

WOMEN'S INTERNATIONAL LEAGUE FOR PEACE AND FREEDOM  
2006 Walnut Street, Philadelphia 3, Penna.

Excerpt from THE EVENING BULLETIN - October 26, 1962

CUBA DECISION FORGED IN CLASH OF OPINIONS

by Drew Pearson

Washington, Oct. 26 - Here is some of the backstage debate which preceded the President's history-making decision to take a tough policy toward Cuba.

It began about the time Under Secretary of State George Ball gave a report to the House Select Committee on Export Control, outlining Cuba's new weapons imports as purely defensive. That was Oct. 3.

Ball did not list any intermediate or long-range missiles in the shipments which Moscow had sent to Fidel Castro.

He was so specific in listing the defensive weapons that some observers, notably Walter Lippmann, went out on a limb in good faith and reported: "We do not have to guess about what is being landed in Cuban ports. We know. And anyone who chooses to question the basis of our present policy (of no intervention) must begin by proving the intelligence estimates wrong."

At the time Ball testified, however, and well before the President's announcement of intermediate-range missile bases on Cuba, the U.S. Intelligence did have reports of such missiles, also of long-range bombers in Cuba.

Ball's testimony caused considerable comment in the Pentagon, and copies of the intelligence reports were leaked to certain key congressmen, among them Speaker John McCormack.

The speaker thereupon became quietly active in pushing for a firmer policy by the Administration.

In fairness to Under Secretary Ball and to the President, it should be noted that intelligence reports are not always black and white. However, there was sufficient reason to believe that offensive missile bases were being constructed on Cuba for a great deal of confidential discussion to be generated over Ball's report to Congress.

RUSK'S POLICY

Until that time, the Kennedy policy in regard to Cuba, as formulated by Secretary of State Dean Rusk, was as follows:

1. There was to be no invasion or blockade of Cuba.
2. There was to be heavy pressure on Cuba's economy.
3. All means were to be taken to stop the export of Cuban communism to other parts of Latin America.
4. The United States would make Soviet support for Castro very expensive at a time when the Soviet economy was hurting.

That was the official policy of the United States until last Thursday, Oct. 18, two days before the President cut short his western trip and returned to Washington.

What caused the change, essentially, were the arguments of McGeorge Bundy, the Harvard professor imported to serve as Mr. Kennedy's national security assistant. Bundy, related by marriage to ex-Secretary of State Dean Acheson, has sometimes been in disagreement with Rusk, and the disagreement over Cuba came to a head last week.

BUNDY'S POLICY

See Over

excerpt from The Evening Bulletin - continued

Bundy made two recommendations to the President:

1. The United States had to convince Moscow that it meant business. As long as we appeared weak or vacillating, he argued, the Kremlin would continue to push. Bundy compared the Kremlin to Hitler, who thought the Allies were weak and kept pushing into final war.

Bundy argued that the United States had always been reacting to Soviet moves in the past and it was time to have the Soviet react to our moves. We should put Moscow on the defensive.

Secretary Rusk, on the other hand, argued that by applying continued pressure and getting more Latin-American support we would gradually win in Cuba without military intervention. He pointed first to the deteriorating condition of the Cuban economy; second, to the fact that Latin-American liberals like President Betancourt, of Venezuela, had swung strongly to our support.

His policy was working, Rusk said, and there was no reason to change it. However, Bundy won the argument, which is why Rusk told intimates that if Bundy were going to be secretary of state in fact, he might as well have the job in name. They have now reconciled their personal differences.

#### POLITICAL FACTORS

Rusk and his State Department supporters also argued that Cuba is not a military threat to the United States; that only Russia is. By turning Cuba into a base, Cuba could be a threat--but only if Russia attacked the United States. Cuba alone, despite all its Russian buildup, would never be a threat--unless Russia attacked at the same time.

And if Russia attacks, it was pointed out, the attack would come directly from Soviet long-range missiles at 300 U.S. cities simultaneously. Attacks from Cuban missile bases alone would be too ineffective. Even if accompanied by an attack from Russian subs off the Florida coast. This would be a fleabite compared with a full-scale barrage from the Russian mainland.

All these arguments were considered, but in the end what really tipped the scales were political factors, including a report from Vice President Johnson that Cuba was causing great damage to the Democrats in the election campaign and that the public was getting the impression that President Kennedy was indecisive.

The President himself had detected this and was gloomy about the prospect of losing the governorship battles in the big key states of New York, Michigan, Ohio and California, which could start a disastrous trend for 1964.

This, coupled with the decision to keep Russia on the defensive, were the real reasons for the historic decision on Cuba. Military fear of Cuba actually had very little to do with it.