

28 October 1962

**MEMORANDUM FOR:** Assistant Director, Current Intelligence

**FROM :** Chief, Sino-Soviet Bloc Area

**SUBJECT :** Impact of the Cuban Crisis on the Soviet Leadership

1. Khrushchev appears to have suffered the biggest defeat of his career. He has, in fact, admitted to his own people that the United States could force his men and missiles out of Cuba and he has admitted to the world that the Soviet Union is not the number one military power. Faced with the likelihood of losing everything in Cuba, Khrushchev has elected to salvage his real estate there.

2. The policy of Soviet military buildup in Cuba was quite clearly initiated and administered by Khrushchev personally. He probably sold it mainly on the grounds that it was a relatively fast and inexpensive way to improve the USSR's military posture at a time when the Soviet government was clearly pressed to allocate better its strained resources.

3. Unlike some other major Khrushchev policies, however, there has been little or nothing to suggest that the Cuban buildup was a heated policy issue within the Soviet leadership. As far as we know, both the political and the military leaders estimated that they could successfully build and hold in Cuba. Only the people themselves--still not a major pressure group in Soviet society--seemed to be opposed in any noticeable degree--and their opposition was not specifically against the Cuban buildup but against all kinds of foreign aid.

4. While the policy toward Cuba seems to have received collective agreement, the backfiring of this policy will be blamed largely on Khrushchev

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personally. This does not appear to be a time when he can easily muster his scapegoats and there are many well placed Soviet officials who will like it this way. Khrushchev has so long bullied so many of his associates that it is reasonable to assume that there is a sizeable element ready to blame him for anything. Further, Khrushchev's detractors will have a better bill of complaints than they have had before. They will contend that, in one fell swoop, he has put the Soviet Union on the defensive for some time to come, that he has given aid and comfort to the Chinese Communists, that he has invited new problems in Eastern Europe and that he has disillusioned the neutralist countries throughout the world.

5. We should expect that these markedly adverse reactions will reach the party presidium itself. Even some of Khrushchev's close colleagues may well interpret Cuba as a long expected consequence of a one-man show. Perhaps the greatest dissatisfaction will come from some of the ambitious younger members of the party hierarchy who are formally at the top of the pyramid but who are still not regularly consulted on the execution of high policy--particularly in foreign affairs.

6. It seems premature, however, to assume that Khrushchev's dramatic back-down within the last 48 hours was largely the result of pressures within the party presidium. Without any real evidence to the contrary, it is likely that his decision was dictated by American pressure.

7. In the highest echelons of the defense ministry, publication of the decision will probably be regarded as an embarrassing revelation of weakness which, in view of its penchant for saber-rattling, the general staff would have preferred not to make. Faced with the loss of an advanced missile base in Cuba, the military planners can now be expected to argue that they will be unable to meet defense commitments without the

establishment on Soviet territory of a missile capability at least equal to that lost in Cuba. They will accordingly seek increased budgetary allocations both for the strategic rocket forces and for conventional arms. At the same time, Khrushchev's generals probably still realize that there is no alternative to acceptance of the Kremlin's dictates, however distasteful they may seem to the professional military.

8. To a large extent, this seems to apply to the leadership as a whole. It is our belief that over the past five years Khrushchev has been able to build such an intricate network of control over the party, armed forces and secret police that no one has dared to challenge his primacy. At the same time, he has not before been faced with a blunder of this magnitude and he may realize that a challenge can no longer be ruled out. If this is the case, we would expect him to steal a march on his opponents and make a dramatic display of authority. For their part, any members of the top leadership who might be disposed to throw down the gauntlet to Khrushchev would probably seek to make common cause with the military. Thus far, however, signs of a crisis in the leadership have not been forthcoming.

9. Khrushchev may now give increased attention to domestic affairs as he attempts to divert popular attention away from the crisis and to focus on the "full-scale building of communism" at home. Plans for a major industrial-administrative reform--to be considered at a central committee plenum sometime next month--were under way well before the crisis and were moving ahead rapidly as of 24 October. Well-informed circles in Moscow were stating as late as 27 October that the central committee would convene in the second half of November to take up "problems of improving the management of industry."