

Britain's Reaction and Attitude towards the Cuba Missile Crisis

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Abstract: The Cuban missile crisis broke out in 1962. For the first time, human beings were put on the verge of nuclear destruction. There are many researches on this crisis, mainly focusing on the reasons and effects of the victory of the United States; The reason and influence of Soviet compromise; The reason why the Soviet Union chose to set up missile bases in Cuba; The theory of crisis management. The research perspective is mostly confined to the Soviet Union and the United States, while there is little discussion on the response of non parties such as Britain to the crisis. Therefore, this article talks about the reaction and attitude of Britain in the Crisis. The article is divided to two parts: the reaction of the common people and the reaction of the British government.

Keywords: Cuba missile crisis, British government, Reaction

1. Introduction

Studies on the Cuban missile crisis mainly focus on studying it as an important event in the history of the cold war. In the 80s and 90s of the last century, Russia, as a party to the cold war, began to decrypt and disclose a large number of historical documents. The United States has also published about 80% of the secret documents during the crisis [1].

This greatly stimulated the research enthusiasm of scholars. The Woodrow Wilson International History Project of the United States established the Cold War International History Project in 1991, which promoted the in-depth study of the cold war history. However, most of the treatises on the Cuban missile crisis are still analyzed and demonstrated from the perspective of the United States or the Soviet Union. Moreover, "Most studies on the Cuban missile crisis are historical descriptions rather than theoretical analyses [2]."

This paper does not examine the crisis from the perspective of traditional research. But from the perspective of Britain, one of the "bystanders" of the crisis, to study its response to the Cuban missile crisis. Secondly, this paper not only discusses the British government's response to the Cuban missile crisis, but also discusses the British people's response to the crisis. The cited literature is mainly the reports of the major British newspapers at that time. Furthermore, in the research of the Cuban missile crisis, many discussions attach too much importance to a single case and seek objective narration and explanation of historical facts. However, through the study of this topic, this paper hopes to discuss Britain's response, countermeasures, gains and losses in the Cuban missile crisis.

2. Main Part

Britain's response to the Cuban missile crisis: Britain's response to the Cuban missile crisis mainly includes two aspects: the response of the people and the response of the government. Due to moral considerations and the influence of anti war sentiment after the World War 2, most people attacked the nuclear race and hegemonism of the United States and the Soviet Union; The British government's response to the Cuban missile crisis is mainly based on its own national interests, advocating the peaceful resolution of the crisis and avoiding the situation from getting out of control.

2.1. British People's Response to the Cuban Missile Crisis

Before the Cuban missile crisis broke out, the British people did not seem to care much about the affairs of the Caribbean Sea. This can be seen from the reports of the major newspapers at that time. In October 1962, the political reports of the major newspapers, including the Times, the Daily Mail and other major newspapers, mainly focused on the border conflict between China and India, with almost daily follow-up reports and comments. On the contrary, the response to the Cuban missile crisis was slow. The Times did not officially report the crisis until October 23.

When the intensity of the crisis soon exceeded many people's expectations, the British people began to pay attention to the crisis that was enough to trigger a "nuclear winter". The starting point and motivation of people's response were different from those of the government. The government mainly considers national interests, security and other factors, while the public and public opinion often came from the consideration of morality, habits, subjective likes and dislikes.

The British people's response to the crisis is mainly reflected in the following three aspects:

1) British people's doubts about the action taken by the United States: On October 24, 1962, the US blockade of the Soviet Union officially began. That night, British Foreign Secretary Holm used the photos provided by the United States to Britain in a television speech. Kennedy also said that he would distribute more photos of Soviet missile deployment to newspapers around the world. Some British people questioned the authenticity of the photos and the effectiveness and legitimacy of the United States embargo against Cuba. In the letter from the people published in the Times on October 25, 1962, A reader named Mertymán pointed out: "Not long ago, armed forces equipped and funded by the United States invaded Cuba. Does Cuba have no independent power? President Kennedy complained about Soviet weapons in Cuba, but what about a series of bases around the Soviet Union? It is time to end this double standard of political morality. The United States is wrong and very dangerous [3]." Another man named Soleyman commented: "No matter how much the United States does not like the missile base on its own doorstep, at the same time, the American base is in Turkey." [3].

Some parties also questioned the policies of the United States. In the Times on October 25, 1962, there was an article entitled "The Labor Party claims that the United States has double moral standards in its actions", which pointed out that the Labor Party Committee expressed its doubts about the United States blockade of Cuba yesterday (October 24) They were "seriously concerned" about the decision of the United States. Some commented that the questionable criteria would lead to serious conflicts in the Caribbean or other regions of the world. They also sharply criticized the lack of interaction between the United States and its allies and further consultations with the United States Congress. They also stated that they would not accept the evidence that Cuba had deployed long-range missiles. If that was true, it would indicate that the United States and other countries in the Western Hemisphere were facing serious, new and potential threats The United States claims that Cuba has a long-range missile base that must be inspected on the spot. The statement pointed out that various bases are abundant in the adjacent areas of the United States and the Soviet Union, and each has a complete ability to destroy the world. Any tension on nuclear weapons and any provocation that challenges the principle of peaceful coexistence are reprehensible. So. British diplomacy must

quickly focus on bringing matters back to the negotiating table. The current crisis shows the serious danger hidden in the arms race. It is necessary to reach an agreement to abolish the means of delivery of nuclear weapons and other disarmament measures [3].

2) Concerns about threats from the Soviet Union and Britain's security problems: Britain has been pursuing an independent nuclear deterrent force, which is not only a factor for realizing the status of a major country, but also considered their own security strategies, mainly in the face of threats from the communist world of the Soviet Union. After the Soviet Union launched the Satellite, it caused a great psychological shock to the British government and the British people, and the Cuban missile crisis aggravated the British people's concern about the security situation in Britain. A letter from a reader named Klein published in *The Times* on October 25, 1962 said: "The war has ended, and the Western Allies have been demobilized. The Soviet Union has more than five million heavily armed troops, who are occupying Poland, East Germany, Czechoslovakia, Bulgaria and Romania at this time. Nothing will stop the Soviet army from staggering Western Europe, just as it controls Eastern Europe. If it is not for the resistance of the United States air base, they will do a good job in this cause [3]." Another person named Bloch also pointed out: "The American base established many years ago is to resist the threat of the powerful Red Army. The entire Western defense strategy relies on this unstable military balance. Due to unique geographical factors, Russia can use its or its mid-range rockets in satellite countries to attack any target in Western Europe, the Middle East and Japan, while the fragile alliance of the United States is difficult to provide effective protection [3]." He also held that although the Russian missile base in Cuba can hardly be compared with the US base in Turkey, it still poses a great threat to the security of the United States and Western Europe. The Soviet Union's progress in nuclear means of delivery, the Soviet Union's troops stationed in Eastern Europe, and the Soviet Union's step by step during the Berlin crisis, even the Soviet Union's support for the national liberation movement in the Third World made some British people distrust the Soviet Union and the socialist world. After the Cuban missile crisis broke out, the British people showed their concern about the Soviet invasion of Europe and the nuclear war. They were also pessimistic about their own security situation.

3) The voice of pacifism of British people: After the war, Britain longed for a peaceful development environment. Although the British economy developed rapidly under the impetus of the Marshall Plan, the decline of the traditional British Empire was an indisputable fact after all. From the partition of India and Pakistan in 1947, to the Suez Canal crisis in 1956, and then to the autonomy of a large number of colonies, Britain's status has been completely incomparable with that of wartime. According to an article titled "There are 501263 unemployed people now", "Since last week, more than 500000 people in Britain have lost their jobs, which has led to the worst unemployment since the 'recession winter' from 1958 to 1959. The unemployment rate on October 15 was 2.2%, compared with 1.6% a year ago [3]." Therefore, the domestic people's hope for peace mainly includes the following considerations: the decline of Britain's strength and status, and the development of a peaceful international environment; Reflection on the lingering fear of World War II and frustration in the Suez Canal crisis; Ethical considerations; Concern about the nuclear age, which was capable of destroying the whole earth. Some British people commented that "Today, no one doubts that the arms race will bring serious consequences. In the current serious situation, what is needed is not a meeting of heads of government to explore the real causes of the Cuban crisis, but to know how to end the crisis." Some people also show a certain isolationist mood and dislike the struggle for hegemony between the United States and the Soviet Union. After the United States imposed a blockade on Cuba, some British people believed that "occupation" was just a land war term, and "blockade" was just an occupation of a country from the sea. The United States blockade of Cuba had nothing to do with us [3]. This also reflects the British desire for peace from another perspective. In the Cuban missile crisis, most British people would rather believe that "the Atlantic front is still silent now. Perhaps we are not on the brink of war [4]."

2.2. British Government's Response to the Cuba Missile Crisis

Some scholars believe that after the end of World War II, the honeymoon relationship of the special relationship between Britain and the United States ended, especially the "treachery" of the United States in the Suez Canal crisis. The restrictions of the United States on Britain's independent nuclear forces, etc., indicating that there are huge differences between Britain and the United States, so the British diplomatic system has become more independent in the future. This can be seen from some events. For example, when Macmillan visited the Soviet Union in 1959, he once aroused the displeasure of the United States. Therefore, some scholars believed that in the Cuban missile crisis, although Britain was seemingly consistent with the United States, in fact, it was more based on the realistic considerations of its own interests, thus showing great independence. However, the facts show that the so-called rift in Anglo American relations at that time actually seemed exaggerated. Although Britain experienced the humiliation of the Suez Canal crisis and endured the constraints from the United States in its pursuit of independent nuclear power, Britain quickly completed its repositioning and quickly eliminated the existing rift in Anglo American relations. For various reasons, Britain and the United States actually returned to the honeymoon period soon, at least in the Macmillan period. "During Macmillan's reign, Britain completed the transition from strength to influence. He decided to attach British policy to American policy and skillfully handle relations with Washington to expand Britain

The selection range of MacMillan never argued philosophical arguments or ideas, and rarely publicly challenged the major policies of the United States. He gave up the central stage to the United States and retreated behind the scenes to try to control the content of the whole play [5].

The outbreak of the Cuban missile crisis made it difficult for Britain to stay out of the situation, because not only was the security of its allies threatened, but also Britain itself felt that the crisis could lead to the terrorist consequences of nuclear destruction. At the beginning of the crisis, the United States and the Soviet Union were tit for tat and would not give in to each other, and the cold war was very likely to escalate into a hot war. And it's nuclear hot war. The United States and the Soviet Union in crisis are much like the "coward's game" in the game theory of international relations. The coward's game is similar to an American film. In the film, two young people drive cars to each other at high speed, and both let their left wheels press the highway lane. If both people keep the same direction. The result can be imagined that it must be a negative sum game; If one of them turns right first and the other keeps the direction, the former will lose face among friends, and the latter will win honor. If both of them turn at the same time, the reputation of "coward" will fall on both of them [2]. The Cuban missile crisis is just like such a "coward" game. The United States and the Soviet Union are such two crazy young people. Other countries are spectators standing near the midpoint of the road. Britain stands in a prominent position in the front row. He can choose to be a spectator or take a ride in one of the cars. If this game becomes a negative sum game leading to nuclear war, even if Britain is only a spectator, it will be shattered. So Britain must make a choice. Facts show that Britain chose to take the American car, cooperate closely with the United States and support the strategic choice made by the United States. What's more, even France, which was very independent after the war, chose to firmly support the United States in the crisis. Not only that, the British government also called for and sought a peaceful solution to the crisis, and played a unique role in the solution of the crisis.

1) The British Government and the United States have maintained close cooperation and consultation: Long before the Cuban missile crisis broke out, the British government exchanged views with the United States on issues related to the Caribbean Sea. On September 30, 1962, Kennedy and Rusk held talks with British Foreign Secretary Holmes. The United States and Britain agreed that the current situation in Cuba is very serious, and the two sides also discussed ways and means to jointly curb the further expansion of communism in the Caribbean Sea. During the crisis, the United

States sought wider support from its allies. In Europe, Acheson and other representatives of the United States government informed French President Charles de Gaulle and German Prime Minister Adenauer of the actions to be taken by the United States, and briefed NATO. Western European countries generally expressed understanding and support for Kennedy's action. Macmillan, Adenauer and Charles de Gaulle quickly and openly supported the position of the United States. NATO also passed a resolution demanding that the Soviet Union withdraw its missiles [6]. Kennedy also said, "The support of our NATO allies - it is also important that Hedenner, Charles de Gaulle and Macmillan quickly and openly support our position. They undoubtedly accepted the facts we stated and unreservedly and openly supported our position [7]." Throughout the Cuban missile crisis, the United Kingdom maintained close contact and consultation with the Kennedy Government. Kennedy also contacted Macmillan every day on the crisis and often met with British Ambassador Olmsby Gore. On October 21, Kennedy met with Al Gore at the White House. Gore expressed his support for the blockade of Cuba and assured Kennedy that Britain would have a sympathetic response. Later that day, Kennedy even explained directly to Macmillan that he felt that he had to make the first decision himself in order to act safely and quickly, but from now on he hoped that the United States and Britain would maintain the closest contact [6].

Kennedy also plans to send American Ambassador to Britain David Bruce to give a more detailed report to Macmillan on October 22, and bring the main contents of his speech on the evening of October 22. Kennedy asked Britain to cooperate closely with the United States, pointing out that, "This very dangerous and provocative action of the Soviet Union has obviously caused the most serious crisis, and we will have to act together most closely in this crisis... I hope we can and should maintain the closest contact, and I also know that with the cooperation of our other allies, we will resolutely face this challenge." On the same day, Macmillan replied to Kennedy: "Of course, we will provide you with all possible support in the Security Council. I hope you will immediately provide us with some of the best legal examples that you can put forward in order to support our general moral position, so that our representatives can effectively help you." On October 23, Bruce made a detailed report on the development of events to Macmillan, clarified the position of the United States, and also brought Kennedy's public statement to the American people on the evening of October 22 and his letter to Macmillan. Kennedy said in his letter: "We must be prepared to go through a period of trial together. It is extremely satisfying for me personally that we can keep in close contact with each other at this moment through a quick and steady way. I intend to let you know my thoughts fully at any time as the situation develops." In the letter, Kennedy proposed to convene an emergency meeting of the United Nations Security Council, and hoped that Macmillan could instruct the British representative in New York to actively cooperate with the American representative and immediately speak in support of the American proposal. On the same day, Macmillan called again to express his support for Kennedy's actions, although he still believed that the best way to solve the crisis was a summit. thereafter. Under Kennedy's persuasion, Macmillan no longer hesitated. During that week, his advice and support were firm [8]. On October 24, although Macmillan had no plans to visit the United States, he met with American Ambassador David Bruce before implementing the blockade. They talked for about 40 minutes [3]. In response to the public's doubts about the authenticity of the photos provided by the United States, the British government claimed that it did not fully rely on the intelligence of the United States. According to its own intelligence, it was "completely and 100% convinced" that the American inference was credible. According to a report in *The Times* entitled "The Alliance cannot be shaken, so said Macmillan": "Since the Congress adjourned until Tuesday, today the Prime Minister clarified the British government's attitude towards the situation in Cuba and expressed firm support for President Kennedy's action. It seems to be right without doubt. He(Macmillan) also said that the Russian actions were deliberate risks. It is beyond its capacity to challenge the ability and determination of the United States [3]."

2) The British government seeks a peaceful solution to the crisis: During the Cold War, Britain often actively eased the tension between the East and the West as an interlocutor between the United States and the Soviet Union, and served its national interests. A typical example is that in 1962, Britain actively promoted the partial Nuclear Test Ban Treaty, which gave Britain special rights and status different from other European countries, and became one of the three nuclear powers in the world at that time. Therefore, during the crisis, the British government not only kept consistent with the United States on major issues, but also kept close consultations on developments and supported the decisions made by the United States. At the same time, Britain is not only a "small partner" depending on the US policy, but also has its own interests and security considerations. It hopes that the crisis between the US and the Soviet Union can be resolved peacefully. After the crisis broke out, Macmillan said: "I must say that I feel that there are two points that must be considered. First, there should be no vacillation and division in the alliance, because that may also be the original intention of Russia to do so. Second, it must be ensured that no solution is blocked. I think it would be better to use the American solution now." It can be seen that supporting the United States and seeking a peaceful solution to the crisis are the two main countermeasures of the British government [3]. After the crisis broke out, Macmillan believed that the first thing to do was to stop the Soviet Union's construction of bases. If this proposal was accepted, it must be subject to international verification [3].

On the evening of October 23, Kennedy talked with British Ambassador to the United States Ormsby Gore. During the talks, Ormsby Gore persuaded Kennedy to make public photos of missiles in Cuba. He also suggested that, since Khrushchev would not make a decision easily, if he had more time to ask, he might easily go down the stairs with dignity. So why don't we intercept closer to Cuba and give the Russians more time? Of course, if Cuban aircraft try to interfere, they can be shot down. Kennedy immediately endorsed the proposal [6]. After the beginning of the Cuban blockade, the United Kingdom still sought a peaceful solution to the crisis when conflicts between the United States and the Soviet Union were very likely to break out. On October 24, Kennedy proposed in a telephone conversation with Macmillan. "Should Cuba be taken?" The next day, Macmillan answered: I considered the important question you raised on the phone last time. After consideration, I think things are very difficult to control. Although there may be a situation where it is necessary to take such action, I think we are still at such a stage: that is, you should try to achieve your goal by other means [8]. Macmillan said in his statement to the House of Commons: "Of course, the British government believes that this new threat should be resolved as soon as possible, and will increase its support for any measures to achieve this goal. The British government also believes that, based on some easing of the current tension, it is also possible to resolve this threat through wider consultation [9]." Macmillan's attitude showed. Britain did not want the United States and the Soviet Union to go to war, because then Britain and Europe would be involved in a big war or even a nuclear war. However, Britain's military strength, including nuclear power, obviously cannot effectively resist the "onslaught from the socialist camp". Although it was impossible to know whether the British proposal worked, Kennedy assured Macmillan on October 26 that he would not take drastic actions, such as bombing or invading Cuba, until Macmillan was informed [10]. In the crisis, Kennedy also accepted the persuasion of Ormsby Gore to narrow the blockade line from 800 nautical miles to 500 nautical miles from Cuba's territorial sea.

At noon on October 28, Macmillan wrote to Khrushchev. He expressed that Britain supported the US request for the Soviet Union to withdraw missiles from Cuba. Shortly after the letter was sent, Khrushchev agreed to withdraw the missiles under full supervision and inspection. The Cuban missile crisis will soon end. Macmillan also suggested in the letter that a nuclear test ban should be reached [3].

3. Conclusion

To sum up, the British government was involved in the Cuban missile crisis. The main response is to support the United States and seek a peaceful solution to the crisis. The United States has strong support from Britain, France and other allies. In a sense, it is also a factor that forced the Soviet Union to compromise. Britain's support for the United States also exceeded that of other allies. Some scholars pointed out that none of the support of Charles de Gaulle and Adenauer reached the level of Macmillan. In a crisis. The United Kingdom has also won a status different from that of other European countries. Ambassador to the United States Ormsby Gore is also the only foreigner invited to the high-level meeting of the National Security Council of the United States. Therefore, close exchanges between the United States and the United Kingdom have played a role in resolving the crisis.

The Cuban missile crisis is not only a tense nuclear confrontation between the United States and the Soviet Union, but also brings the world to the brink of a nuclear war. As an important ally of the United States, Britain has its own interests in the crisis. It also plays a unique role.

After the crisis broke out, a considerable part of the British people showed a pacifist mood, not only questioning the evidence of the existence of missiles in Cuba. It also questioned the rationality and effectiveness of the blockade policy adopted by the United States. At the same time, it also shows concern about the outbreak of a nuclear war. The British government's response to the Cuban missile crisis is mainly reflected in two aspects: one is to stand firmly on the side of the United States and support its decision-making; The second is to seek a peaceful solution to the crisis.

As a non party to the Cuban missile crisis, Britain has played a certain role in the peaceful settlement of the crisis. But more importantly, Britain's choice in this crisis has achieved the goal of safeguarding its own interests and security, and also provided a reference for non parties to deal with the crisis.

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