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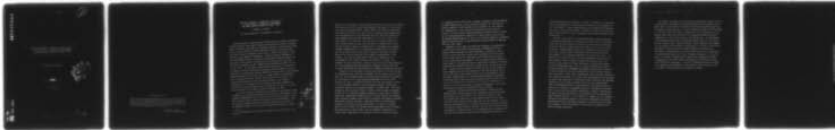
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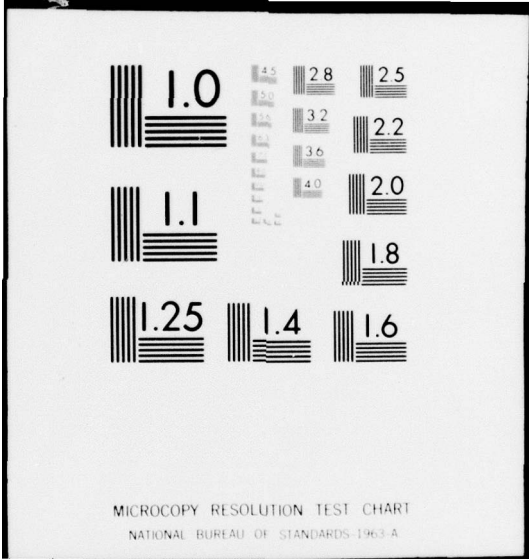
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REVIEW OF HERBERT S. DINERSTEIN, 'THE MAKING OF
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THE JOHNS HOPKINS UNIVERSITY PRESS, 1976),

10 Benjamin S. Lambeth

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REVIEW OF HERBERT S. DINERSTEIN, *THE MAKING OF
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THE JOHNS HOPKINS UNIVERSITY PRESS, 1976)*

Benjamin S. Lambeth

The Rand Corporation, Santa Monica, California

The Cuban missile confrontation of 1962 bears the singular distinction of being the most extensively studied political-military crisis of modern times. Given the vast amount of literature which has already been written on that crucial episode in Soviet-American relations, one would think that there would be remarkably little more to add in the absence of significant new documentary information. Professor Herbert Dinerstein of the Johns Hopkins School of Advanced International Studies, however, has shown that fresh perspectives applied to the existing data can still yield novel insights into the complex Soviet deliberations which led up to the crisis. In this major study which has been close to a decade in the making, Professor Dinerstein consciously detaches himself from the mainstream of conventional wisdom, implicitly rejects many of the prevalent hypotheses adducing the Soviet move to a simple desire on Khrushchev's part to upgrade the Soviet nuclear force posture "on the cheap," and presents an argument depicting the missile gambit as the organic culmination of a systematic Soviet foreign policy design against the United States and Latin America whose origins may be traced as far back as the overthrow of the Arbenz regime in Guatemala in 1954.

In a sense, Professor Dinerstein has written not one book but three. In addition to treating the missile crisis itself, he also dwells on the seemingly independent themes of Cuba's rise to socialism and the evolution of Soviet policy toward Latin America since the mid-1950s. Given his prefatory admission that the volume was originally conceived as an expanded version of an article he had previously written on Soviet

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policies in Latin America without specific reference to the missile episode, some readers may feel that the study meanders from topic to topic without any consistent unifying theme. Other readers interested in the missile confrontation primarily as a case event in strategic decisionmaking and crisis management may become impatient with the elaborate intellectual side arguments which precede consideration of the crisis itself (the study warms to its theme only after 150 pages of gradual analytical brick-laying) and may protest that the book is inappropriately titled. The book remains, however, a serious work of scholarship whose complex argument depends heavily on the methodical reconstruction of Moscow's pre-crisis dealings with Castro which Professor Dinerstein provides. Whatever one may conclude about the ultimate persuasiveness of that argument, the careful reader cannot help but be impressed by the thoroughness of the textual analysis upon which it is based. At a minimum, the book constitutes a classic case study in the Kremlinological art of developing broad-gauge hypotheses regarding Soviet policy calculations from deductive interpretation of Communist documentary materials.

Reduced to its essentials, the principal thesis of the book is that the deepening Soviet political involvement with the Cuban socialist movement and the concomitant growth of broader Soviet geopolitical interests in Latin America which began gathering momentum in the late 1950s provided not only a lucrative *opportunity* but also the primary *rationale* for the systematic buildup of Soviet-supplied weaponry in Cuba that eventually resulted in the missile showdown of October 1962. The story begins with the toppling of Arbenz' nascent leftist regime in Guatemala in 1954 by U.S.-supported indigenous proxies, an event which Professor Dinerstein claims had the long-run effect of assuring that the embryonic Cuban socialist movement would follow a virulently anti-American developmental path, thereby offering a ready-made hotbed of revolutionary potential for Soviet political exploitation. It goes on to depict Castro's rise to power, the gradual Soviet-Cuban embrace that followed, the abortive Bay of Pigs affair, and the subsequent expressions of Soviet verbal commitment to the defense of Cuba as successive stages

in a seamless web of events which, through a compound of opportunism and outright misperception, led the Soviets to believe (a) that they had finally achieved a solid toehold in Latin America, (b) that further U.S. meddling was in fact deterred by declaratory Soviet nuclear threats, (c) that placing offensive missiles in Cuba would be a natural way of lending definitive credibility to those threats, and (d) that the Kennedy Administration--in view of its previous display of irresolute behavior during the Bay of Pigs operation--would actually let them get away with such a move.

Needless to say, given the persistent shortage of authoritative "inside" data on the private deliberations of Khrushchev and his advisors which preceded the Soviet deployment of missiles to Cuba, there is no way that this account can be regarded as the final word on the crisis, and one can reasonably raise questions about many of its key propositions and judgments. For one thing, despite his meticulous canvass of the pertinent Soviet open-source literature, Professor Dinerstein has obviously been able to explore only the tip of the iceberg. Forced by the constraints of Soviet secrecy to rely solely on those fragments of data (one hesitates to call them evidence) available in the Soviet press rather than on the hard documentary record one would ideally prefer for venturing high-confidence explanations, he has been left to build his case on material which heavily obscures the real intentions and calculations of the Soviet leadership and which may in fact have had only a tenuous relationship to the actual premises which privately informed the Soviet decision.

Moreover, Professor Dinerstein has tended to assume that the numerous public declarations he cites faithfully mirrored the underlying objectives of the Soviet elite; that the authors of those declarations were made privy to the momentous move that was afoot; that both Castro and the Soviet media were not only brought in on the intimate planning details of a highly clandestine operation involving core Soviet national security interests but were also allowed (indeed encouraged) to broadcast hints of the impending event in advance; and that the entire body of Cuban and Soviet declaratory rhetoric was

supremely orchestrated from above to provide a foundation of legitimacy for the establishment of a Soviet nuclear presence in the backyard of the United States. These assumptions may not be patently unreasonable, but they are far from self-evident, and there is much in the record of past Soviet political practice to generate valid skepticism about their plausibility.

Finally, in his effort to portray Khrushchev's missile decision as the natural outgrowth of previous Soviet interests in establishing a political-military sphere of influence in Latin America, Professor Dinerstein may have assigned excessive weight to the goal of shoring up Castro's regime against further U.S. intervention in comparison with other, possibly more transcendent, objectives bearing little relationship to the immediate geographic setting of the crisis. It should not be forgotten that at the time Khrushchev was planning his grand design, Soviet strategic programs were moving at best at a desultory pace, Soviet strategic inferiority to the West had become a widely acknowledged fact, and U.S. defense spokesmen were openly discussing plans for a MINUTEMAN and POLARIS posture which threatened to leave the Soviets even more outdistanced in the strategic balance than ever before. Under these circumstances, which Professor Dinerstein only cursorily addresses, the Soviets were extraordinarily hard-pressed to project some appearance of initiative toward offsetting the impending expansion of U.S. forces, and their concern in this regard almost surely overshadowed whatever collateral desire they may have had for staking out a position of tangible influence in hemispheric diplomacy. This is not to say that Professor Dinerstein is wrong in underscoring the Cuban political connection as an important factor in shaping the Soviet missile decision. It is, however, to suggest that his argument--impressive and elegant though it is--has not altogether convincingly repudiated the more traditional explanation of the decision as having been grounded, first and foremost, in the context of bilateral U.S.-Soviet strategic relations.

↳ The reviewer finds that this book

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Obviously, no review of this brevity can do adequate justice to such a major work of scholarship as Professor Dinerstein has produced, and it must remain to the reader to provide the detailed assessment which lack of space has prevented here. It can be asserted, however, that *The Making of a Missile Crisis* will find a lasting place in the literature of the October 1962 crisis and will have to be carefully pondered by future commentators on that crucial event in the nuclear age. It illuminates in unprecedented detail the relationship between Moscow's Cuban policy and the ultimate Soviet missile decision, offers important new insights into the timing of the decision, and provides a fascinating speculative discussion of possible Soviet internal factional infighting over alternative strategies once the venture broke down into a confrontation of countervailing resolve. It also conforms scrupulously to accepted rules of evidence, displays proper modesty where ambiguity dictates circumspection, and shows seemly cautiousness in advancing its admittedly provocative hypotheses. As such, it deserves attention not only as an important re-examination of the missile crisis itself, but also as a model of sophisticated micro-political analysis.

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