

October 1964

The Polyansky Report on Khrushchev's Mistakes in Foreign Policy, October 1964

Citation:

"The Polyansky Report on Khrushchev's Mistakes in Foreign Policy, October 1964", October 1964, Wilson Center Digital Archive, Library of Congress, Manuscript Division, Dmitrii Antonovich Volkogonov papers, 1887-1995, mm97083838, Reel 18. Translated by Svetlana Savranskaya, The National Security Archive.
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Summary:

Excerpt from a report prepared by Politburo member Dmitry Polyansky on Khrushchev's foreign policy mistakes, presented at 14 October 1964 CPSU Central Committee plenum. Polyansky included a scathing denunciation of Khrushchev's "adventurism" in sending the missiles to Cuba, causing the "deepest of crises [that] brought the world to the brink of a nuclear war." Ridiculing Khrushchev's claims of having achieved a successful "penetration" of Latin America, Polyansky dismissed his contention that the crisis had in fact ended with a Soviet victory.

Credits:

This document was made possible with support from Leon Levy Foundation

Original Language:

Russian

Contents:

Translation - English

Now on to the Caribbean Crisis. Cde. Khrushchev stated that Stalin was not able to penetrate Latin America, but he succeeded. However, first of all the policy of "penetration" is not our policy. And secondly, only an adventurer could insist that in the current situation our state could provide real military assistance to the countries of that continent. It is many thousands of kilometers from us, and oceans separate us. How would we transport our troops there, and how would we ship supplies? Missiles will not work in such a case — they would only burn a country we want to help — that's all. You can ask any one of our marshals or generals, and they will tell you that the plans for military "penetration" of South America are just delusions leading to a greater danger of war. And if we, in order to help one of the Latin American countries, had delivered a first nuclear strike against the US, not only would we have made ourselves a target of a [retaliatory] strike, but everybody else would have shunned us.

The adventurism (recklessness) of the policy toward Cuba is particularly obvious in light of all this. In one of his speeches, Khrushchev stated that if the US touched Cuba, then we would deliver a strike against them. He insisted that our missiles be sent to Cuba. That [action] led to the deepest of crises, and brought the world to the brink of a nuclear war; it also scared the organizer of that idea himself greatly. Having no other way out, we were forced to accept all the demands and conditions dictated by the US, including humiliating inspections of our ships by the Americans. The missiles, as well as most of our troops, were withdrawn from Cuba after the US demand.

This event also damaged the international prestige of our country, our party, and our armed forces, while at the same time helping to strengthen US prestige.

Soviet-Cuban relations deteriorated seriously. Castro and the Cuban people understood the withdrawal of the missiles as abandoning Cuba to its fate. Serious cracks emerged in the Cubans' attitude toward us and our country, and we still feel them.

However, you know that Cde. Khrushchev portrays his defeat in the Caribbean Crisis as his victory. Moreover, he intends to proceed in the same manner, i.e. in a reckless manner. Recently he said the following to the members of the CC Presidium: "We should sign a mutual assistance treaty with Cuba. They will scream that it is a reckless action. To hell with them, let them scream."