Britain During The Cuban Missile Crisis

Matthew D. Long
Professor Fredrik Logevall, Mentor
Professors Jonathan Glickstein and Harold Marcuse, Seminar Directors
UCSB Department of History
June 9, 1999

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Abstract

In October 1962, the Cuban Missile Crisis brought the world as close as it has ever come to an apocalyptic nuclear war. The United States acted quickly and decisively to impose a naval "quarantine" around Cuba soon after it learned of the presence of Soviet nuclear installations under construction on the island. The United States came to this decision before notifying its allies throughout the world of the presence of the missiles in Cuba, denying them the opportunity to consult with the United States over policy options. Once the U.S. made this decision, and allied governments were briefed on the crisis, Britain's role quickly became an important factor. Two British officials played important substantive roles in the crisis. Prime Minister Macmillan, and British ambassador to the United States, David Ormsby-Gore. During the crisis both of these men talked daily with Kennedy and proved to be at least moderately successful advocates for British interests during the crisis in Cuba.

Introduction

On October 15, 1962 United States intelligence reported to Washington the presence of two seventy foot long Russian Medium Range Ballistic Missiles (MRBMs) in San Cristóbal, Cuba to Washington. The following day, the first of the Kennedy administration's Executive Committee (Ex Comm) meetings took place to discuss the implications of this discovery in the Caribbean. This meeting became the first of numerous, tense meetings of the Ex Comm over the next seven days as the Kennedy administration debated its options and attempted to weigh the impact that each initiative might have on the situation. By Saturday the 20th, a plan of action had taken shape: the immediate U.S. response to the ballistic missiles would be to establish a selective naval quarantine around Cuba to prevent further delivery of Russian missile systems to Cuba. Kennedy made this decision over the protestations of many within the Ex Comm, who preferred one of several more aggressive responses, such as a land invasion or an aerial bombardment of the missile sites. Six days after the existence of the missiles was verified in Washington, Kennedy notified the heads of government in Great Britain, France and West Germany of the missiles' existence and his plan to remove them. Kennedy's notification was entirely informative in nature, rather than consultative. He offered it for purposes of readying allied governments for the crisis, not for getting allied approval of the American plan. On Monday the 22nd of October, with a plan of action in hand, Kennedy made a televised speech announcing both his knowledge of the missiles in Cuba and his determination to see them removed.

Thus it came to be that for thirteen days in October of 1962, the world stood at the brink of nuclear war. The potential for and indeed the probability of world-wide destruction had never, and has never since, been greater. The Cuban Missile Crisis was, at heart, an incident in a larger chain of antagonistic events and standoffs called the Cold War. Britain's role in the crisis, though not central, was important. Britain played a larger role than other NATO allies, for several reasons. First, Anglo-American relations during and since the Second World War had been exceptionally close. Second, Britain held a substantial amount of diplomatic power, including a permanent seat on the United Nations Security Council. Third, Britain was the most powerful U.S. ally, with sizable conventional forces and nuclear capability, not to mention its role as host to numerous US forward nuclear bases for Thor missiles. There was also a strong personal relationship between Britain's Conservative Prime Minister, Harold Macmillan, and America's President, John F. Kennedy, which strengthened the so-called 'Special Relationship' between Great Britain and the United States.

Given this special relationship and the closeness of Anglo-American relations, it is noteworthy that Britain's support for US policy during the Cuban missile crisis was painfully slow in coming. Macmillan was notably measured in is early assurances of support for the US during the crisis, lest he intensify the public discontent in Britain over American policy in Cuba. In addition, despite having days more lead time with information about the crisis and the same reconnaissance photographs in his possession, his initial response was less than robust from the U.S. viewpoint.

The effect of the Cuban missile crisis on long-term Anglo-American relations was surprisingly small. It could have arguably strengthened the relationship despite the fact

that many in Britain were shocked and angry, at least initially, with Washington's handling of the situation. United States policy during the crisis reflected a continuing trend in US policy respecting Britain and other allies that strove to keep allied interference with American foreign policy to a minimum and at the same time exert maximum control over the allies' foreign policies. Britain and other NATO allies learned of the crisis only after the US had formulated a plan of action and put it into effect. Yet by challenging Soviet premier Khrushchev, Kennedy was in effect including all of his allies in the nuclear showdown, since if a nuclear exchange did occur, European targets would not escape destruction. This tactic placed US allies in danger without their consultation, and this scenario was especially alarming to many in Britain who did not believe missiles in Cuba merited the risk of a nuclear exchange.

If a close personal relationship had not existed between the Macmillan and Kennedy, would Macmillan have advocated a more non-aligned policy during the crisis? And would this stance have imperiled the Anglo-American "special relationship"? Would David Ormsby-Gore, the British Ambassador to the United States, have been confided in if he had not been a personal friend of Kennedy? Contact between the two nations during the crisis would have been all but cut. But with these well placed officials working in the British government, the British were kept informed and consulted by the United States more than was any other Western power.

There were, however, groups in Britain that advocated a more neutral policy during the Cuban Missile Crisis and that favored arbitration over supporting American claims against the Soviet Union. Important among these groups was the Labour party opposition in Parliament, led by Hugh Gaitskell, and the intellectual figure, Bertrand

Russell, who was a leader in popular protest against the US and British handling of the crisis. These groups somewhat weakened the ability of the Prime Minister to act decisively in support of the United States in the early days of the crisis.

Macmillan's difficulty in balancing the need to support the Anglo-American alliance and Kennedy, against satisfying calls for moderation from a clearly hostile public was a major consideration in British policy formation during the crisis . While it is evident now in retrospect, and strongly suspected at the time, that Macmillan was informed rather than consulted about the situation in Cuba, Macmillan was eager to create an illusion of feigned participation in the White House's decision making in order to mollify domestic dissenters.

In Macmillan's estimation, photographic evidence would need to be provided in order to sway the British public decisively into supporting the United States. US U-2 spy planes had gathered photographic evidence of the missile sites, which were in Macmillan's possession from the 21st of October. But they had been classified in order to keep the U-2's capability a secret. The timing of the public release of American reconnaissance photos over Cuban missile installations had a great deal to do with Macmillan's preoccupation with public opinion during the crisis. British popular support was essential to Macmillan if he was to deliver sustained support for the United States' cause. British support for its ally was not immediately forthcoming. This was mostly because of British (and for that matter, international suspicions) that the US had concocted the crisis, or at least exaggerated it in order to rid itself of the fledgling Soviet proxy state that was quickly maturing in the Caribbean. British support was present in force by the end of the

crisis week, principally owing to the support photographic evidence had won amongst doubters.

The Bay of Pigs

The removal of Cuban leader Fidel Castro and the communist threat to the western hemisphere had been a American foreign policy priority since Castro's ascension to power in January 1959. The United States' allies in Western Europe and Latin America, though not enthusiastic about Castro, were not nearly as hostile about the revolutionary as were officials in Washington. Constant U.S. urging for help in undermining the Castro regime convinced most in the West that America was acting irrationally towards Cuba. The ignominious Bay of Pigs invasion, which took place in April 1961, just months after JFK's inauguration, gives some measure of the extreme lengths that the U.S. was willing to go to overthrow Castro.

In July 1960, as America attempted to tighten the economic noose around the island, Western solidarity was already in doubt. The U.S. wanted Britain to drastically reduce its sugar imports from Cuba and to cease allowing British ships to carry oil to the island. Britain refused to comply with this request since it could ill afford the sanctions itself, suffering at the time from one of its chronic balance of payments crises.[1] This reluctance to join in economic sanctions came in spite of the fact that British companies had suffered losses under Castro's nationalization programs, though not anywhere to the degree that American firms had suffered losses. Moreover, most British officials felt that

[1] Richard Lamb, *The Macmillan Years 1957-1963, the Emerging Truth* (London: John Murray, 1995) 351.

Castro could not be removed with these economic penalties, but would only become more deeply entrenched against the West, and reliant on Soviet patronage.

This downward spiral of US-Cuban relations came to a head with the Bay of Pigs invasion. Although the invasion occurred on Kennedy's watch, it had been the Eisenhower administration that had planned the invasion and trained Cuban exiles to take part in a dramatic landing at the Bay of Pigs, which was supposed to trigger a general revolt against Castro and topple his regime. Unfortunately for Kennedy, the invasion was a complete failure, for which he was blamed. The failure severely damaged his prestige as a President, and it weakened his credibility in dealing with the Soviets, making him look reckless and more inexperienced than he actually was.

After the Bay of Pigs failure, the US redoubled its efforts to impose sanctions on Cuba. As Richard Lamb points out, Alec Home, the British foreign secretary, had come out in support of joining the Americans in order to avoid tension between the two nations. Home told Fred Erroll, the President of the British Board of Trade that "The existence of the Communist regime in Cuba is a matter of deep concern to us, but for the Americans a calamity. A further rebuff to the Americans would lead to a major row."[2] But Erroll, supported by Macmillan, argued against a trade and credit ban, saying "While we are vigorously enforcing a ban on the shipment of arms to Cuba, we are not prepared to extend this to other forms of trade or to commercial credit."[3] Evidently, the Board of Trade disagreed with the Foreign Office's appraisal of British trade with Cuba as not being of "any considerable volume…not play[ing] a material part in Cuba's economy."[4] which

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[2] Lamb, *The Macmillan Years 1957-1963, the Emerging Truth*, 352.
[3] Lamb, *The Macmillan Years 1957-1963, the Emerging Truth*, 352.
[4] FO 371/162367/AK1051/1, Foreign Office paper of status of Cuba dated 9-27-62.

would therefore, by the FO's calculations, make Cuban trade expendable in order to bolster Anglo-American relations.

Many European nations that otherwise sympathized with the struggle against communism found the American obsession with Cuba to be grounded more in an American sense of honor and emotionalism either than in the ideals of freedom, and justice, or most important of all, in practicality. The Batista Regime, which Fidel Castro overthrew in 1959, was generally acknowledged as corrupt and incompetent. Batista's demise was lauded by many inside and outside the U.S. as a change for the better. What had really upset the Eisenhower administration about Castro's bid for power were the reforms that he initiated and the increasingly close rapport he was establishing with the Soviets. Castro's land reforms aimed at an equitable redistribution of land which included the seizure of much of America's vast agricultural and industrial holdings in Cuba. Castro also initiated a ruthless campaign to eliminate opposition to his rule within Cuba.[5] America's subsequent crusade against Castro was seen by many in Europe, including Great Britain, more as a punitive revenge for the loss of its quasi-colony than as anything else. Britain and France were especially unwilling to support the U.S. against Cuba, considering that just five years before they had been forced into an ignominious withdrawal by the U.S. for conducting just the same sort of aggressive military venture during the Suez crisis. Still smarting from the Suez debacle, the French and British people were less than enthusiastic about supporting what seemed to be American imperialism in the Caribbean.

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[5] For a fuller account of Casro's policies and Cuban-American relations in this period between the Bay of Pigs invasion and the Missile Crisis, refer to *One Hell of a Gamble*, especially chapters 5-7.

British conceptions of the Cuban situation were shaped primarily during this first American bout with the Castro regime. The impression that the Bay of Pigs invasion made on Britain was largely negative, convincing many Britons that the US was unreasonably obsessed with toppling the Castro government. This belief was held widely by both the British public and the Foreign Office. Macmillan also worried that because Kennedy had taken the blame for the Bay of Pigs disaster, he would be pressured even more to assert himself during the Missile Crisis. It was this sentiment that prompted the British publication, *The Economist*, to predict on October 13, 1962, that "There will certainly be great pressure on President Kennedy during the next three weeks to come to the aid of his party with some extreme action against Cuba - The imposition of a blockade for example."[6] This prediction and others like it would help to put doubt in the minds of many in Britain about the United States' real motives for imposing the blockade once the crisis had started.

Notification

As already mentioned, Harold Macmillan acquired some information on the crisis through unofficial intelligence channels well before a decision had been made by the United States. This information came directly from Major General Sir Kenneth Strong. Strong and the rest of the British intelligence delegation had arrived at CIA headquarters at Langley on the morning of Monday, October 15th, a full week before Kennedy made

[6] *The Economist*, October 13, 1962, 138.

public his knowledge of the missiles. That afternoon Strong was invited to return to Langley early the following day before the scheduled meeting began. At 9:30 a.m. Strong lead his delegation back and received the very same message the President himself had only received an hour earlier, "The Rusians have sited offensive missiles in Cuba."[7] As advised, Strong immediately boarded a flight to London to tell the Prime Minister of the situation, forbidden from making any telephone calls or even a cyphered message from the embassy. As historian John Dickie contends, "That Strong was considered worthy of exemption [from a White House edict for highest secrecy]…is proof that in times of crisis in the Cold War, whatever the cynics said about Britain as a hapless bystander, the British were not left on the outside."[8] And so the nature of the information and photographs that Ambassador Bruce and Chester Cooper presented to the Prime Minister on the evening of Monday the 22nd was hardly a surprise.

Chester Cooper had accompanied former Secretary of State Dean Acheson on an Air Force 707 on the evening of the 20th for a trans-Atlantic flight. Acheson was charged with briefing French President De Gaulle the following morning on the situation in Cuba. Also on the plane were three bodyguards, two other CIA men, and Walter "Red" Dowling, the American ambassador to Germany. Sherman Kent, one of the CIA men, was carrying the U-2 photos. The plane stopped first in England before continuing on to Paris and Bonn. Acheson was greeted by Ambassador Bruce, who shared a bottle of scotch with him and showed him a revolver he had been instructed to bring with him to the meeting. Acheson briefed Bruce, who was to meet with Macmillan the next day, then

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[7] John Dickie, 107.
[8] Dickie, 108.

departed for Paris, leaving behind Cooper with a set of the photographs and one of the bodyguards.[9]

The next day, when Acheson met with De Gaulle, the French President offered assurances of support out of hand, confidently speaking for France as he did so. The question of the photograph's authenticity or interpretation was never a question. In fact, when Dean Acheson attempted to show De Gaulle the photographs, President De Gaulle declined, "Not at all. Not now. This is mere evidence, and great nations such as yours would not take a serious step if there was any doubt about the evidence at all. Later, it would be interesting to see these and I will look at them."[10] When De Gaulle did view the pictures he was surprised more by the quality of the reconnaissance photographs than their content. As he examined the photos, he declared "*C'st formidable...C'st formidable.*"

Prior to being officially informed of its existence by David Bruce, Prime Minister Macmillan received some knowledge of the Cuban crisis from David Ormsby-Gore, who on 19 October warned of "an impending crisis, probably about missiles in Cuba."[11] This was of course after Strong's arrival in London, but it was to be the first official notification the Prime Minister received. An intriguing question about these early days remains unclear. What was Macmillan's first reaction to the news and why did he remain so secretive about the knowledge he had obtained, not telling a sole cabinet member until the 22nd?

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[9] James Chace, *Acheson: The Secretary of State Who Created The American World.* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1998) 402.
[10] Chace, *Acheson*, 403. In *'Special' No More*, John Dickie records De Gaulle as having said "No, Mr. Acheson. The President of the United States would not deceive me on a question of such importance." 114.
[11] Horne, *Macmillan*, 363.

In *Eyeball to Eyeball*, Dino Brugioni argues that Macmillan was upset about the news he received, and shared many of the anxieties the British public soon displayed. As he explains, Macmillan "expressed doubt about the information, stating there must have been some misinterpretation of the photos."[12] Brugioni also claims that Macmillan was critical of Kennedy's handling of the crisis during a meeting between the PM, Ambassador Bruce, and CIA White House Liaison Officer Chester Cooper, complaining that the President should have talked with Khruschev directly instead of "going on the telly"[13] over the affair. This account is in marked contrast to other accounts of the meeting, and it is a pity that Brugioni fails to document the sources in which he found these claims.

In contradiction to Brugioni's claims, CIA representative Chester Cooper did not indicate that Macmillan was at all critical of Kennedy. Cooper recalled that, although Macmillan did say "Now the Americans will realize what we in England have lived through for the past many years," he said it Cooper claimed, spontaneously and "hastened to assure us that it was an instinctive reaction, and that he was terribly worried about the missiles and would of course, provide the United States with whatever assistance and support was necessary."[14] Alistair Horne, Macmillan's biographer, agrees with this explanation. Although Macmillan did express concern over the situation, it was mainly due to his understanding of the gravity of the crisis rather than reflective of any doubts over US motives. As Macmillan said when shown the photos of the missile sites by Bruce, "I take it for granted that the statements made by your government are unchallengeable."[15]

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[12] Dino A. Brugioni, *Eyeball to Eyeball* (New York: Random House, 1990) 328. Brugioni provides no documentation for his work.
[13] Brugioni, *Eyeball to Eyeball*, 329.
[14] Horne, *Macmillan*, 365.
[15] Horne, *Macmillan*, 367.

These statements, along with the fact that Macmillan had known of the crisis for days seems to further discredit Brugioni's argument that Macmillan had seriously questioned the United States' actions.

After being notified of the crisis, Macmillan made his first formal reply by letter. He pledged British support for the U.S., but also pointed out the likelihood that Western European support would not be automatic, saying "Many of us in Europe have lived so long in close proximity to the enemy's nuclear weapons of the most devastating kind that we have got accustomed to it."[16] This was Macmillan's first intimation that the Kennedy administration would have to see to the opinion of its allies during the crisis, and considering Macmillan's later concern for releasing reconnaissance pictures in Britain, it seems likely that he was considering British opinion when he made this statement.

One of the few solid contributions that Britain made in shaping American policy during the crisis came not from London, but from Washington, on the initiative of Ambassador David Ormsby-Gore. After a dinner party at the White House on Tuesday October 23, Ormsby-Gore joined President Kennedy and Robert Kennedy in private and discussed the crisis at length. Crucially, Ormsby-Gore urged the President to tighten the radius of the naval quarantine around Cuba from 700 to 500 miles. This move would give Khrushchev more time to react to US demands by increasing the distance that approaching Soviet ships would have to travel before encountering the blockade. As Ormsby-Gore recalled the discussion, after he had suggested moving the blockade, and after the military had warned of potential skirmishes with Cuban planes, "the President was very unimpressed by this argument and said he wanted this thing studied again as he saw great

value in allowing the Russians rather more time to consider their next action."[17] Kennedy implemented this suggestion over the protestations of Secretary McNamara, who worried about the increased possibility of skirmishes with Cuban aircraft.

The tangible contributions made by Ambassador Ormsby-Gore did not, however, remove the tension that had been created within the Anglo-American and wider NATO alliance by the United States' failure to consult it allies. As Alan Dobson argues, it created a "possibility of one side of the Atlantic Alliance involving the other in a full-scale nuclear exchange for the sake of interests the other side did not regard as vital."[18] The issue of consultation became a central part of the Labour opposition's criticism of how the Macmillan government handled the crisis. Labour leaders insisted on "much closer consultation with the Americans in view of possible developments in Europe."[19] Yet it was not Macmillan's fault that he had been kept in the dark about the crisis until after a decision had been made by the Kennedy administration to set up the naval "quarantine". Instead, it would have been more reasonable to judge the Prime Minister on his handling of the crisis after he had been notified. Labour's partisan criticism of the Prime Minister was called "absurd" by Sir William Hayter, the former British Ambassador to Moscow. He further pointed out the folly of Labour's criticism by asking, "If Labour had been in

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[16] PRO PREM 1/3689, 2420 as quoted in *The Kennedy Tapes*, May, Ernest R. and Philip D. Zelikow, eds. (Cambridge, MA: Harvard U.P., 1997) p.269.

[17] *Oral History Interview, Lord Harlech*, 17.

[18] Alan Dobson, *Anglo-American Relations in the Twentieth Century: Of the friendship, conflict and rise and decline of superpowers* (London: Routledge, 1995) p.128. Dobson makes a link of critical importance relating the Cuban missile crisis and the Skybolt crisis which followed on its heels. Dobson argues that the US was in effect trying to prevent the possibility of the Europeans ever putting the US into the same scenario of risking a nuclear war over what might be considered non-vital US interests. By eliminating an independent European nuclear deterrent, the US could insure that missiles would never be fired against the enemy unless such an act was at the express desire of the United States.

[19] *The Times*, October 24, 1962 as quoted in H. A. Deweerd, "Bitish Attitudes in the Cuban Crisis." *RAND Memorandum P-2709*, 1963, 12.

power, what would its leaders have said?"[20] Meaningful consultation had been withheld from the United States' NATO allies until after a US plan had been implemented. This decision had far more to do with the US fear of being tied down by consultation and inaction than it was reflective of a fault in the Tory's leadership during the crisis.

Why, then, did the US fail to consult its allies on such a crucial matter as missile proliferation? The answer might be found in a statement made six years earlier by American Secretary of State John Foster Dulles. He concluded that "... The process of consultation, should never enmesh us in a procedural web so that we fall victim to the ability of despotism to act suddenly and with all their might."[21]

Historian Richard Lamb disagrees with Alistair Horne's conclusion that, if the Kennedy-Macmillan conversations did not amount to consultation, they still represented something very close to that. Lamb's rejection of this argument is based on McGeorge Bundy's declaration after Kennedy's death that Macmillan's role "was not very important."[22] However, this quote is not sufficient evidence to show that Macmillan played only a minor role in the crisis. As close as Bundy was to Kennedy during the crisis, he was not the President, and he did not have daily conversations with the Prime Minister. The notion that Macmillan played the role of an elder advisor to Kennedy can be easily taken beyond what their relationship actually was. On the other hand, it cannot be dismissed on the judgment of Bundy alone. Past Kennedy-Macmillan relations must be examined, particularly the post Vienna Summit meeting in London, in order to get some sense of why Kennedy found talking with Macmillan a comfort. Macmillan could console

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[20] *The Observer*, November 11, 1962 as quoted in Deweerd, 12.
[21] H. A. DeWeerd, 7.
[22] Lamb, *The Macmillan Years 1957-1963, the Emerging Truth*, 356.

Kennedy and empathize with the President's troubles, since he too shouldered responsibility as the leader of a nation.

The question of consultation also was raised in France. When Dean Acheson arrived to speak with De Gaulle over the crisis and the decisions already implemented by the Kennedy administration, De Gaulle asked "Do I understand that you have come to inform me of some decision taken by the President---or have you come to consult me about a decision which he should take?" When Acheson explained he had been dispatched only to inform him, De Gaulle replied "I am in favor of independent decisions."[23] This reply was probably the most diplomatic that De Gaulle could have made. Regarding secrecy and expediency as the reasons for the lack of consultation was perhaps a preferable stance to acknowledging that France had been left out of the loop far more than Britain had.

At the close of the crisis, Ambassador Bruce sent a telegram to Secretary of State Dean Rusk on his take on recent events and the idea of consultation. Bruce's arguments are consistent with the predominant view in the United States at the time and thereafter. Bruce argued that it would be dangerous "to fail to preserve complete freedom of unilateral decision whether with British or others…so-called collective wisdom is a tricky catch phrase and unreliable when a great nation's most vital interest are at stake. Only stupid giants let themselves be tied down by Lilliputians."[24]

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[23] Chace, 403.
[24] National Security Files, Box 41, Cables, Cuba, 10/28/62-10/29/62. Telegram number 1705. Received October 28, 1962.

The Berlin Crisis

Given the ambiguous status of Berlin and the periodic application of pressure on West Berlin by Khrushchev, it was a natural assumption that the Soviets would attempt to link the Caribbean crisis, as they called it, with the status of Berlin. It was suspected and feared by many in the West that even if this was not the Soviet intention behind the introduction of missiles onto the island, it would probably become a bargaining chip in a Cuban settlement. Macmillan recorded these fears in his diary during the crisis, "if [Krushchev] was stopped, with great loss of face, in Cuba, would he not be tempted to recover himself in Berlin?"[25] Years later, Macmillan further elaborated on this issue during a conversation with Alistair Horne, his biographer, saying, "Khrushchev might have suggested a swap of Cuba for Berlin—how could the Americans have resisted."[26]

Even before the crisis went public, some journalists linked the Cuba and Berlin issues. *The Economist,* for instance, asserted that Kennedy was trying to get tough in Berlin in order to make up for shortcomings in Cuba, saying that "President Kennedy argues that the Russians are interfering in Cuba in order to direct attention from their much more dangerous plans for Berlin. But it is difficult not to feel that he himself is building up a sense of imminent emergency in Berlin in order to distract American votes from the Republican allegations that he has failed to cope with Dr. Castro and that his foreign policy has been a constant backing down in the face of threats."[27] This last assertion would certainly not help to rouse British public support during the crisis. It

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[25] Alistair Horne, *Macmillan 1957-1986* (London: Macmillan, 1989) 366.
[26] Horne, *Macmillan,* 366.
[27] *The Economist*, October 20, 1962, 246.

suggested that the tough stand that Kennedy took against the missiles in Cuba was directly linked to domestic political concerns. And as fate would have it, this issue of *The Economist* was in its subscribers' hands just as Kennedy made the missiles' presence known to the public.

A study of the American position on Berlin suggests, however, that Macmillan's anxieties over a Berlin-Cuba swap were unjustified. Indeed, it seems that the American commitment to saving Berlin was even higher than the European commitments. A gallop poll conducted in August 1961 had shown that "71 per cent of Americans were ready to fight over Berlin whereas only 46 per cent of the British and 9 per cent of the French were."[28] In addition, Berlin was constantly brought up at ExComm meetings during the missile crisis and figured prominently in assessments that the Executive Committee made on how to approach the crisis.

[28] Lamb, *The Macmillan Years 1957-1963, the Emerging Truth*, 343.

The Well Manicured Gentleman

"In nearly three years of co-operation, we have worked together on great and small issues, and we have never had a failure of understanding or of mutual trust."
– Kennedy's last letter to Macmillan, October 1963.

Prime Minister Macmillan and President Kennedy, April, 1962

The central question that Macmillan puzzled with in the days before Kennedy assumed the Presidency, was how he was going to "persuade this unknown young President to play the 'Roman' to Macmillan's 'Greek'."[29] Successful Anglo-American relations, so the formula went, required a close affinity between the nations' leaders based on an appreciation of 'Greek' wisdom and 'Roman' prowess. This was the model that Macmillan had followed with Eisenhower and it was the very same he would use with Kennedy.

I still need to discuss early Kennedy-Macmillan meetings at Nassau and Bermuda, as the foundation of their working relationships.

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[29] Horne, *Macmillan*, 282.

A Friend in Washington

David Ormsby-Gore was a longtime friend of the President. Distantly related by marriage, they had met in London during the 1930s during Joseph Kennedy's term as United States Ambassador to London. From 1954 on, Ormsby-Gore would annually vacation at one of the Kennedy's properties in Hyannisport or Palm Beach.[30] It had been at Kennedy's own behest that Macmillan had named Ormsby-Gore as the Ambassador of Great Britain to Washington in 1961, an unprecedented event. The President often confided in Ormsby-Gore, so much so that he once said that "I trust David as I would my own Cabinet---after all, he's Bobby's best friend."[31] As Nunnerley argues "It was of great value to the President to be able to talk and consult with somebody apart from his own entourage in perfect confidence."[32] Much of this confidence was built on an understanding that "Kennedy knew that nothing he said would be construed as official policy and reported back to the British Government. Ormsby-Gore always made it quite clear to the President when he felt a point had been made which he should report back to Macmillan."[33] This created an atmosphere where Kennedy would often confide "more information to Ormsby-Gore than would permit to be given to Macmillan."[34] This coziness did have its drawbacks, drawing criticism on both sides of the Atlantic. In American newspapers, there were allegations "that the Ambassador wielded too much influence. Many in Britain, however, took the opposite point of view believing that

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[30] Nunnerley, 40-41.
[31] John Dickie, 111.
[32] Nunnerley, 42.
[33] Ibid., 42.
[34] Ibid., 42.

Ormsby-Gore was so much in the President's pocket that this inhibited rather than helped Britain's position."[35]

Ambassador Ormsby-Gore accompanying the President in Washington.

A Special Ally in Doubt?

From the moment Macmillan was first briefed by Ambassador Bruce on the crisis, he worried over how the British public would take the news of the crisis. According to Chester Cooper, who attended that first crucial meeting along with Ambassador Bruce, Macmillan mused that:

> ...he was going to have considerable trouble with the Commons and with the British public because there was great suspicion in England at the time that the United States exaggerated the Castro threat. The pictures satisfied him, but might be reguarded as a bit of fakery unless somehow they could be shown to the British people generally...[36]

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[35] Ibid., 43-44.
[36] Chester Cooper's recollection of Macmillan's comments, as cited in Horne, *Macmillan*, 365.

Macmillan's urgings to have the photos published somewhat disappointed Kennedy, who had received much more unconditional approval for his boycott policy from De Gaulle. But as Macmillan had feared, the British press had little good to say about the US demands during the first days of the crisis. According to David Nunnerley, this "was nevertheless only a reflection of the widespread skepticism in Britain of the American claims and a general condemnation of the American action."[37]

Initial reactions in the press to the crisis were decidedly against American actions. Early criticisms and distrust focused on the accuracy of the United States claims about missiles in Cuba. Much of this distrust was founded on the belief that the crisis was just an extension of hostile US policy toward Cuba which both predated, and was epitomized by, the Bay of Pigs Invasion. An insightful editorial about these initial suspicions appeared in *The Times* of October 24, 1962 which linked the British reply to the questionable accuracy of American charges:

> almost everything depends on the accuracy of the evidence…Past American mistakes in coping with Cuba, the violent emotions…the wrong information that was served to the President before the invasion fiasco eighteen months ago [at the Bay of Pigs], and even the President's sudden display of toughness…all these things were bound to make people in Britain extremely wary on first hearing the news."[38]

The Times went on to report that Hugh Gaitskell, the Leader of the Opposition, urged Macmillan to visit the US to advise Kennedy on the crisis in the same way that Prime Minister Atlee had done in 1950 when Truman flirted with the idea of using the

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[37] David Nunnerley, *President Kennedy and Britain* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1972) p.72.
[38] *The Times*, October 24, 1962, as quoted in Nunnerley, David, *President Kennedy and Britain* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1972) p.73.

atomic bomb in Korea.[39] Drawing the link between these two events was logical enough for most in Britain since both events represented situations in which it was believed that US leaders required guidance from more seasoned and sensible statesmen. The left wing *Tribune* went so far as to link the crisis with upcoming election politics, saying "It may well be that Kennedy is risking blowing up the world to hell in order to sweep a few Democrats into office."[40]

One of the most formidable sources of opposition to Macmillan's support for the United States during the early days of the crisis was the renowned philosopher and unilateralist Bertrand Russell, and his supporters. Russell drew support from other intellectuals and the general population. From his home in Plas Penrhyn, Wales, Russell conducted a campaign against the response to the Missile Crisis that was highly critical of U.S. actions but also notably silent about both the Soviet deception over the missile's secret installation in Cuba and the subsequent Soviet denial of their existence. Opposed to nuclear weapons in general, Russell did not mince words in his criticism of Kennedy, while urging patience from Soviet Premier Khrushchev, who had brought the weapons into another country. On the 23rd he telegraphed Kennedy the following message, "Your action desperate. Threat to human survival. No conceivable justification. Civilized man [sic] condemns it. We will not have mass murder. Ultimatums mean war. I do not speak for power but plead for civilized man. End this madness."[41] To Khrushchev, Russell telegraphed, "I appeal to you not to be provoked by the unjustifiable action of the United States in Cuba. The world will support caution. Urge condemnation to be sought

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[39] *The Times*, October 24, 1962, p.1.
[40] *The Tribune*, as quoted in Nunnerley, David, *President Kennedy and Britain* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1972) p.73.

through United Nations. Precipitous action could mean annihilation for mankind."[42] Far from criticizing Khrushchev for the Soviet introduction of nuclear missiles into Cuba, Russell only urged him to deal with the crisis using caution and reason. At the same time he scolded Kennedy for bringing the situation to a crisis level. Russell also authored a pamphlet titled "You Are To Die," which was sponsored by the Cuban Embassy in London. It urged the British public to protest against the crisis that was threatening their very existence with total annihilation.[43]

This contrast was consistent with Russell's political inclinations. Russell's opinion of the British and American governments had been unfavorable long before the crisis began. In September of 1961 he was quoted saying that "Kennedy and Macmillan are the wickedest people in the story of man."[44] However, Russell's extremely negative opinion of the Anglo-American leadership, though not widely held, proved no liability to him in the early days of the crisis. During this period public opinion found in Russell a voice that could articulate the apprehension, fear, and anger that so many Britons shared over the threat that now suddenly confronted them. Russell, a unilateralist and head of the Committee of 100, had long been a critic of American nuclear bravado. As Harvey DeWeerd of the RAND corporation argued, Russell and his associates "found in the crisis a vindication of their fears unleashed by rash American action." However, DeWeerd added that "Persistant anti-Americanism trapped the unilateralists in a logical absurdity. Their major platform stood for doing away with nuclear weapons, yet during the crisis they supported the Soviet Union which had introduced the missiles. They opposed

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[41] Bertrand Russell, *Unarmed Victory* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1963) p.37.
[42] Russell, *Unarmed Victory*, 37.
[43] Deweerd, 22. Also see *The Observer*, November 4, 1962 and *Unarmed Victory*.

American actions which were aimed at restoring the Caribbean to the status of a nuclear free zone."[45]

Russell also campaigned for support and cooperation in Britain, urging Macmillan "to prevent American madness from bringing on nuclear war. Speak out while time permits."[46] Simultaneously, he asked much more from Labour leader Hugh Gaitskell, urging the "Opposition to join our mass protests against imminent disaster threatened by American madness over Cuba. This is the moment to act."[47]

Russell's campaign for peace coincided with numerous independent student organizing and demonstration efforts. Notable centers of student organization emerged at Oxford, Cambridge, Liverpool, Leeds, and the University of London.[48] In addition, over sixty senior academics from British universities submitted a petition to the Prime Minister on behalf of averting the possibility of Britain being drawn into a conflict over Cuba.[49] Student protest also occurred at Sixth Form colleges [British high schools] throughout the country. One such group of teens demanded "that Her Majesty's Government take every possible step to end this state of affairs"; "Therefore to impress the British public of our convictions, we are not participating in any lessons for two days."[50] These petitions made up a small part of what became a deluge of letters to the British government critical of US handling of the Cuban crisis, many of which would later become permanently incorporated in the government's archives on the crisis.

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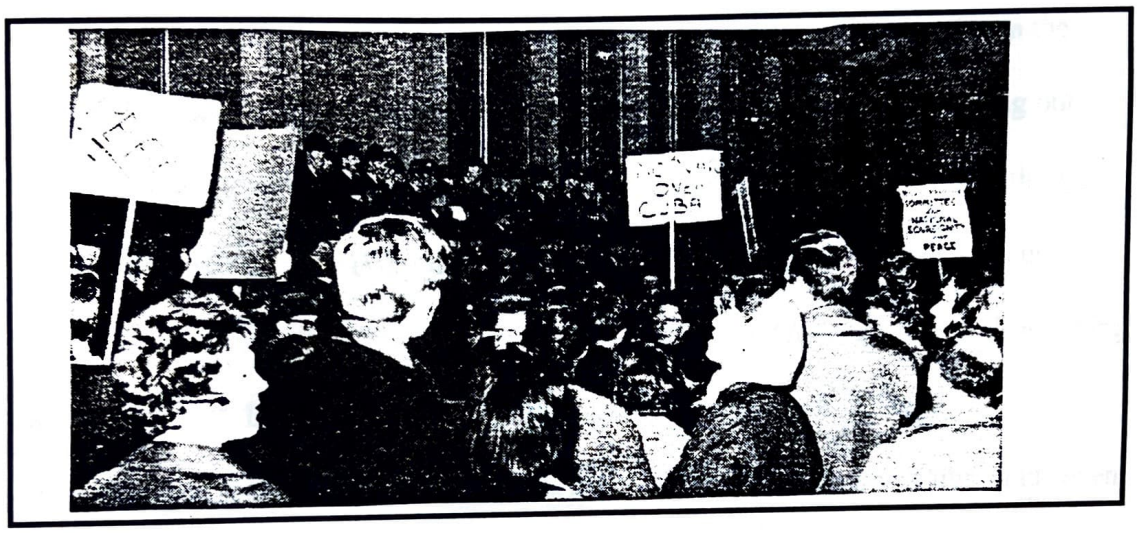
[44] Horne, *Macmillan*, 361.
[45] H. A. DeWeerd, 18.
[46] Russell, *Unarmed Victory*, 37.
[47] Russell, *Unarmed Victory*, 37.
[48] David Nunnerley, *President Kennedy and Britain* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1972) p.73.
[49] *Manchester Guardian* October 25, 1962, 8.
[50] *Manchester Guardian* October 25, 1962, 8.

On the night that news of the crisis broke in Britain, a crowd of demonstrators spontaneously gathered outside of the American Embassy in Grosvenor Square, London[51] to protest the American ultimatums against the Soviet Union. Estimates on the size of the crowd range from several hundred upwards to two thousand. The crowd was large enough, at any rate, to require over three hundred police to disperse it. The crowd chanted for hours into the night, "Hands off Cuba."[52]



The American Embassy, Grosvenor Square, October 22, 1962

The situation got so bad that at one point Ambassador Bruce called Frankfurt in order to have some tear gas rushed to the Embassy, and although he had instructed the Marine guards not to open fire, he wanted "to reconsider whether for the protection of the code room we should not, as a last resort, open fire."[53] US Secretary of State Dean Rusk sarcastically commented about the protests at a meeting of the ExComm on the evening of

[51] The new American Embassy, completed just months before, had already been associated with controversy. This situation arose because of a row between the U.S. and its English building contractor, which quickly became an embarrassment for the U.S., because of the negative media attention the dispute had received.
[52] Lamb, *The Macmillan Years 1957-1963, the Emerging Truth*, 356.

Tuesday the 23rd. "The mobs [of protesters] that we stimulated turned up in London instead of Havana" Rusk said, "2,000 people…Bertrand Russell's people [the British peace movement] stormed the embassy there. We haven't had any reports of them disarming Cuba."[54]

Obviously, the negative press over the US handling of the crisis in Britain did not go unnoticed by the American government. In a morning meeting on 23 October, Kennedy's lamentation over the lack of support that his actions were receiving in the British press was captured on the White House tape recorder. Kennedy, thinking out loud, complained "even the British today are saying our actions are too…6 months ago, when we would have had everything going…The British press are not even with us today."[55] McGeorge Bundy added, "Even today we got the *Manchester Guardian* saying we're wrong."[56] Bundy was likely referring to the *Manchester Guardian's* editorial of that day which said that "The United States has acted drastically against Cuba" and "even a limited military action will be hard to justify. In the end the US may find that it has done its cause, its friends, and its own true interests little good."[57] Indeed, the positions taken by respected papers such as the *Manchester Guardian* were an important and accessible way that British and American policy makers could track trends in British opinion and the rate at which information was being disseminated. For instance, CIA Director John McCone pointed out at an NSC meeting on the 22nd, the day that the crisis went public, "that the *London Evening Standard* had printed a great deal of information about the

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[53] Nelson D. Lankford *The Last American Aristocrat: The Biography of David K. E. Bruce* (New York: Little & Brown, 1996) 308.
[54] Ernest R. May and Philip D. Zelikow, *The Kennedy Tapes* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 1997) 333.
[55] May and Zelikow, *The Kennedy Tapes*, 297.
[56] May and Zelikow, *The Kennedy Tapes*, 297.

existence of Soviet strategic missiles in Cuba."[58] British and American policy makers found that the position that papers like the *Manchester Guardian* took on the issue of the crisis would be of central importance in forming a positive public consensus.

Macmillan rebuked the press for showing an "exaggerated neutrality" concerning the crisis and for seeming to be "more skeptical of statements made by allies than of the Communists."[59] Two weeks after the crisis had come to an end, Harold Evans mused over the question of whether Britain had wavered during the crisis. During a lunch with two colleagues, Evans outlined the reasons why the British press specifically had seemed to waver in its support for US actions:

> (a) it was asking a good deal to expect the British Press and public to jump immediately to attention, as if by reflex action, when the President of the United States confronted them overnight with the possibility of nuclear annihilation; and (b) it was Walter Lippman [not a British journalist] who publicly advocated a Turkey-Cuba deal.[60]

The Opposition Weighs In

The leaders of the Labour Party met with Macmillan at five o'clock in the evening on Tuesday the 23rd. This was the first opportunity for the Opposition leadership to be briefed on the crisis and to question the Prime Minister. Accompanied by Lord Home the Foreign Secretary and Macmillan's assistant Mr. Bligh, Macmillan met with Gaitskell,

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[57] *The Manchester Guardian*, October 23, 1962, editorial.
[58] U.S. State Department. *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1961-1963: Cuban Missile Crisis and Aftermath*. Vol. XI. (Washington, D.C.: United States Government Printing Office, 1996) 153.
[59] DeWeerd, 22.
[60] Evans, Harold. *Downing Street Diary: The Macmillan years 1957-1963*. (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1981) 226.

Brown, and Wilson. At this meeting, a variety of topics were covered, including the Labour party's position on the crisis, the extent that American domestic politics was shaping reactions in America, to what degree Macmillan had been consulted, the possibility of his visiting Washington, and the status of British shipping.

Gaitskell's tone was largely supportive of Macmillan during the discussion. He assured the Prime Minister that "There would be no wave of anti-Americanism sweeping the Labour Party."[61] However, the Labour panel did urge Macmillan to make an emergency trip to Washington. As Mr. Bligh recorded, Hugh Gaitskell asserted that, "It would seem prudent to establish proper consultation and get it accepted that we should be consulted before any action was taken which might involve us. He thought the country would be reassured by a move of this sort."[62]

In a more critical analysis of American policy, Gaitskell asked "how far the American reaction had really been engendered by the elections."[63] Lord Home replied that the Americans were indeed "in an excited state about Cuba"[64] but that the present initiative was driven by photographic evidence. Mr. Brown undoubtedly felt that Britain was being ignored by the United States. As he rather awkwardly expressed this, he "thought that the Americans were more conscious of the effect on themselves of our actions than the effect on us of their actions."[65]

The issue of British vessels under long-term charters to the USSR was also noted as a potential problem in the event they might be used to challenge the US naval

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[61] PREM 11/3689, Content of meeting as recorded by Mr. Bligh, 1.
[62] Ibid., 3.
[63] Ibid., 3.
[64] Ibid., 3.
[65] Ibid., 4.

quarantine. Other British vessels were considered a much lower liability by the participants because they would not be transporting arms and would voluntarily accept American inspections.[66] Of the participants in this meeting, Macmillan commented in his diary that "they hadn't much to say. Brown was more robust than Gaitskell. Wilson looked very shifty. Fortunately, they distrust each other profoundly."[67]

At the Commons, Gaitskell was a shade less conciliatory, and he probed Macmillan on the issue of consultation.

> Were Her Majesty's Government consulted before the decision by President Kennedy to institute a blockade of Cuba was taken? If they were consulted, what advice was taken? If they were not consulted, is it not a very unsatisfactory state of afairs that one member of an alliance can take unilateral action even though this may clearly involve the gravest danger to other members of the alliance? Will Prime Minister say what steps he proposes to take to try to avoid any further lack of consultation of this kind in the future.[68]

Macmillan replied that the President had needed to act quickly, and that he was in any case adequately forewarned of US actions. After Macmillan's speech and questioning in the Commons, Macmillan confided to Kennedy over the telephone that Gaitskell's tone was helpful, but "He was most damaging about 'consultation,' his memories are, of course, of Suez. Wade (Liberal Deputy Leader) was weak and futile…There was a mild demonstration, but it amounted to little."[69]

Labour opposition to American foreign policy could express a degree of criticism of British policy without really having to be held accountable for what they argued. Labour leaders who had seen the evidence in Macmillan's possession could still harp on the issue of "consultation." The Labour rank and file in Parliament, not having seen the

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[66] Ibid., 4.
[67] Horne, *Macmillan*, 367.
[68] PREM 11/3690, 134. Transcript of Commons debate.

evidence, were still keenly suspicious of US intentions and therefore even more of an impediment for Macmillan. Macmillan, who surely would have been eager to have been more thoroughly consulted over the crisis, could not come out and admit this. He stood to weaken himself politically. In addition, Macmillan was bound by secrecy not to disclose the precise nature of his discussions with Kennedy and American officials over the matter. On the 25th, *The Times* reported that Labour Party officials "were gravely concerned about the United States decision [to implement the naval blockade]…which was of doubtful legality and could lead to the most serious consequences in the Caribbean and elsewhere."[70] The release went on to state that the party "*did not accept as proved* (emphasis added) that long-range missile bases had been established in Cuba."[71] This Labour party statement, as explicitly critical as it was of American policy, and as implicitly critical as it was of the Macmillan government that had pledged its support, did not go far enough, according to at least two members. One of the dissenters, Mrs. Barbara Castle, "wanted them [the United States] not only to regret the lack of prior consultation but to insist that there should be consultation in the future before Mr. Kennedy proceeded to the further measures at which he had hinted."[72] Thirty-seven M.P.s went so far as to sign "a Commons motion demanding that the West should actually increase its trade with Cuba and urging that 'Britain should resist all proposals for an economic or shipping boycott.'"[73] While the view expressed by Mrs. Castle and others was not the general line

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[69] Horne, *Macmillan*, 373.
[70] *The Times*, 25th, p.11.
[71] Ibid.
[72] Ibid.
[73] David Nunnerley, *President Kennedy and Britain* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1972) p.72.

accepted by Labour, it does show that such sentiments were not held exclusively by the political fringe.

Proof Positive

On October 23 Macmillan, with the support of US Ambassador David Bruce, urged the US to give its consent to release photos of the missile sites in order to quell the growing protest movement in Britain. Recognizing the need to get the pictures already in his possession before the eyes of the British people, Macmillan instructed Ormsby-Gore to get clearance from the White House to release the U-2 reconnaissance photos to the press for publication. Macmillan, concerned that his hands were tied because of British skepticism, telegraphed the following message to Ambassador Ormsby-Gore at 12:32 p.m.:

> The Press today is not too bad but of course they are a little sceptical about the facts of the Soviet build up in Cuba. I shall not be able to make the sort of statements that I would like either in the United Nations or in Parliament unless we are able to use the facts given by Ambassador Bruce in his briefing yesterday and apparently communicated also to other Western Heads of Government. How far can these figures be released?[74]

Thus it is evident that Macmillan was hesitant to commit full support to the United States before the British public gained access to evidence of missiles in Cuba. And no wonder, given the skeptical public response in Britain to the crisis in its opening days. It would take hard evidence to convince many Britons that there were indeed Soviet offensive missiles in Cuba, and that the United States was not exaggerating or fabricating the crisis as a pretext to take control of Cuba.

Ormsby-Gore's reply to Macmillan's telegram was received in London just after six o'clock in the evening on that same day. He cabled Macmillan the following brief message: "State Department agree that more precise information should be made public. They are giving this most urgent consideration, but have not yet decided on how far facts given by Bruce may be released."[75] Shortly after this message had been received, a CIA representative gave a briefing to reporters who filmed his displays.[76]

The question of just how the photos ended up being released without Kennedy's consent is something of a mystery. The "official" story, which was circulated immediately after the incident by the White House, was that it had intended to release the photos anyway; the information was simply released earlier than it had intended because of an error made by an Embassy official in London.[77] The recorded discussion of this matter, however, indicates that Kennedy had not been ready to release the photos anytime soon. The President, discussing the issue with his brother Robert, said "I don't want to make it look like we're all fucked up here, by [unclear]. I don't think we want to have the Prime Minister show them [the photographs] on private, civilian television. I'll be [unclear] to release them."[78] Robert Kennedy suggested what soon became the official U.S. position on the matter: "Why don't we say we were planning to release them?"[79]

Recalling the event years later in his memoirs, Macmillan made no mention of the unauthorized briefing. He did, however, make an argument praising the merits of

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[74] PREM 11/3689/T497/62 Ciphered letter to Ormsby-Gore from Macmillan, delivered at 12:32 p.m. GMT on 10-23-62.
[75] PREM 11/3689/T499/62 Ormsby-Gore's reply to telegram T497/62 concerning release of documents in Britain.
[76] May, *The Kennedy Tapes,* 340. This CIA man was probably Chester Cooper, who had accompanied Acheson to London.
[77] May, *The Kennedy Tapes,* 341.
[78] May, *The Kennedy Tapes,* 341.

releasing the photos in the Security Council on October 23, which can be interpreted as his way of defending his advocacy of an early photo release. Macmillan's explanation, though written long after the events occurred, is still important to consider:

> [In the Security Council] Zorin, in reply to the excited accusations of Adlai Stevenson, had the effrontery to deny that there were any missiles or launching pads in Cuba…Stevenson…Armed with enlarged photographs, admirably presented, he was able to confound his adversary and prove, even to the most skeptical or hostile observer, the strength and accuracy of the American complaint. This incident had a profound effect in Britain and throughout the world. It was of real importance, because, as I had already warned Washington, it was essential that the actual photographs should be made as public and as intelligible as possible…[80]

The Prime Minister added in his memoirs that on the 24th "the President decided on a further release of photographs to the Press of the world…This accumulation of proof was of vital importance, and the President was very conscious of this."[81] Curiously, Macmillan fails to mention that this official Washington release was merely a formality since Cooper had released the same pictures in Britain the day before. Macmillan's account of this period of the crisis, although it does not in any way link him explicitly to the release of photos, is consistent with arguments that he made for the release of the information and photographs during October 1962. But did Macmillan's repeated requests for the dissemination of the reconnaissance photos link him with the unauthorized release?

Dino Brugioni argues that Macmillan, having spoken with Kennedy concerning the release of the photographic evidence, "assumed the release would be immediate and subsequently called Ambassador Bruce…[who] asked that Chet Cooper arrange for a

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[79] May, *The Kennedy Tapes*, 341.
[80] Harold Macmillan. *At the End of the Day 1961-1963*. (London: Macmillan, 1973) 196.
[81] Harold Macmillan. *At the End of the Day 1961-1963*. (London: Macmillan, 1973) 197.

briefing and release of the photos to the British press and media."[82] The problem with this version of events is that Kennedy gave no such assurance to Macmillan about releasing the photos. In fact the issue is not even raised in their 12:30 am (GMT) telephone conversation on the 23rd, the last one before the release.

Somewhat more suspicious regarding the press release question are historians May and Zelikow, who argue that it was only "*Possibly* as a result of some misunderstanding in communications between the Prime Minister's office and the White House, Macmillan told Bruce that the White House had granted permission for the photos to be shown on TV."[83]

Nelson Lankford, the biographer of David Bruce, gives a much more controversial account of the photo release. Lankford argues that Bruce knowingly released the photographs without authorization, after discussing the matter with Macmillan and being in agreement about the need to disseminate the evidence,

> Acting on his own, without authorization from the White House, he gave the pictures to the BBC…The pictures' unexpected appearance on British television threw the White House into momentary turmoil…Fortunately for Bruce, the unfolding crisis quickly superseded the anger his independent action provoked in Washington. His decision did not affect the outcome of events in the Caribbean, but it did help steady Anglo-American relations in a time of crisis.[84]

Macmillan may or may not have orchestrated the miscommunication relating to the photos release, but it was precisely what Macmillan had yearned for since the crisis had

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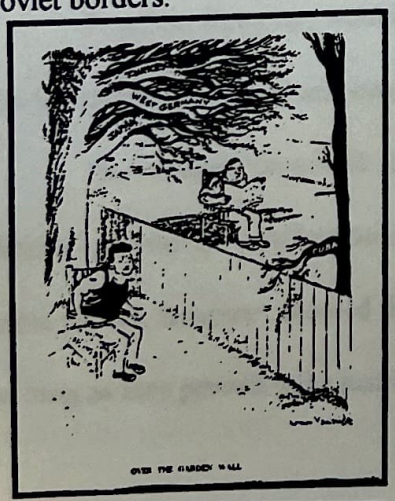
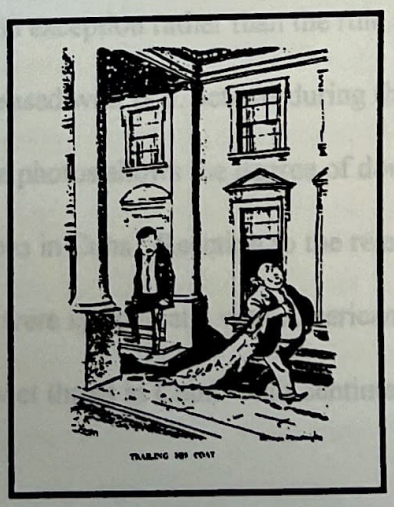
[82] Dino Brugioni, *Eyeball to Eyeball*, 390.
[83] Ernest R. May, and Philip D. Zelikow, *The Kennedy Tapes* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 1997) p.340. [Emphasis added].
[84] Nelson D. Lankford, *The Last American Aristocrat, The Biography of David K. E. Bruce*. (New York: Little, Brown and Co., 1996) 309. Lankford bases this argument on Cooper oral interview at the JFK library.

first gone public. What is more, the release of the photographs caused a remarkable shift in British attitudes during the crisis.

The general shift from British suspicion over US actions concerning Cuba prior to the crisis to subsequent support for these actions can be seen in two comics which appeared in *Punch*, a satirical weekly political magazine. These two cartoons were penned by the same author, Norman Mansbridge, just before and after the crisis. The first cartoon, published in the October 17th issue of *Punch,* shows Kennedy's preoccupation with Cuba as unjustified considering the far more substantial US bases that "branch out" from Japan, West Germany, and Turkey to encroach upon Khrushchev's "yard". Both Kennedy and Khrushchev are reading up on "hints on pruning."[85] This cartoon, published days before the news of missiles in Cuba was made public, illustrates the latent disapproval in Britain over US policy toward Cuba. It also represents the very same argument that many in Britain would promote after the crisis had started, namely that the US really ought to not be so upset in view of the fact that it had established similarly ominous bases near Soviet borders.



OVER THE GARDEN WALL 10-17-62



TRAILING HIS COAT 10-31-62

[85] *Punch*, October 17, 1962, p.547.

The second cartoon was published in the October 31st issue of *Punch* and represents the about-face in attitude that the artist along, with much of Britain, had made within the fortnight. In this cartoon Khrushchev saunters past the steps of the White House "trailing his coat," as the caption reads. Khrushchev is looking behind to see that Kennedy, furious, lifts his feet over the coat, labeled Cuba. There is no longer any sign of Kennedy provoking Khrushchev. This time, Premier Khrushchev is clearly antagonizing President Kennedy.[86]

The publication of the missile site photographs was enough to convince at least one unilateralist, Philip Toynbee, to rescind his previous criticism of U.S. actions. He explained

> From midnight on Monday of President Kennedy's speech...I believed that the blockade was a monstrous and cold blooded election stunt; that there were no Russian missiles in Cuba, and that the physical invasion of Cuba was the next step in this wicked United States plot. By Wednesday I had judged, from Russian reactions to the crisis, that President Kennedy had told the literal truth about the Russian rocket sites; and I was forced to make an immediate volte-face...Being a unilateralist disarmer of the most extreme type, I was outraged by the extension of nuclear arms and nuclear tension into a new area.[87]

Toynbee, however, would turn out to be the exception rather than the rule among the unilateralists, who by and large remained displeased with U.S. actions during the crisis.

The necessity to publish the reconnaissance photos shows the degree of doubt the British had over the justification of American actions in Cuba. Reaction to the release of press photos, however, showed that most Britons were sympathetic with American actions so long as they proved to be justified by a true Soviet threat in Cuba. This sentiment was

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[86] *Punch*, October 31, 1962, p.619.
[87] DeWeerd, 19.

at odds with Russell's view that whatever transpired in Cuba remained unjustifiable grounds for risking a war through heightened nuclear brinkmanship.

Continued Dissent

Indeed, the change in British public opinion was not universal. Most groups diametrically opposed to Kennedy's actions prior to the release of the photos remained so afterwards. These groups included those who identified with Bertrand Russell and other intellectuals campaigning for peace, as well as both those who supported the rhetoric of such right-wing jingoistic newspapers such as *The Daily Herald*, and those who embraced the left-wing perspective of such socialist papers as the *Tribune*. Bertrand Russell remained unconvinced even after seeing the reconnaissance photographs, dismissing them as inconclusive because they had been taken "by an interested party."[88] When the President gave a belated reply to Russell's rather belligerent telegram, he stated "I think your attention might now be directed against the burglars rather than those who have caught the burglars." Agitated, Russell dismissed this as "Ridiculous—he is the burglar because Cuba was threatened and she sought protection."[89] Here it seems clear that Russell felt more strongly about American harassment of Cuba than he did about the

[88] DeWeerd, 19.
[89] Interview in the *Daily Worker*, October 29, 1962, as quoted in H. A. DeWeerd, 22.

threat of nuclear weapons and their proliferation, which was ostensibly the aim of his political activities.

On October 24, 1962 *The Daily Herald* argued for a bigger role for the United Nations and neutral mediators, supporting Canadian Prime Minister Diefenbaker's proposal "that the eight neutral members of the Disarmament Conference should be sent to Cuba to establish the facts."[90] This was suggested along with the charge that "the American President has no valid excuse for 'going it alone' and imperiling the peace."[91] This sort of criticism from the nationalistic British right smacked with resentment at Britain's not being consulted in a more substantive manner. On October 26th the left leaning *Tribune* ran the headline "The American Government stands convicted by its actions in Cuba." It also urged its readers to attend rallies against American demands. Scheduled for Sunday October 28th in Hyde Park and in St. Pancras Town Hall, the speakers' list for this event included five MPs from the Commons.[92]

Coming out again as a hawkish supporter of America, Macmillan deplored the enthusiasm with which much of the British press had greeted the idea of a missile swap. Momentum was quickly building for the proposal of jointly removing Soviet missiles from Cuba and US missiles from Turkey and possibly Britain. He lamented that "the weaker brethren, at home and abroad" were being seduced by this offer, which he characterized as folding under Soviet pressure. "The Press today—*Observer* and *Sunday Times* especially were awful. It was like Munich. The *Sunday Telegraph* was very good and firm...."[93] Believing that such a swap would cause a decline in confidence throughout the NATO,

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[90] *The Daily Herald*, October 24, 1962, p.1.
[91] *The Daily Herald*, October 24, 1962, p.1.
[92] *The Tribune*, October 26, 1962, p.1.

Macmillan offered instead the *temporary* defusing of sixty Thor missiles stationed in Britain.[94]

At the end of the crisis, with the threat of war quickly receding, William Warby, M.P., still felt moved enough by the situation to deliver this scathing indictment of the PM to the Commons: "The Prime Minister should be impeached for daring, when he had the opportunity to protect the British people, to hand them over on a plate to be used as pawns, to be sacrificed, if necessary, in a game of high power politics which might so easily have ended in total disaster."[95]

"The dreadful need to do something"

Despite lingering dissent from the likes of Bertrand Russell, Macmillan was fortified with something of a mandate after evidence of the missiles was published to support the US's position and to play a positive role in seeing that the crisis came to a peaceful resolution.

What were the goals of the British government vs. the Foreign Office and how were they limited by public reaction to the Cuban missile crisis? David Nunnerley points out the uncertainty in Britain during the crisis as to just what role Britain ought to play and whom it would support. He explains:

> Britain's contribution in the Cuban crisis, valuable as it may have been, was nevertheless limited to a role of support and to the mobilisation of unanimity, and was effective not through mediation in world affairs nor through her ownership of nuclear weapons, but through her close relationship with the United States. The supreme

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[93] Horne, *Macmillan*,.375.
[94] Horne, *Macmillan*, 375.
[95] *House of Commons Debates*, November 2, 1962 as quoted in DeWeerd, 19.

> paradox in this context, therefore, is that British support for the American blockade was neither immediately nor in fact obviously forthcoming![96]

Once the political center in Britain had been firmly swayed by US claims, Macmillan, hands no longer tied, had his opportunity to come out swinging for the West.

The question of Berlin was particularly delicate during and even after the missile crisis. When Ormsby-Gore suggested on October 28th, just after Khrushchev had backed down on the Cuban issue, that the West ought to use Cuba as a pawn just as the Soviets had used Berlin, the Foreign Office was livid at the suggestion. Home, Caccia and Macmillan all rejected this idea because it equated Cuba with Berlin. Macmillan explained his stance on the following grounds:

> an explicit link between them might even encourage Khrushchev to feel that he might take Berlin at the risk not of nuclear war, but only of the loss of Cuba. It is surely possible that Señor Castro may one day be overthrown by a spontaneous revolution, and we should not get into a position in which such a development might seem to justify the Russians in seizing Berlin.[97]

And what did the Western Europeans have to say to one another? Europe, it is clear, was of primary importance to European leaders. The fear that the United States might relent in Berlin in order to remove missiles from Cuba was on many European minds. Macmillan expressed his desire to address this possibility quickly in a top secret communiqué to General De Gaulle on October 25th:

> ...for the moment this remains primarily a Russo-American dispute about Cuba. If and when any negotiations take place however, these it seems to me are very likely to develop into matters of concern to Europe. I have in mind such questions as United States bases, and of course Berlin. I have been wondering how, at this stage, if it reached we can best ensure that the interests of Europe are given due weight in any discussion of negotiation."[98]

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[96] David Nunnerley, *President Kennedy and Britain* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1972) p.71.
[97] Lamb, *The Macmillan Years 1957-1963, the Emerging Truth*, 357.
[98] FO 371/162387/AK1261/247

In this letter, Macmillan elaborated on what he had promised the same day in the House of Commons, namely that from this point on Britain would be intimately involved in and consulted about the crisis negotiations. Did Macmillan have any credible grounds for making this statement?

Resolution and Aftermath

When Macmillan received word that the crisis had been concluded without any further escalation, he remarked to Harold Evans that "It's like a wedding, when there is nothing left to do but drink champagne and go to sleep."[99] But if the victory in Cuba was like a wedding, then the marriage it yielded---at least in terms of the Special Relationship--was turbulent and short lived. Even without having been consulted before the crisis had commenced, Macmillan might still have claimed that given the input and support he had provided Kennedy with at the crisis's height, he had strengthened the Anglo-American relationship. Or so he could have claimed, had it not been for the diplomatic disasters which rocked the Special Relationship so soon after the crisis.

The first of these occurred during an address that Dean Acheson delivered at West Point on December 5, 1962, barely a month after the Cuban Missile Crisis had ended. In this speech, Acheson admonished Britain for refusing to participate in European integration. He argued, "Great Britain has lost an empire and has not yet found a

role…the attempt to play a separate power role, that is, a role apart from Europe, a role based primarily on a 'special relationship' with the United States, a role based on being head of the Commonwealth…[is] about to be played out."[100]

This speech, widely circulated in the British press the next morning, created considerable political embarrassment for Macmillan. The Prime Minister issued a statement the following day saying:

> Mr. Acheson has fallen into an error which has been made by quite a lot of people in the course of the last four hundred years, including Philip of Spain, Louis XIV, Napoleon, the Kaiser and Hitler…In so far as he referred to Britain's attempt to play a separate power role as about to be played out, this would be acceptable if he had extended this concept to the United States and to every other nation of the Free World. This is the doctrine of interdependence, which must be applied in the world today, if Peace and Prosperity are to be assured.[101]

Privately, Macmillan recorded in his diary that Acheson was "always a conceited ass, but I don't really think he meant to be offensive…."[102]

Looking back at the Cuban Missile Crisis John Strachey, a Labour M.P., lamented what he felt was the nation's undignified handling of the crisis he declared in *The Observer* that

> I cannot feel that any of us in Britain, Government or Opposition, cut a very distinguished figure in the crisis. Mr. Macmillan's public pronouncements and what one hears about his private reactions, sounded to me rather like those of a fussy old retired nanny, forever calling out: "Oh, oh, Master Jack, do be careful or the bad men will get you!" The role of Britain in this confrontation of the two nuclear powers could only be a modest one. When there was little that we could say which made a difference, might it not have been more dignified to assert our solidarity with our ally, and, for the rest, keep silence?[103]

But even as this self examination began in Britain, few were willing to offer the concession that one journalist made at the end of the crisis: that "most non-Americans

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[99] Evans, *Downing Street Diary*, 224.
[100] Chace, *Acheson*, 406.
[101] Macmillan, *At the End of the Day*, 339-340.

have taken the position for two years now that Americans were making the Castro molehill a mountain and fools of themselves. We should now admit…events have proved us wrong."[104]

Conclusions

It was frequently commented on in the days after the crisis that the Cuban missile crisis had ended as abruptly as it had begun. As brief as it was, the crisis proved to be an acute test of Anglo-American cooperation. The Special Relationship allowed meaningful conversations to take place during the crisis. But on the other hand the Missile Crisis was also an instance where the Special Relationship failed to give Britain an opportunity for consultation before the United States implemented its own plan of action.

The negative reaction of the British public to the crisis is obviously one instance where the Special Relationship broke down. The reasons for the widespread distrust of US actions in Britain can be attributed to several factors, such as memories of the Bay of Pigs invasion, or perhaps memories of the 1956 Suez crisis, where it had been the US who had failed to support its ally.

Despite public discontent, British government contact with the US was frequent and often meaningful. Through the use of personal friendships among government officials Great Britain was able to sustain communications in a far more substantial and meaningful way than any of the other members of the NATO alliance. This asset did give

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[102] Horne, *Macmillan*, 429.
[103] *The Observer*, November 11, 1962, as quoted in DeWeerd, 5.
[104] *The Observer*, October 28, 1962, as quoted in DeWeerd, 17.

Britain eyes and ears in Washington in a time when the strictest secrecy was being observed by Washington.

For Britain, the crisis had exemplified both the Special Relationship's advantages and shortcomings. Given the damaging blows that Anglo-American relations sustained over the remainder of 1962, with first the Skybolt crisis then Acheson's remarks at West Point, 1963 did not promise a blossoming of relations and cooperation between the allies. This situation suggests that the Special Relationship requires good personal relations between the highest government officials of both countries and does not stem from a latent affinity for mutual cooperation arising from shared language, history, and culture. A better explanation might use these supporting circumstances as a reason why the leaders of the United Kingdom and the United States have historically throughout this century been at ease with one another.

Appendix I - Selected British Cabinet and Government Officials

Cabinet Officials

Harold Macmillan	Prime Minister
R. A. "Rab" Butler	First Secretary of State
Lord Alec Douglas-Home	Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs
Peter Thorneycroft	Minister of Defense

Other Officials

David Ormsby-Gore (Lord Harlech)	Ambassador to the United States, d.1985
Sir Harold Caccia	Permanent Under Secretary at the Foreign Office
Harold Evans	Public Relations Advisor to the Prime Minister
Philip de Zulueta	Macmillan's Private Secretary
E. E. Tomkins	Foreign Office Official
Mr. Bligh	Macmillan's Assistant
Hugh Gaitskell	Labour Party M.P., leader of the Opposition.
Harold Wilson	Labour Party M.P.
George Brown	Labour Party M.P.
Sir Patrick Dean	Permanent UK Representative to the UN
Mr. Erroll	President, Board of Trade

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PREM 11/3691/M298/62
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PREM 11/3689
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