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Sergo Mikoyan, *The Soviet Cuban Missile Crisis: Castro, Mikoyan, Kennedy, Khrushchev, and the Missiles of November*. Ed. Svetlana Sovranskaya. Stanford: Stanford Univ. Press, 2012. Pp. xxii, 589. ISBN 978-0-8047-6201-4.

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Most histories of the Cuban Missile Crisis (14–28 Oct 1962) treat Fidel Castro as a supporting character at best. In *The Soviet Cuban Missile Crisis*, Sergo Mikoyan (hereafter SM) argues that Castro and his regime were critical to the peaceful resolution of the crisis. SM's father, Anastas Mikoyan (hereafter AM), served as the Soviet Union's representative in Cuba during the crisis. SM seeks to explain his father's actions during the Missile Crisis not only to the Russian people but to an international audience. He argues that AM played a vital part in convincing Castro to accept Soviet removal of nuclear weapons from Cuba in exchange for an American promise not to invade the island. The basis of his in-depth narrative is a selection of fifty of AM's contemporary documents relating to the resolution of the crisis.

SM concentrates on his father's efforts to induce Soviet Premier Nikita Khrushchev to support the overthrow of Cuban dictator Fulgencio Batiste's government in 1959 and to calm Castro's concerns about the Soviet concessions made to quell the secondary crisis of November 1962. SM, who served as his father's executive secretary during his trips to Cuba, later taught at Georgetown University, conducted research at the Institute of Peace at the Russian Academy of Sciences, and participated in many conferences on the Cuban Missile Crisis.

Though SM's book is not meant as a general survey of the Missile Crisis, it is particularly important for its insights into Soviet diplomatic relations. The author's extensive use of primary sources, particularly documents in his father's personal records will appeal to specialists more than a broad audience unfamiliar with the particulars of the Missile Crisis.

SM begins with a sketch of his father's life up to the late 1950s. AM fought in World War I for the Tsarist army, then for the communists in the Russian Civil War. In the 1930s, as the People's Commissar for International Trade, he traveled widely, including to the United States to investigate manufacturing processes. He astutely navigated the perilous political waters of Stalin's Kremlin, even during the dictator's sanguinary purges. He realized that opposition, however loyal, outside of Stalin's government would be ill-advised and instead worked to change the system from within.

After this succinct biographical overview, SM shifts to the evolution of the Missile Crisis, which, he writes, stemmed from the USSR's inattention to Castro's revolution. He maintains that Castro's anti-Americanism was more problematic than his communist politics for President Dwight Eisenhower and US foreign policy makers. However, he fails to discuss in detail Eisenhower's view of the Cold War and the perceived threat posed by a communist leader so close to American shores. He does reveal how the efforts of both Eisenhower and President John Kennedy to influence the situation in Cuba alarmed the Soviets. Indeed, American interest in the Caribbean made Khrushchev eager to help Castro's nascent communist regime. AM first went to Cuba in 1959 to talk about trade relations. This visit, according to SM, convinced Eisenhower that he had lost Cuba to the Soviet Union.

Castro's acceptance of Soviet aid aborted American efforts to establish good relations with the new Cuban regime. AM could offer Castro only \$100 million in assistance, but both men knew much more than this would be required to consolidate the regime. AM discussed various trade opportunities that might give Castro access to the much-needed currency to fund his new state. The military ties between the two states also originated at this time.

It was Khrushchev who introduced the idea of using missiles to defend Cuba and, concomitantly, level the strategic playing field between the Soviet Union and the United States. SM personally witnessed the

development of the crisis from the Soviet perspective. Although his father doubted the wisdom of deploying missiles, he did not speak out when Khrushchev floated his idea before the Presidium, hoping (in vain) that Soviet military leaders would quash the notion. SM treats in depth the process of transporting the missiles to Cuba, quoting at (too great) length military officials and bureaucrats involved in the mission. The paucity of analysis here leaves the reader at sea in an overwhelming plethora of firsthand experiences.

When President Kennedy learned of the missiles in Cuba, he was furious, and a panicky Khrushchev tried to defuse the situation. SM elucidates the confusing communications between Kennedy and Khrushchev about what exactly each party was proposing or consenting to. For example, Khrushchev's rushed letter to Kennedy did not mention the US Intermediate-Range Ballistic Missiles (IRBMs) in Turkey, while the Soviet Foreign Ministry's letter demanded that they be part of the solution to the crisis. This left it to Kennedy to decide that Khrushchev's letter was the "official" document.

In his haste to resolve the standoff, Khrushchev did not consult Fidel Castro, who learned of the decision to remove the missiles from Cuba only *after* the message went to President Kennedy. SM recounts his father's attempts during November to smooth Castro's ruffled feathers. This forms part of his case for the role of his father and Castro in ensuring a peaceful final resolution of the crisis. But he never identifies just what leverage Castro might have exerted to stop the impending removal of the missiles.

In chapters 8 and 9, SM casts new light on the negotiations between Castro and AM to resolve the matter of the tactical nuclear weapons and short-range bombers still in Cuba. The Soviets wanted all nuclear warheads off the island, while Castro expected to keep the tactical weapons and bombers. SM credits his father with settling these issues peacefully. Again, however, he does not explain how Castro's objections could have stopped the Soviets from removing the weapons. It was a most delicate situation:

First, [Anastas Mikoyan] had to convince the Cuban leadership that Cuba's security had been assured and that there was no danger of invasion, even though the missiles were being removed. At the same time, he had to explain the situation in which Khrushchev did not consult or inform Castro beforehand of the decision to remove the missiles from Cuba in exchange for Kennedy's promise of nonaggression toward Cuba. This was absolutely necessary in order to continue with productive negotiations, so the Cuban side would listen to the arguments without immediately rejecting them because of hurt feelings; and so it would agree to certain concessions without which the Kennedy-Khrushchev agreement would be invalid. (196)

SM has made a valuable addition to the historiography of the Cuban Missile Crisis by his application of Soviet source material in English translation,¹ vividly evoking the problems his father had to wrestle with. Unfortunately, the documents he adduces all come from AM's own collection. Though extremely significant in and of themselves, they fall short of giving the broader viewpoint needed for a true contextual understanding of the tricky and dangerous diplomatic maneuvers between Khrushchev, Mikoyan, and Castro. And, too, SM fails to achieve his ambitious goal of showing that his father and Castro were major players in averting war and defusing the Missile Crisis. Castro in fact could play only a single card—denying access to international inspectors charged with verifying the removal of the missiles, an obstructionist move that did not markedly alter the outcome of the conflict. A mere pawn in a struggle between superpowers, Castro could not prevent the withdrawal of nuclear weapons from Cuba, however much he might resent his exclusion from the critical negotiations that brought the world back from the brink.

1. For another, more comprehensive, study adopting the Soviet perspective, see Aleksandr Fursenko and Timothy Naftali, *One Hell of a Gamble: Khrushchev, Castro, and Kennedy, 1958–1964: The Secret History of the Cuban Missile Crisis* (NY: Norton, 1998).