

FOREWORD

Close to 30 years ago, missiles in Cuba stood between the United States and the Soviet Union—and our differences nearly brought us to war. Never before had our two countries come so close to war; never before had it been quite so clear just how dangerous such a conflict was in the nuclear age. I do not think anyone who was alive then can or will ever forget the tension and the fear of the moment.

But now we live in a different age—an age in which we seek to build a new and democratic peace with Russia and the other new independent states, an age in which we hope democracy will come to Cuba as it has come to Central and Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union. It is an age in which we are working with Russia and the other new independent states to become partners in preventing crises, not just managing them.

The joint publication by the United States and Russia of the letters President John F. Kennedy and Chairman Nikita S. Khrushchev exchanged during the Cuban missile crisis marks another step, a symbolic one, down our path of partnership and friendship.

Here, in these pages, all can follow the dialogue between the two leaders as they stood on the precipice of war. Here, in these 25 documents, we find the true essence of decision, the essence of the conflict, and the process by which war was avoided. Here, I hope, we all can learn lessons that will help us prevent crises for decades to come.

JAMES A. BAKER, III
Secretary of State
United States of America
April 1992

FOREWORD

The foreign policy goal of the new Russia consists in pursuing the national interests of the country in order to turn it into a prosperous and democratic power. To us, our global authority and influence are inseparably linked with the ability to reach mutual understanding with our partners in international relations in this conflict-ridden world. Looking back at the dangerous situations of the past, we are reinforced in our conviction that only by searching for common interests with other powers can we achieve real security and prosperity for Russia.

Turning to history is always instructive. Studying past experience, in particular the “Caribbean crisis,” gives us a chance to better understand what depths of confrontation we have left behind. In those October days of 1962, mankind stood on the brink of the abyss of nuclear war. Soviet nuclear missiles had been stationed in Cuba, and in the United States demands were mounting that President John Kennedy use any means available to remove them from the island. A military confrontation seemed unavoidable.

The joint publication of the complete top-level correspondence of that period, undertaken by mutual agreement between the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation and the United States Department of State, symbolizes a definitive departure from the confrontational stance of the cold war period, which has been left behind forever. With the transformation of Russia into a democratic, normal, but non-communist, great power, favorable opportunities emerge for developing increasingly friendly relations and ultimately an alliance with the United States. In the past, the survival of our country and of the United States, indeed world peace itself, depended to a great, even decisive, extent on preventing a conflict between the two states. Today their constructive relationship is operating positively for the benefit of our national interests, for the benefit of all mankind.

ANDREY KOZYREV
Minister of Foreign Affairs
Russian Federation
April 1992

Предисловие

Почти тридцать лет назад ракеты на Кубе разделяли Соединенные Штаты и Советский Союз и наши разногласия едва не привели к войне. Никогда ранее наши две страны не были так близки к войне, никогда ранее не было так ясно, как опасен такой конфликт в ядерный век. Я не думаю, что кто-либо из живших в тот период сможет забыть напряженность и страх того момента.

Но сейчас мы живем в другую эпоху — эпоху, когда мы ищем пути построения нового и демократического мира с Россией и другими новыми независимыми государствами, в эпоху, когда, мы надеемся, демократия придет на Кубу, как она пришла в Центральную и Восточную Европу и бывший Советский Союз. Это эпоха, когда мы сотрудничаем с Россией и другими новыми независимыми государствами, чтобы стать партнерами в деле предотвращения кризисов, а не только в их урегулировании.

Совместная публикация Соединенными Штатами и Россией переписки Президента Кеннеди и Председателя Хрущева в период кубинского ракетного кризиса является еще одним символическим шагом на нашем пути партнерства и дружбы.

На страницах данной публикации все могут проследить за ходом диалога двух руководителей, стоявших перед пропастью войны. В этих 25 документах мы найдем подлинную суть решения, суть конфликта и процесса, в ходе которого война была предотвращена. Из этого, я надеюсь, мы все сможем извлечь уроки, которые помогут нам предотвратить кризисы в предстоящие десятилетия.

Джеймс А. Бейкер III
24 апреля 1992 г.

Задача внешней политики новой России состоит в реализации национальных интересов страны с тем, чтобы она стала процветающей и демократической державой. Свой авторитет и влияние в мире мы неразрывно связываем с умением достигать взаимопонимания со своими партнерами по международному общению в этом небесконфликтном мире. Оглядываясь назад, мы видим имевшие место в прошлом опасные ситуации, которые укрепляют в нас убеждение, что только поиски взаимных интересов с другими державами способны привести к реальной безопасности и процветанию России.

Возвращение к истории вообще поучительно. Изучение опыта, в частности «карибского кризиса», позволяет лучше понять, от какого уровня конфронтационности мы отошли. В октябрьские дни 1962 года человечество вплотную приблизилось к пропасти ядерной катастрофы. На Кубе были установлены советские ядерные ракеты, а в США усиливались требования к Президенту Дж. Кеннеди использовать любые средства для их устранения с острова. Военное столкновение, казалось, было неминуемым.

Совместная публикация полной переписки тех дней на высшем уровне, осуществляемая по взаимной договоренности между МИД Российской Федерации и Государственным департаментом США, символизирует окончательный отход от былой конфронтационности времен холодной войны, которая навсегда осталась позади. С преобразованием России в демократическую, нормальную, а не коммунистическую, великую державу появляются благоприятные возможности для установления с Соединенными Штатами Америки все более дружеских и в перспективе союзнических отношений. Если в прошлом выживание нашей страны, США и мир во всем мире во многом, если не в решающей степени, зависели от того, чтобы между двумя государствами не произошел конфликт, то теперь конструктивные отношения между ними уверенно работают на благо наших национальных интересов, на благо всего человечества.

Андрей Козырев
24 апреля 1992 г.

Onward and Upward from the Missile Crisis

Arthur Schlesinger, Jr.

THIS exchange of letters between President John F. Kennedy and Chairman Nikita S. Khrushchev would have been more comprehensible if it had been published as one chapter in a release of the entire correspondence between the two. Even within the context of the missile crisis, it would have been helpful to have begun the correspondence at the start of the deployment and to have reprinted those earlier messages from Khrushchev telling Kennedy not to worry, no offensive weapons were on their way to Cuba. But scholars, I guess, must be grateful for whatever bones the declassifiers may choose to toss from the table.

These letters do cast useful if not especially new light on the way the two leaders approached the crisis, as well as on the way they extricated themselves from it. Kennedy, as he made clear in letters on October 22 and again on November 6, saw the Soviet deployment of missiles in Cuba as an action that "in a major way disturbed the existing over-all balance of power in the world," "a dangerous attempt to change the worldwide status quo." And, while he did not think that "any . . . sane man would . . . deliberately plunge the world into war" (October 22), he was greatly concerned that efforts to alter the global balance might lead to nuclear war because of miscalculation and misjudgment. Barbara Tuchman's *The Guns of August*, with its vivid account of Europe's blundering into war in 1914, was

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much on Kennedy's mind as he contemplated the "missiles of October" in 1962. We must not, he warned Khrushchev on October 23, let the situation get out of control.

As Kennedy saw it, preservation of the peace depended especially on two conditions: on the willingness of each superpower to respect the existing global balance, and on the ability of the superpowers to "judge with some accuracy the intentions of each other" (November 6). This was precisely the argument he had made face to face to Khrushchev in Vienna the year before. Kennedy had tried to persuade Khrushchev of the perils of any major disruption of the status quo and of the consequent need for a global standstill agreement.

Kennedy's efforts in Vienna failed. For Khrushchev defined the status quo not as the existing division between the two blocs but as the communist revolution in progress (as he hoped) around the world. He therefore rejected a global standstill as a capitalist attempt to subvert his status quo and as an attack on the revolutionary process itself.

And when Kennedy added in Vienna that the greatest danger to world peace was the miscalculation by one power of the interests and policies of the other, Khrushchev responded with evident irritation that "miscalculation" was a vague word suggesting to him that America wanted the Soviet Union to sit like a schoolboy with his hands on the top of the desk. (When, by the way, will the State Department release the minutes of the Vienna meeting? Or will the Russians in their present mood beat us to it?)

The installation of nuclear missiles in Cuba thus appeared a deliberate rejection of the points Kennedy had presented in Vienna. The secrecy in which the operation was carried out was a further provocation