

# The Cuban Missile Crisis

- On the Brink of Nuclear War -



# CUBAN CRISIS - BACKGROUND



During the Spanish-American War in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the US gained control of Cuba.

Americans were supporting a rather corrupt regime under Fulgencio Batista, by the time the 1950's rolled around.

Batista had seized power illegally in 1933.



# CUBAN CRISIS - BACKGROUND



The Americans completely controlled the Cuban economy. In every major Cuban industry they held controlling interests.

The sugar industry was the most important. While the economy of Cuba was really productive when compared with other countries in Latin America, the wealth was not distributed fairly.



# CUBAN REVOLUTION



**January 1, 1959**

Many attempts had been made to try and reform the system peacefully. But by the late 1950's, it was obvious that no economic or social progress would avoid a violent revolution.

A lawyer, who had a liberal nationalist political background, organized a guerrilla force in the mountain regions. His name was Fidel Castro.



# CUBAN REVOLUTION



On January 1, 1959, Fidel Castro and his forces overthrew the Batista regime.

In the beginning the government was only slightly left-wing. It was made up of a mixture of Marxists and liberals.



# CUBA & THE USA



The relationship Cuba had with the USA did not take on a confrontational tone right away.

As the year continued, American-owned factories and plantations in Cuba became nationalized by Castro.

That was when it was obvious that Cuba and the USA would be enemies. America made the first move in July of 1960, when they stopped buying Cuban sugar.



# TRADE AGREEMENT



Castro signed a trade agreement with the U.S.S.R in February, 1960. The deal would see Cuban sugar going to the USSR, and aid and weapons going to Cuba.

To a certain extent, the USA had driven the Cubans straight into the arms of the Soviets.

In January of 1961, America broke off all of their diplomatic relations with Cuba.



## BAY OF PIGS



President Kennedy inherited a plan from Eisenhower. It called for American support of Cuban exiles, to re-take and recapture Cuba.

The CIA was majorly involved in this event.

The Americans offered their military base in Guatemala as a marshalling ground.





# BAY OF PIGS



But...they did not offer any troops or air support.

The not-so-well-planned invasion attempt happened in April, 1961. The small force of 1400 Cuban patriots were shamed by the Cuban forces...seeing as how none made it to shore.



# BAY OF PIGS



It was a MAJOR embarrassment for the USA.

Castro announced that Cuba was a Marxist state soon after.

The break with the USA was complete.



# THE MISSILE BUILDUP



The U.S.S.R. decided to deploy missiles in Cuba, in the spring and summer of 1962.

Why Khrushchev made this decision is unknown, but there are some possible explanations:

1. The Soviet Union was now far behind in the “space race.”



# THE MISSILE BUILDUP



America was capable of launching I.C.B.M.'s (inter-continental ballistic missiles), but the Soviet range was limited to certain targets in Europe.

Khrushchev could equalize the situation if he got away with missile bases in Cuba.



# THE MISSILE BUILDUP



The U.S.S.R. and Cuba feared an American Invasion.

Sound evidence for this fear was the Bay of Pigs incident.

Certain documents have been released in the 1960's, proving that the USA really did have military plans for a invasion of Cuba.



# THE MISSILE BUILDUP



While these plans surely existed, be aware that the Pentagon had numerous plans for the invasion of many places. That is what military planners do.

(iii) Perhaps if the Soviets were to put missiles next door to the U.S.A., Khrushchev could convince the U.S.A. to remove missiles in Turkey.



# FIRST HINTS



.... *Thirteen Days.*



## SIGNIFICANCE OF THE CRISIS



The obvious, cannot be ignored. Both superpowers had a nuclear arsenal that could end life on earth.

That created significance each and every time the superpowers confronted each other.

However, this conflict was different from others in the Cold War because...





# SIGNIFICANCE OF THE CRISIS



It was military and direct.

Protected by submarines, Soviet ships were fast approaching the American Navy.



# SIGNIFICANCE OF THE CRISIS



Other conflicts during the Cold War had been once-removed... with the USA against one of the U.S.S.R.'s clients and vice versa.

It had a nuclear focus.

Other crises, like Berlin, weren't directly about the deployment of nuclear weapons.



# SIGNIFICANCE OF THE CRISIS



It was pure Brinkmanship.

Kennedy's need for a complete victory increased the possibility of a direct military confrontation.

The manner in which Kennedy handled the “two letters” and the issue of the missiles in Turkey shows that he was practising brinkmanship.



# SIGNIFICANCE OF THE CRISIS



Brinkmanship is a form of diplomacy where the participants take events to the brink, or edge.

Some see the Cuban missile crisis as a form of “nuclear chicken”...where the point of the game is to see who will back down first.

Khrushchev finally agreed to remove the missiles at the height of the crisis. “We've been eyeball to eyeball and the other fellow just blinked,” was how Dean Rusk, Secretary of State put it.



## SIGNIFICANCE OF THE CRISIS



Another valid metaphor is that Kennedy “stared Khrushchev down.” But in the process, the whole world was on the edge of a nuclear war.

Kennedy came out of this with an enhanced reputation. Before, this kind of high tense showdown had only been seen in the movies.



## RESULTS OF THE CRISIS



Kennedy and Khrushchev set up a direct phone line between Washington and Moscow.

Communication between the two leaders had been very slow, since the letters needed translation.

The first letter that Kennedy received at the height of the crisis took six full hours from the time it was sent, to the time Kennedy read it.



# RESULTS OF THE CRISIS



Both agreed that to start a war, because communication was slow, would be stupid.

This hotline is often called the “red phone.” In reality, the phone was black.

Nine months later, both Kennedy and Khrushchev agreed to sign an atmospheric test ban treaty.



# RESULTS OF THE CRISIS



As a result of the crisis, Cuba became a Soviet satellite.

Khrushchev was dismissed as a Soviet leader in October, 1964.

The main reason for his dismissal was his poor showing in the Cuban Missile Crisis, although there were some other domestic problems caused by Khrushchev that factored in as well.

