadened, of course, to include other scholars as well.^x There is still a degree of uncertainty surrounding these matters, but the crucial facts are clear: the Soviet deployment to Cuba was much larger, and involved many more types of weapons, than American policy makers at the time knew, or would even have imagined

in their wildest dreams. Moreover, Moscow's control of these weapons was more tenuous than Khrushchev evidently believed would be the case when he conceived the deployment in the first place. Every new tidbit of information that drops on the historian's plate only reinforces these conclusions. For example, we learned only last year that each Soviet submarine patrolling the western Atlantic and waters around Cuba during the crisis carried a nuclear torpedo in addition to its standard complement of conventional high explosive torpedoes.^{xi} The U.S. Navy was giving these Soviet submarines a rather rough time, but there is no indication that anyone knew that in its dangerous game of cat-and-mouse, the American cats were playing with nuclear-armed mice.^{xii}

Not all of the frightening new military details to emerge have come from Russian sources. Scott Sagan, an early participant in our critical oral history, published an important book in 1993 titled *The Limits of Safety: Organizations, Accidents, and Nuclear Weapons*, which drew heavily on the events of 1962 to make the case that "normal accidents" are inevitable in complex military systems.^{xiii} Among the frightening episodes that took place during the heat of the crisis, according to Sagan, were the following:

The Strategic Air Command (SAC) launched a Titan ICBM from Vandenberg Air Force Base on October 26, 1962—just as the crisis was reaching its crescendo. It did so in keeping with a predetermined flight-test schedule. While this particular missile did not carry a nuclear warhead, the Air Force had mated nuclear warheads to the other ICBMs at Vandenberg, and had placed them on alert. Fortunately, the Soviets did not detect the launch, or they might have misinterpreted it as part of a nuclear attack.

At Malmstrom Air Force Base in Montana, American officers at a Minuteman ICBM site jerry-rigged the launch system so as to give themselves an independent launch capability, bypassing normal safeguards.

A number of F-102 fighters scrambled from Eielson AFB in Alaska to escort the American U-2 that had inadvertently strayed into Soviet airspace on October 27. Owing to the heightened alert, they were carrying live nuclear anti-aircraft missiles. Fortunately, they never encountered the Soviet MiGs that had scrambled to intercept the U-2. If they had, they might have detonated nuclear weapons in or near Soviet airspace.

Just before 9:00 a.m. on Sunday October 28—minutes before Soviet Chairman Nikita Khrushchev announced his willingness to withdraw Soviet missiles from Cuba—American radar operators at Moorestown, N.J., erroneously reported a missile launch from Cuba.

President Kennedy, of course, had already come to realize at the climax of the crisis that he did not know, and could not control, all of the actions of his own military. This was a significant part of the reason why he felt such a sense of urgency to bring the crisis to a close. We suspect that if he had known about these particular events, his sense of urgency would have been all the more acute.

What we have learned about the military details of the Cuban missile crisis since the Havana conference, then, only reinforce the impression that it was largely a matter of great good fortune that things did not get out of hand. Particularly dangerous, in our view, was the combination of misperceptions and misjudgments at the highest levels of the civilian leadership in both the United States and the Soviet Union, the sheer complexity of the military systems they sought to control, and the tensions in both countries between civilian leaders who sought primarily to keep matters from spinning out of control, and military leaders who advocated playing hardball (the American military felt confident that nuclear superiority gave the United States a relatively free hand; the Soviet military felt confident that their nuclear capability was adequate to deter reckless American action.) These psychological, organizational, and (for want of a better phrase) civil/military cultural factors gave the lie, in our judgment, to a common view among some political scientists that nuclear weapons stabilize and pacify hostile political relationships, and that the managed proliferation of nuclear weapons would on balance be a good thing.^{xiv} We rebutted this view in a 1995 essay titled “Risking ‘the Destruction of Nations’: Lessons of the Cuban Missile Crisis for New and Aspiring Nuclear States,” in which we argued that if the United States and the Soviet Union—two countries favored technologically, unfettered by resource constraints, and fortunate to enjoy a long and stable tradition of civilian control over a professional military establishment—could stumble to the brink of disaster not *in spite of* having nuclear weapons, but *because of* nuclear weapons, the implication for countries less advantaged in these respects was clear: nuclear weapons are a problem, not a solution.^{xv} The nuclear genie is better left in the bottle.

After the essay’s publication, we briefed it to the Indian military, whose overwhelming reaction was: “But of course Americans and Soviets made mistakes in 1962. We are Indians. We do not make those types of mistakes.” And within a few years, both India and Pakistan had become declared nuclear powers.^{xvi} Both are now rethinking the wisdom of that move as they grapple with the added technical, organizational, diplomatic, and domestic-political complications they now face. If Indian and Pakistani leaders had had the experience of the Cuban missile crisis—if they had lived it as Kennedy and Khrushchev did—we suspect they would not have been quite so sanguine. They simply did not have the benefit of a sobering near miss.^{xvii}

We know a good deal more now, of course, about the mistakes the Soviets and Americans made that led them to the brink—and also about the ways in which Kennedy and Khrushchev managed to step back from it. Russian scholars were quick to take advantage of *glasnost* and the collapse of the Soviet Union to begin to tell for the first time a reliable and authoritative tale of Moscow’s Cold War decision making, based in part upon access to some (though, importantly, not all) Soviet archives.^{xviii} Particularly noteworthy are Vladislav Zubok and Constantine Pleshakov’s award-winning book, *Inside the Kremlin’s Cold War: From Stalin to Khrushchev*, which provides a great deal of relevant background to the Cuban missile crisis; Aleksandr Fursenko and Timothy Naftali’s *‘One Hell of a Gamble’: Khrushchev, Castro and Kennedy, 1958-1964*, which deals primarily with the crisis itself; and John Lewis Gaddis’s *We Now Know: Rethinking Cold War History*, which provides an excellent overview.^{xix} Khrushchev’s son Sergei—a participant at the Havana conference and a researcher at Brown University’s Thomas J. Watson Jr. Institute for International Studies—has immeasurably enriched our

understanding of his father as a man and as a leader in two important books, *Khrushchev on Khrushchev: An Inside Account of a Man and His Era*, and *Nikita Khrushchev and the Creation of a Superpower*.^{xx} These have been widely reviewed elsewhere, and we do not think it necessary here to delve into specifics. But these works, along with a wealth of documentation now available in translation to American researchers (thanks in large part to the efforts of the National Security Archive at George Washington University and the Cold War International History Project),^{xxi} paint a sobering picture of a country at once deeply insecure about its status in the world; acutely conscious of its weaknesses and vulnerabilities; ill-served by a bureaucracy that is regimented, over-compartmentalized, and un-self-critical; and shockingly susceptible to the whimsy and caprice of the men at the top. One has the sense, reading what is now available on the subject, that the Soviet Union had no business being a superpower. It was simply not up to the task. Certainly what we now know about the decision making that lay behind the Soviet deployment of missiles to Cuba would make an excellent case study on how *not* to conduct foreign policy.

One of the subjects about which we had previously known very little was the role of intelligence in the genesis, conduct, and resolution of the crisis. Apart from a number of largely self-congratulatory works on American intelligence that dwelled on intriguing but not necessarily central questions, there was little on the public record at the time of the Havana conference about the intelligence-policy interplay in the United States—and there was nothing at all on Soviet or Cuban intelligence. Fursenko and Naftali established a beachhead in *‘One Hell of a Gamble,’* and we sought to broaden it (with their help and others’) in our own book, *Intelligence and the Cuban Missile Crisis*.^{xxii} There, for the first time, we presented a fascinating inside story about Cuban intelligence written by a former senior Cuban intelligence official, Domingo Amuchastegui.^{xxiii} According to Amuchastegui’s account, the Cuban intelligence community performed creditably during the crisis, even though, compared to its American and Soviet counterparts, it was small, poorly resourced, and only rudimentarily institutionalized. Lacking neither professionalism nor commitment, Cuban intelligence did about as well as one could reasonably expect under the circumstances. The chief problem Cuban intelligence faced was Fidel Castro, who seems not to have put a very high value on the benefit of independent professional assessments, and who was above neither trying to keep his own intelligence community in the dark on important matters, nor instructing them in advance on the conclusions to which their analyses ought to lead. For all of the failings of the Cuban intelligence-policy interface, however, it shines in contrast to the Soviet. Nikita Khrushchev made no serious effort to engage the resources or advice of his intelligence community, and even if he had done so, Soviet intelligence was in virtually no position to tell him what he needed to know. The performance of Soviet intelligence before and during the crisis was, with very few exceptions, nothing short of appalling.^{xxiv} (Our own assessment of American intelligence performance, for what it is worth, is generally positive.)^{xxv}

The light that has always been brightest, of course, is the light shining on American decision making, which for forty years has been the overwhelming subject of missile crisis scholarship. The initial wave of inevitable court histories illuminated almost exclusively those aspects of American decision making that made the principals look especially good, and generally successfully managed to keep from view facts that in a

Cold War context would not play well at home or with allies abroad (for example, that President Kennedy had *not* ordered Jupiter missiles in Turkey dismantled before the crisis, or that he *did* trade them off as a private quid-pro-quo for the withdrawal of Soviet missiles from Cuba).^{xxvi} But for many years now we have had a generally accurate understanding. The real President Kennedy, and his real team of advisers, did not perform superhuman feats of crisis management as the early hagiographies contended. Rather, they grappled very uncertainly with a supremely dangerous situation, and they did so through a fog. They made their share of mistakes, and these were very human mistakes. But the genius of their handling of the Cuban missile crisis was that it was premised upon an awareness of human fallibility—their own fallibility, and their adversaries'. It is their circumspection, coupled with a due appreciation of the weight of responsibility they bore not only for themselves and their country but for humanity as a whole, that most impresses us. This impression first began to arise early in the course of our critical oral history, at the Hawk's Cay meeting in 1987, and it has grown ever since.^{xxvii} We vastly prefer the human John F. Kennedy to the superhuman one, because while we can never expect superhuman leaders in the future, the example shows that we can at least hope that ordinary leaders will sometimes rise to the difficult challenges with which their own very human choices occasionally present them.

In the last ten years, the bright light shining on American decision making in the Cuban missile crisis has only grown brighter. The process of declassification has continued apace, and researchers now have access to a vast trove of official records. A number of publications symbolize the new culture of disclosure, most notably two volumes of documents in the *Foreign Relations of the United States* series for the years 1961-63;^{xxviii} and more complete collections of transcripts of White House deliberations than had been available hitherto, namely, *The Kennedy Tapes: Inside the White House During the Cuban Missile Crisis*, and *The Presidential Recordings: John F. Kennedy: Volumes 1-3, The Great Crises*.^{xxix} While these are by no means the only useful collections, they represent important milestones. The *FRUS* volumes are indispensable compendia, notwithstanding certain gaps and omissions,^{xxx} and the transcripts give us for the first time a complete record of the deliberations secretly captured on audiotape during the most dangerous crisis of the nuclear age.^{xxxi} Neither contains any bombshells, but both require us to tweak our earlier understandings of how the president and his advisers understood their predicament, how they viewed their options, and who embraced which options when. Perhaps most importantly, they give us a richer, more fully-textured sense of uncertainty and fluidity. The transcripts are especially good at showing us what it must have felt like to experience first the shock, then the anger, and then the fear of having to grope one's way across a diplomatic, political, and military minefield into which one has landed largely by surprise. In them we observe, as Timothy Naftali puts it, Kennedy's rapid transformation during the crisis itself from an incensed hawk to a "stubborn peacemaker."^{xxxii}

We know a good deal more, too, about issues and personalities that have received comparatively little attention before. Some of these issues we have long known to be extremely important, and it is with some surprise at how long overdue they are that we greet their first extended treatments. Most notable in this regard is Philip Nash's masterful book, *The Other Missiles of October: Eisenhower, Kennedy, and the Jupiters, 1957- 1963*.^{xxxiii} For the first time, Nash tells the complete story of the ill-conceived and

long- delayed Jupiter deployment, and how it represented both a problem and a solution in the denouement of the Cuban missile crisis. The book brilliantly tells the tale, too, of the Kennedy administration's energetic spin-doctoring designed to mask from public view the Jupiter missile quid-pro-quo. Less earth-shattering, but no less engaging, is Mark White's 1996 book, *The Cuban Missile Crisis*, which shines its spotlight (in part) on less well- known figures such as Dean Acheson, Adlai Stevenson, and Sen. Kenneth Keating.^{xxxiv} Acheson was a strong proponent of the air strike option whose disgust with what he saw as the Kennedy administration's pusillanimous handling of the affair led him to dismiss its apparently successful outcome as a matter of plain dumb luck.^{xxxv} (It was luck, to be sure, though neither plain nor dumb.) Stevenson was an advocate of a diplomatic response who dutifully did his job at the United Nations only to be crucified by the Kennedy crowd as a champion of "appeasement." Keating, you may recall, was the thorn in Kennedy's side who insisted that the Soviet Union was deploying nuclear missiles in Cuba even before the White House had any hard information to that effect.^{xxxvi}

There are two points we would like to make about the most recent work on the politics and decision making of the Cuban missile crisis. First, while a number of things are certainly coming into clearer focus, there will always be a number of irreducible mysteries. The most important of these is the precise combination of motives behind Khrushchev's decision to deploy missiles to Cuba, and why he thought he could get away with it. At some level, Khrushchev's gamble remains simply unfathomable. It is extremely difficult to put oneself into Khrushchev's shoes and see the world, as he must have seen it, in a light in which a massive secret deployment to Cuba would look both possible and desirable. This is not to say that it is hard to *imagine* any number of reasons why Khrushchev would have liked to get away with it. It is simply to say that it is hard to know what motivations bore on the decision in what proportion; it is difficult to avoid the conclusion that he must have fallen prey to some degree of wishful thinking; and it is hard to deny that certain idiosyncratic features of his personality were important—for instance, his willingness to take risks (at least in the early stages of the game; fortunately, he proved to be *unwilling* to take risks during the acute phase of the crisis itself). This means that certain questions will always be a matter of interpretation, and certain disagreements will prove to be intractable.

It has always been our judgment, for example, that Khrushchev was acting on the basis of two main motivations: the desire to rectify the strategic nuclear imbalance; and the desire to deter an American invasion of Cuba. We have always had the sense that he was moved in part also by the desire to reciprocate American missile deployments on the Soviet periphery (most notable in Turkey) about which he was notoriously indignant. Recently, however, some scholars have once again stressed a consideration we have discounted: the desire to use a Cuban deployment to exert leverage on Berlin.^{xxxvii} Berlin, of course, was very much on American policy makers' minds at the time, and during the crisis itself a number of them leapt to the conclusion that Khrushchev's gambit must have had something to do with Berlin. Ernest May and Philip Zelikow concur. "What we now know," they write, "indicates that Kennedy and his advisers understood the reasoning in the Kremlin better than have most scholars writing about the crisis in retrospect. While Khrushchev and his colleagues did indeed care a great deal about Cuba, the thought of deterring a U.S. invasion figured only incidentally in their

discussions about the missile deployments. Calculations about the strategic nuclear balance were much more in evidence. Berlin was an omnipresent and dominating concern.”^{xxxviii}

We do not find this argument compelling. While it is true that Khrushchev conceived of the missile deployment at a time when he was very much concerned with Berlin, there is no documentary or testimonial evidence suggesting that the deployment was *about* Berlin. Khrushchev had been concerned with Berlin for years, but only in the spring of 1962 did he conceive of a nuclear missile deployment to Cuba. Moreover, those who knew Khrushchev best insist that there was no connection between the two. His son Sergei maintains that his father never linked them.^{xxxix} His son-in-law, Aleksei Adzhubei, recalled that Khrushchev likened Berlin to a “blister” on his opponent’s finger that he could conveniently pinch from time to time to remind him that he was still there.^{xl} Fyodor Burlatsky, seconded by Sergo Mikoyan, insisted that Berlin was “one more step in the Cold War, but we did not think it was that dangerous. We pressed you, you pressed us, but it was not that dangerous. Only games—political games. That is all.”^{xli} During the crisis itself, Khrushchev made no effort to exert leverage on Berlin as one might have expected him to do if a major point of the exercise was to do exactly that in the first place. He sought a no-invasion pledge for Cuba; he sought a trade of Soviet missiles in Cuba for American missiles in Turkey; but he never threatened Berlin, and he never offered to withdraw his forces from Cuba in return for American concessions on Berlin. What evidence we have, circumstantial and otherwise, seems to us to undermine the Berlin gambit thesis. But it certainly tells us something about the difficulties of historical interpretation that well-informed scholars can disagree on such a point.^{xlii}

Second, it is evident that we still know much more about American decision making than Soviet decision making, and even less about *Cuban* decision making. The story we heard at the Havana conference has changed little since, because there is as yet relatively little else to say.^{xliii} There are many reasons for this. While Cuba has undergone its own version of *perestroika*, it has not yet undergone its own version of *glasnost*. In addition, it is not clear what records there are for Cuba to release even if it decides that the time is right to release them. Third, and perhaps most importantly, the story of Cuban decision making in the missile crisis is overwhelmingly the story of Fidel Castro’s decision making. Relatively few are in a position to speak to that subject authoritatively, and those who are in a position to do so are not so presumptuous as to try while Castro is still alive. He speaks when the spirit moves him, and in a manner of his own choosing. He has had relatively little to say on the subject in recent years. There are some encouraging signs that we may eventually learn a great deal more.^{xliv} But for now, Cuba remains the darkest, least detailed corner of the puzzle, even though the broad outline of Cuban decision making seems now to be in view.

The historical imbalance in our understanding of the crisis persists, therefore, despite the best efforts of an army of scholars.

We think it is safe to say that those best efforts, insofar as they have tried to shape post-Cold War consciousness of the Cuban missile crisis, have in any case been swamped by a single stroke of celluloid: *Thirteen Days*, starring Kevin Costner, which hit the theaters in the year 2000. A small library full of scholarly books and articles is no match for a major Hollywood release. If anyone under the age of twenty today is even aware of the Cuban missile crisis, he or she probably now knows it only through this film. As time

passes, and as the movie lingers on video store shelves, it will inform more and more people's understanding. The question we must now ask, then, is this: just how bad *is* it?

The answer is that the film is better than one might have expected, but worse than one might have hoped.^{xlv} It is better than one might have expected primarily because Hollywood has an extremely poor track record with the accuracy of historical drama. The film makers in this case at least made an effort to base their script on serious scholarship. They made up very little out of whole cloth, though they tinkered occasionally with the chronology and the personalities, as a small-print disclaimer at the end of the film quietly informs us. Why the missile crisis, of all events, required tinkering to improve its sense of drama is beyond us. Sherman Edwards and Peter Stone defended the altered chronology in *1776* by proclaiming that "God makes lousy theater," but surely the missile crisis was the pinnacle of His theatrical craft.^{xlvi}

Of the elements that were important to the plot, there were two notable inaccuracies. The first was the film's portrayal of Kenneth O'Donnell, who did little more during the crisis than make sure the coffee was fresh. He was manifestly *not* Kennedy's alter ego, confidant, adviser, coach, psychologist, bully, or direct channel to pilots of reconnaissance planes.^{xlvii} Some commentators have noted that O'Donnell's embellished role may reflect the fact that his son helped underwrite the film.^{xlviii} But, in any case, Costner had to play someone, and much of the audience was sure to know how little he resembled other possible leads such as JFK, RFK, McNamara, Bundy, Sorensen, or Rusk. It was a safe bet that nobody would know whether or not he looked like Kenny O'Donnell—which he does not.^{xlix}

The second notable inaccuracy was that the film overplayed civil-military tensions, which, bad though they were in the actual event, were nonetheless (dare we say it?) generally civil. All of the president's interactions with the Joint Chiefs of Staff went through Chairman Maxwell Taylor, who was invariably calm and polite, or through McNamara. Rarely did the Chiefs meet with JFK as a group, and there were only two notably heated exchanges: one between McNamara and Admiral George Anderson over quarantine procedures, which the film split into two separate scenes (one between JFK and Anderson at the White House, and one between McNamara and Anderson at the Pentagon, where the real flap took place); and one between General Curtis LeMay and JFK after the announcement of the October 28 deal concluding the public phase of the crisis, which prompted LeMay to argue for invading Cuba anyway.¹

What the film does particularly well is communicate the roller-coaster of emotional reactions in Washington to the discovery of the Soviet deployment: shock, anger, bellicosity, uncertainty, fear, caution.^{li} Bruce Greenwood as Kennedy overacted these; the *real* Kennedy, by all accounts, kept his outward cool throughout. But we nevertheless get a clear picture of a group of men divided over what to do, uncertain about what was going on in Moscow, oblivious to what was going on in Havana, and trying to keep things from spinning out of control.

What the film does *not* do—and this is a great shame—is contextualize the crisis. The viewer gets no real sense that American policy was itself partly to blame for the crisis; that Cuban and Soviet motives and calculations were interesting and complex; and that there were real human beings on the other side, not faceless and nameless cardboard-cutout communists. Students today are taught a deeply American-centric version of the crisis as it is, and the film only reinforces this. Of course, in its defense, its blinkered

parochialism more or less accurately captures Washington's own at the time, and it is hard to imagine how one could present the crisis adequately from more than one angle in the context of a single dramatic feature-length film.

"Where are the Cubans?" was, of course, Fidel Castro's predictable reaction to *Thirteen Days* when Costner and his entourage traveled to Havana to give him a private screening (after scouring Latin America for a Spanish-subtitled print). But this was not his only reaction: "We may be somewhat hurt from being left out, because Cuba is missing," Castro mused, "but we did not see any negative purpose of doing something negative to Cuba. We saw a very positive intention to sensitize public opinion about the risks, the horrible risks, of nuclear war, risks that are still present! What Kevin and his group have done is very courageous."^{lii}

Is this the same Fidel Castro who blithely accepted the role of Samson in 1962—who admits to having been indifferent to the possibility that his own concern with redeeming the honor of Cuba in the face of Yanqui imperialist aggression might have been the proximate cause of Armageddon? Is this the man who virtually courted nuclear war? Indeed it is. What has changed?

Both much and little. The most significant thing that has not changed, of course, is that Fidel Castro still leads the Cuban Revolution, and that he still understands the United States as its—and his—mortal enemy. The feeling, for the most part, is mutual. In this respect, there remains a curious timelessness about U.S.-Cuban relations. The Cold War is long over, except perhaps here. The United States has made peace with all of the countries of the former Warsaw Pact and their successors. It has normalized relations with Vietnam, which it spent a full decade trying to destroy in order to save. It has long since stopped speaking of communism as its chief enemy. And yet it stubbornly continues to try to isolate Cuba politically and economically.

The hostility erupts from time to time, volcano-like, reminding us of the powerful undercurrents of hatred that remain almost half a century after the fall of Batista. In recent years, there have been two significant eruptions: in 1996, when Cuban air defenses shot down two unarmed planes flown by the Florida-based exile group *Brothers to the Rescue* (better known in some circles by its Spanish name, *Hermanos al Rescate*); and in 1999, when six-year-old Elian Gonzalez became the object of an international custody struggle between his Cuban-resident father and his Miami cousins after his mother drowned attempting to flee with him to the United States. Both were powerful reminders that feelings across the Strait of Florida continue to run high.

But the Cuban Revolution has changed, and, in important respects, so has Castro. We were wrong, immediately after the Havana conference, to predict that he would stubbornly stay the course in the wake of the Soviet collapse, battering down the hatches of socialism.^{liii} Castro has shown that he knows how to survive. He has demonstrated that he has the courage to sail with the wind at times rather than tack against it. When Russia abruptly cut subsidies to Cuba and insisted on conducting business in cold hard cash, leaving Cuba bereft of alternative sources and markets in the face of America's ongoing economic embargo, Castro's initial reaction was to hunker down and weather the storm as best he could through self-reliance and internal adjustment. This was the "Special Period in Time of Peace." But it was not long before he realized the inadequacy of this, and he was quick to perceive new opportunities that had not been so clear or so attractive in the comfortable stability of the Cold War geopolitical climate. He dollarized

the economy and threw open the doors to foreign direct investment, triggering a dramatic economic turnaround. In came the Canadians and the Europeans, leaving American investors out in the cold. It was a masterstroke.

Castro's critics point to his embrace of globalization and economic liberalism as proof that he has lost his idealism, if he ever had any, and as a sign that what he cares most deeply about is political power. His pragmatism certainly smacks of a certain tactical flexibility, and there is no denying that his political role is his whole life. But Cuba's new openness has had the effect of enabling a relatively underdeveloped and resource-poor country to maintain public health and education systems that are the envy of the Third World, and these are the centerpieces of Castro's understanding of social justice. Moreover, in the face of Washington's ongoing embargo, Castro's radical reforms have meant that Cuba has been able to draw on foreign resources while defying the laws of political and economic gravitation that would otherwise have drawn it inexorably back into the American orbit. Cuban independence is at the heart of Castro's idealism, too. So it would be a mistake to say that he has lost it. But it would be right to say that it has a new face.

While Castro resents Washington's haughty refusal to acknowledge Cuban independence on his terms and rails against American hostility, he still needs it. This, too, has not changed in the past ten years. As long as Cubans believe that the United States threatens their independence, they will rally behind Castro as their leader and defender. As was true ten years ago, the U.S. Marine Corps is not the real threat, and it is our sense that Cubans are increasingly beginning to realize this. What ordinary Cubans fear most is the rich and powerful exile community, which they see as poised to pounce, when given the opportunity, to reassert their claims to the land, the homes, and the businesses they left behind when they fled the Revolution. Cubans see the U.S. government as the agent of this community and know that as long as Castro lives, it will be held at bay. It remains to be seen, of course, whether these fears will prove justified. But they are strong, and Castro knows they guarantee him the deference and fidelity of a people who, in the ordinary course of events, might well have grown tired of one-man rule by now.

The *Brothers to the Rescue* and Elian Gonzalez affairs were useful to Castro because they provided an opportunity for Cubans to unite in defiance behind him. But the legacies of both are ambiguous. The former prompted the passage of the Cuban Liberty and Democratic Solidarity Act of 1996, more commonly known as the Helms-Burton Act, which sought to put the squeeze on Cuba by putting the squeeze on foreign nationals doing business there. This blatant attempt to apply U.S. law beyond U.S. territory—the most significant effect of which was to irritate some of America's most important friends and allies who recognize the Castro regime as the legitimate government of Cuba and who resent Washington's attempts to interfere in their bilateral relations with Havana—nonetheless did put a chill on foreign investment in Cuba.^{liv} But symbolically and substantively, Helms-Burton was bitter gall. It was an affront not to be borne, and a painful reminder of Cuba's chief problem, as Castro understands it: the fact that Cuba had the ill-fortune to be located so close to the United States, to whom it will always be vulnerable, and upon whom it is destined somehow always to depend.

The Elian Gonzalez affair, on the other hand, hinted at the possibility of a maturing U.S.-Cuban relationship. The fact that it took American authorities so long to decide

what was obvious to Cubans and to the rest of the world—namely, that both U.S. and international law required the United States to return Elian to his father in Cuba—was, of course, irritating to Cuba in the same way as was Helms-Burton. But the fact that American authorities *did* ultimately decide this at least raises the possibility that Washington and Havana may transcend their vestigial Cold War rhetoric and hostility. So also does a recent crack in the embargo regime. In response to the devastation Hurricane Michelle wrought in 2001, the United States authorized four American companies to sign the first trade deals with Cuba in four decades, so that they can provide emergency supplies of wheat, corn, soy, and rice.^{lv} This almost immediately followed Russia's decision to close its giant signals-intelligence facility at Lourdes—its last significant Cold War presence on the island—further alienating Moscow and Havana.^{lvi} One senses that an opportunity may be there for the taking. The United States and Cuba may be in a position to begin to redefine their relationship. The material benefits to Cuba would certainly be significant. But whether Castro could afford the corresponding political costs is a matter of doubt. This, the central dilemma of Cuba's relationship with the United States, remains.

There is one thing, though, that has changed, and changed profoundly, in our view. Fidel Castro has grown. The early parochial Castro is gone—the Castro whose horizons were limited, and whose myopia led him to gamble with the fate of the world in 1962, first by accepting a deployment of Soviet nuclear missiles, and then by doing everything in his power to prevent Khrushchev from agreeing to take them out, even at the risk of World War III. The early Castro knew little, and thought less, about nuclear weapons and how they had fundamentally changed the world. In 1962, he embraced the idea of a Soviet nuclear deployment on Cuban soil without second-guessing its motives and without thinking through its risks. Castro today is very different. He is a statesman of global stature with broad horizons. He is older and wiser. Combat fatigues notwithstanding, he is no longer the firebrand that he once was.

He is, at any rate, the only one of the three central figures in the events of 1962 still with us today—and for how much longer, obviously no one can tell. He is the last remaining leader of the world who can claim to know the Cuban missile crisis by acquaintance, and not merely by description. He is therefore the only one to carry into post-Cold War consciousness the lived experience of standing on the nuclear brink.

How multidimensionally ironic this truly is. He was the only one of the three who did not bear the nuclear burden of responsibility. He was the only one who was fatalistic at the time. He was the one only who claimed to have felt no fear. When he now speaks of “the horrible risks of nuclear war,” we wonder: where does his sense of horror come from? Is it, like most of ours, something learned through reflection—a second-hand horror that does not proceed from the gut? Or does he appreciate now, as he clearly did not at the time, the spectacular near-miss of which he was in part a cause? If so, does it unnerve him, as it surely should?

The nicest touch of the film *Thirteen Days* comes at the very end. It is a voice-over of Kennedy's speech at American University in June 1963—a voice-over by the real Kennedy, that is, not Bruce Greenwood. In that speech, Kennedy said this:

[L]et us not be blind to our differences, but let us also direct attention to our common interests and to the means by which those differences can be resolved.

And if we cannot end now our differences, at least we can help make the world safe for diversity. For, in the final analysis, our most basic common link is that we all inhabit this small planet. We all breathe the same air. We all cherish our children's future. And we are all mortal.

Khrushchev would have said exactly the same thing, in exactly the same way, and of course it was the missile crisis that drove this lesson home for both of them. We sense that Fidel Castro may now be having similar thoughts.

They are healthy thoughts. We can only hope that, as the Cuban missile crisis recedes into history and gives up its visceral potency, and as Fidel Castro leaves the political stage, these thoughts will over time constitute the defining interpretation of the events of October 1962, an interpretation informed as much by the fear evoked by the feeling of the nearness to nuclear tragedy, as by the fact of its having been a miss. But this will not happen on its own. Unlike the atomic bombings of Japan, what is—or should be—lastingly important about the missile crisis is not what happened, but what almost, yet did not quite, happen. There is no patch of hallowed earth, such as Ground Zero in Hiroshima, to which pilgrimages can be made, and where those making the journey can recite and internalize “never again.” What we will soon have exclusively is knowledge of this “what-if” of a crisis that is, in Bertrand Russell’s term, purely by description, derived from many sorts of documents, all at least once removed from the actual experience of carrying responsibility during the crisis itself. It will thenceforth become the responsibility of scholars, novelists, filmmakers, poets, and others with the necessary creativity to transform this descriptive knowledge vicariously into an intimate acquaintance, face-to-face, as it were, with the near-Armageddon of that long ago time of October 1962.

Endnotes

ⁱ Bertrand Russell, *The Problems of Philosophy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), chapter 5. William James made a similar distinction between “knowledge of acquaintance” and “knowledge about” in *Principles of Psychology* 1 (New York: Henry Holt, 1890), 221-23.

ⁱⁱ Harold Godwinson was one of three claimants to the throne of England following the death of Edward the Confessor. He defeated one claimant, Harald Hardrada of Norway, only to suffer defeat himself in the Battle of Hastings shortly thereafter at the hands of the third: William of Normandy, better known today as William the Conqueror.

ⁱⁱⁱ On these themes, see, e.g., Thomas F. Homer-Dixon, *Environment, Scarcity and Violence* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1999); Thomas F. Homer-Dixon, *The Ingenuity Gap* (New York: Knopf, 2000); Robert S. McNamara and James G. Blight, *Wilson’s Ghost: Reducing the Risk of Conflict, Killing, and Catastrophe in the 21st Century* (New York: PublicAffairs, 2001).

^{iv} For a good summary discussion of the Cuban missile crisis in the context of the Cold War and its end, see Richard Ned Lebow and Janice Gross Stein, *We All Lost the Cold War* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1994).

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- ^v See, e.g., John Newhouse, "Socialism or Death," *New Yorker*, 27 April 1992, 52-83.
- ^{vi} The first conference took place at Musgrove Plantation, St. Simon's Island, Ga., in May 1996. For discussion, see James G. Blight and Peter Kornbluh, eds., *Politics of Illusion: The Bay of Pigs Invasion Reexamined* (Boulder, Colo.: Lynne Rienner, 1997). A second conference took place in Havana in March 2001.
- ^{vii} See, e.g., Len Scott and Steve Smith, "Lessons of October: Historians, Political Scientists, Policy-Makers and the Cuban Missile Crisis," *International Affairs* 70 (October 1994), 659-84.
- ^{viii} Cf. Jutta Weldes, *Constructing National Interests: The U.S. And the Cuban Missile Crisis* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1999).
- ^{ix} Gen. Anatoli I. Gribkov and William Y. Smith, *Operation Anadyr: U.S. And Soviet Generals Recount the Cuban Missile Crisis* (Chicago: Edition Q, 1994).
- ^x Mark Kramer, "Tactical Nuclear Weapons, Soviet Command Authority, and the Cuban Missile Crisis," *Cold War International History Project Bulletin*, no. 3 (Fall 1993), 40, 42-46; James G. Blight, Bruce J. Allyn, and David A. Welch, "Kramer vs. Kramer: Or, How Can You Have Revisionism in the Absence of Orthodoxy?," *Cold War International History Project Bulletin*, no. 3 (Fall 1993), 41, 47-50; Mark Kramer, "The Cuban Missile Crisis and Nuclear Proliferation," *Security Studies* 5, no. 1 (Autumn 1995), 171-79; James G. Blight and David A. Welch, "On Historical Judgment and Inference: A Reply to Mark Kramer," *Security Studies* 5, no. 4 (Summer 1996), 172-82.
- ^{xi} "Soviet Subs Were Armed with Nukes," *Time*, 6 August 2001, 8.
- ^{xii} See esp. Joseph F. Bouchard, *Command in Crisis: Four Case Studies* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1991).
- ^{xiii} Scott Sagan, *The Limits of Safety: Organizations, Accidents, and Nuclear Weapons* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1993).
- ^{xiv} Kenneth N. Waltz, *The Spread of Nuclear Weapons: More May Be Better*, Adelphi Paper no. 171 (London: International Institute for Strategic Studies, 1981) [a shortened and revised version appears as Kenneth N. Waltz, "Toward Nuclear Peace," in *The Use of Force: Military Power and International Politics*, ed. Robert J. Art and Kenneth N. Waltz, 4th ed. (Lanham, Md.: University Press of America, 1993), 527-55]; Bruce Bueno de Mesquita and William H. Riker, "An Assessment of the Merits of Selective Nuclear Proliferation," *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 26, no. 2 (June 1982), 283-306; Bruce Berkowitz, "Proliferation, Deterrence, and the Likelihood of War," *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 29, no. 1 (March 1985), 112-36; Kenneth N. Waltz, "The Origin of War in Neorealist Theory," *Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 18, no. 4 (Spring 1988), 615-28; John J. Mearsheimer, "Back to the Future: Instability in Europe after the Cold War," *International Security* 15, no. 1 (Summer 1990), 5-56; Kenneth N. Waltz, "Nuclear Myths and Political Realities," *American Political Science Review* 84, no. 3 (September 1990), 731-45; John J. Mearsheimer, "The Case for a Ukrainian Nuclear Deterrent," *Foreign Affairs* 72, no. 3 (Summer 1993), 50-66.
- ^{xv} James G. Blight and David A. Welch, "Risking 'the Destruction of Nations': Lessons of the Cuban Missile Crisis for New and Aspiring Nuclear States," *Security Studies* 4, no. 4 (Summer 1995), 811-50. See also Nathan Busch, "Nuclear Weapons States and the Implementation of Nuclear Safeguards," Ph.D. dissertation, University of Toronto, 2001.

xvi India had first tested a “peaceful nuclear device” in 1974, but in May 1998 became a declared nuclear power after a series of underground tests. Pakistan followed suit a few weeks later. For context on the Indian decision to go nuclear, see John Lloyd, “Land of the Cow and the Techie,” *New Statesman*, 8 May 2000, 23-24.

xvii Some have argued that the 1990 crisis over Kashmir was actually a nuclear crisis. Certainly the American government thought it was, and dispensed CIA director Robert Gates, in Air Force One, to Islamabad and New Delhi to try to prevent the crisis from spinning out of control. However, at a conference of Indian and Pakistani civilian and military leaders in Bellagio, Italy, in September 1994, nearly all the South Asian leaders denied categorically that the crisis could have “gone nuclear.” They said simply that the nuclear crisis was in the imagination of the Americans, who over-reacted because they did not understand South Asian political-military realities. But even now, most American analysts are inclined to believe that it was the South Asians who underestimated the nuclear risks at the time. So, in effect, Westerners tend to believe that South Asia has had its Cuban missile crisis, but that South Asians are unaware of it. Of course, this means ultimately that South Asia has not had its missile crisis—an event that frightens them into a new level of nuclear sobriety and caution. One can only hope that if and when the next serious crisis comes between India and Pakistan, it will be a near miss, and not a tragedy.

xviii Mark Kramer, “Archival Research in Moscow: Progress and Pitfalls,” *Cold War International History Project Bulletin*, no. 3 (Fall 1993), 1, 18-39.

xix Vladislav Zubok and Constantine Pleshakov, *Inside the Kremlin’s Cold War: From Stalin to Khrushchev* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1996); Aleksandr Fursenko and Timothy Naftali, *‘One Hell of a Gamble’: Khrushchev, Castro and Kennedy, 1958-1964* (New York: Norton, 1997); John Lewis Gaddis, *We Now Know: Rethinking Cold War History* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997), esp. chapter 9.

xx Sergei Khrushchev, *Khrushchev on Khrushchev: An inside Account of the Man and His Era*, trans. and ed. William Taubman (Boston: Little Brown, 1990); Sergei Khrushchev, *Nikita Khrushchev and the Creation of a Superpower* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2000).

xxi See <http://www.gwu.edu/~nsarchiv>; <http://cwihip.si.edu/>.

xxii James G. Blight and David A. Welch, eds., *Intelligence and the Cuban Missile Crisis* (London: Frank Cass, 1998).

xxiii Domingo Amuchastegui, “Cuban Intelligence and the October Crisis,” in *ibid.*, 88-119.

xxiv Aleksandr Fursenko and Timothy Naftali, “Soviet Intelligence and the Cuban Missile Crisis,” in *ibid.*, 64-87.

xxv James G. Blight and David A. Welch, “The Cuban Missile Crisis and Intelligence Performance,” in *ibid.*, 173-217.

xxvi Cf. Theodore C. Sorensen, *Kennedy* (New York: Harper & Row, 1965); Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr., *A Thousand Days: John F. Kennedy in the White House* (New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1965); Robert F. Kennedy, *Thirteen Days: A Memoir of the Cuban Missile Crisis* (New York: Norton, 1969).

xxvii See generally James G. Blight and David A. Welch, *On the Brink: Americans and Soviets Reexamine the Cuban Missile Crisis*, 2d ed. (New York: Noonday, 1990).

xxviii United States Department of State, *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1961-1963 X, Cuba, January 1961-September 1962* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1997); United States Department of State, *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1961-1963 XI, Cuban Missile Crisis and Aftermath* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1997).

xxix Ernest R. May and Philip Zelikow, *The Kennedy Tapes: Inside the White House During the Cuban Missile Crisis* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1997); Timothy Naftali, Ernest R. May, and Philip D. Zelikow, eds., *The Presidential Recordings: John F. Kennedy: Volumes 1-3, the Great Crises* (New York: Norton, 2001). For the first published transcripts, see “White House Tapes and Minutes of the Cuban Missile Crisis: Excomm Meetings, October 1962,” *International Security* 10, no. 1 (Summer 1985), 164-203; and “October 27, 1962: The Excomm Transcripts,” *International Security* 12, no. 3 (Winter 1987/88), 30-92.

xxx For useful overviews, see Raymond Garthoff, “Documenting the Cuban Missile Crisis,” *Diplomatic History* 24, no. 4 (Spring 2000), 297-303; Jorge I. Domínguez, “The @#%& Missile Crisis (or, What Was ‘Cuban’ About U.S. Decisions During the Cuban Missile Crisis?),” *Diplomatic History* 24, no. 4 (Spring 2000), 305-15; and Philip Zelikow, “American Policy and Cuba, 1961-1963,” *Diplomatic History* 24, no. 4 (Spring 2000), 317-34.

xxxi The original edition of *The Kennedy Tapes* included a number of important transcription errors; as of the time of writing, a corrected second (“concise”) edition is in process.

xxxii Personal communication.

xxxiii Philip Nash, *The Other Missiles of October: Eisenhower, Kennedy, and the Jupiters, 1957-1963* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1997).

xxxiv Mark J. White, *The Cuban Missile Crisis* (Basingstoke, Hampshire: Macmillan, 1996).

xxxv Dean Acheson, “Dean Acheson’s Version of Robert Kennedy’s Version of the Cuban Missile Affair,” *Esquire*, February 1969, 76-77, 44, 46.

xxxvi Historians have always wondered where Keating got his information; it now appears that he got it from Clare Booth Luce, who had it in turn from anti-Castro operatives in the Cuban exile community. See Max Holland, “A Luce Connection: Senator Keating, William Pawley, and the Cuban Missile Crisis,” *Journal of Cold War Studies* 1, no. 3 (Fall 1999), 139-67.

Other works that helpfully illuminate various aspects of American policy include Stephen G. Rabe, “After the Missiles of October: John F. Kennedy and Cuba, November 1962 to November 1963,” *Presidential Studies Quarterly* 30, no. 4 (December 2000), 714-26; and L. V. Scott, *Macmillan, Kennedy, and the Cuban Missile Crisis: Political, Military, and Intelligence Aspects* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1999).

xxxvii Graham T. Allison and Philip Zelikow, *Essence of Decision: Explaining the Cuban Missile Crisis*, 2d ed. (New York: Longman, 1999), 105-08; May and Zelikow, *The Kennedy Tapes*, 668-80; Zelikow, “American Policy and Cuba, 1961-1963,” 322-26.

xxxviii May and Zelikow, *The Kennedy Tapes*, 668.

xxxix Personal communications.

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- xl Sherry Jones, producer, "The Other Missiles of October: What the World Didn't Know," with Peter Jennings, *ABC News*, 1992.
- xli Blight and Welch, *On the Brink*, 288.
- xlii Cf. John C. Ausland, *Kennedy, Khrushchev, and the Berlin-Cuba Crisis, 1961-1964* (Oslo: Scandinavian University Press, 1996).
- xliii Cf. Mark J. White, *Missiles in Cuba: Kennedy, Khrushchev, Castro, and the 1962 Crisis* (Chicago: Ivan R. Dee, 1997).
- xliv Cuba began disclosing documents in November 1990, with the release of the Castro-Khrushchev letters, and continued in January 1992 to release the January 1963 Khrushchev letter and the text of the agreement governing the deployment of Soviet missiles. Another great leap forward was the release of nearly 500 pages of classified documents for the Bay of Pigs conference held in March 2001, and the release of roughly four times as much material to Piero Gleijeses for his book, *Conflicting Missions: Havana, Washington, and Africa, 1959-1976* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2002). The collection of Bay of Pigs documents is particularly noteworthy because it reveals a series of significant Cuban misjudgments. Initially reluctant to release this material, the Cuban organizers of the conference were persuaded by the American organizers, and particularly by Peter Kornbluh, that admissions of this kind would help establish Cuba's bona fides in the critical oral history process.
- xlv Cf. the following with Ernest R. May, "Thirteen Days in 145 Minutes," *American Prospect* 12, no. 1 (1/15 January 2001), 34-35.
- xlvi Sherman Edwards and Peter Stone, *1776: A Musical Play* (New York: Viking, 1970), 153, quoting "a European dramatist friend of ours."
- xlvii Arthur Schlesinger remarked in a personal communication that "Ken O'Donnell had absolutely nothing to do with the Cuban missile crisis. But if you treat the O'Donnell character in the movie as a purely fictional invention, the film is quite compelling and the historical inaccuracies pale beside its contribution to carrying the story of the missile crisis to the present generation." With respect to this latter judgment, we concur in part and dissent in part, as per our discussion below.
- xlviii Eric Alterman, "Thirteen Days of Our Lives," *The Nation*, 29 January 2001, 10; Ken Ringle, "Creating a Role Larger Than Life," *Washington Post*, 3 February 2001, C01.
- xlix Nor, for that matter, does he sound like him. Some of the members of the cast, however, were remarkable doubles. The best of the lot was Michael Fairman, whose Adlai Stevenson was superb. His shining moment was his confrontation with Valerian Zorin at the United Nations. Fairman had studied the films so well that his delivery and posture were almost indistinguishable from the original. Bruce Greenwood was a surprisingly good JFK. Visually, he and Steven Culp (RFK) were the best matches for the originals, and Greenwood's voice tone and accent were remarkably accurate, though the real JFK was a fair bit taller. Greenwood's October 22 television speech was also quite close to the original, although it did not contain some of the more endearing Bostonianisms of the original (e.g., "Cuber" instead of "Cuba"). Most of the rest of the cast were immediately recognizable, but the real Bundy, McNamara, and Sorensen had more *gravitas* than the actors managed to convey.

^l There is a silly scene between LeMay and the pilot of an RF-8 reconnaissance plane in which the former attempts to ascertain whether the latter had been shot at while overflying Cuban territory, and the latter emphatically denies it—on O'Donnell's express direction. Everybody, of course, knew when low-level U.S. reconnaissance planes were being shot at during the crisis itself, and there was no attempt by anyone at the White House to suppress this information.

There were, of course, dozens of minor inconsequential errors. For example, anachronistic warships and airplanes, incorrect Washington weather for the evening of 27 October 1962, etc. These do not significantly detract from the film.

^{li} Cf. James G. Blight, *The Shattered Crystal Ball: Fear and Learning in the Cuban Missile Crisis* (Savage, Md.: Rowman & Littlefield, 1990).

^{lii} Tom Blanton, "Hollywood in Havana: The Costner-Castro Conversations," unpublished ms., 2001.

^{liii} Cf., e.g., pp. 370, 400, above.

^{liv} Bill Clinton and George W. Bush have consistently waived Title III of the Act, the provision most offensive and potentially most damaging to Cuba's other economic partners. Title III permits legal actions against firms trafficking in expropriated properties in Cuba. The law requires the president to waive or enforce Title III every six months.

^{lv} "Four U.S. Companies Sign the First Trade Deals with Cuba," *New York Times on the Web* (22 November 2001), <http://www.nytimes.com/2001/11/22/international/americas/22CUBA.html>.

^{lvi} Nick Miroff, "Cuba Blasts Russian Decision to Close Lourdes Base," *World Press Review Online* (24 October 2001), <http://www.worldpress.org/1024cuba.htm>. The decision will cost Cuba \$200 million in rent per year.