

# Cuban Missiles Jolted U. S. Into New Era

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For seven days in October a lightened world contemplated a specter of nuclear catastrophe.

The week of high tension began Monday, Oct. 22, 1962, just 10 years ago, when the President of the United States announced to a startled nation a direct challenge to the Soviet Union: a blockade of Soviet vessels.

That was the Cuba missile crisis. It is likely to be credited by future historians with having applied the severe shock treatment that jolted the two superpowers into a new era and eventually produced radically different relations between Moscow and Washington.

Ten years ago the two glared at one another through nuclear gun sights.

TODAY, in the wake of a visit to Moscow by the President of the United States, the Russians are buying huge quantities of American grain and eagerly inviting U. S. technological know-how to help exploit their resources.

What about the source of the shock treatment? Fidel Castro's Cuba no longer is producing crisis headlines. In fact, it seems to some students of Soviet affairs that the Russians would be gratified if they could find a convenient way of shearing away Fidel's power.

It was a close thing, 10 years ago. As President John F. Kennedy himself put it at one point in the developing

drama, it could have gone either way.

FOR THE NATION as a whole, the drama had begun with the President's sudden television appearance that Monday night, Oct. 22. For the President and his advisers it had been a much longer siege.

Actually, it had begun for the White House and official Washington early in September with U. S. intelligence reports of suspicious-looking emplacements in Communist-ruled Cuba. The President ordered photographs of the entire island and high-flying U-2 planes carried out the mission.

What they brought back was evidence that some sort of military buildup was going on.

By Oct. 15, analysis confirmed Washington's worst suspicions, and in an atmosphere of crisis the President met with his chief defense, security and intelligence advisers to discuss what to do about it.

SHOULD the United States sit back and wait? That would suggest U. S. weakness and irresolution in the face of a threat. It would strengthen Premier Nikita Khrushchev's position.

Should the United States blockade Cuba and challenge Soviet ships bringing in the offensive equipment? That would mean risks.

Nobody could say what the Soviet reply might be, or whether, in return, the Russian might kick up a mighty crisis elsewhere — say in di-

vided Berlin.

MEANWHILE, the United States began a buildup of airpower in the Southeast. About 5,000 Marines put to sea. About 40 U. S. warships converged on the Caribbean area.

Outwardly, a look of calm prevailed at upper levels of the White House, Pentagon and State Department. Routine went on as usual. Behind scenes, the tension mounted swiftly.

President Kennedy met Oct. 18 for 2½ hours with Andrei A. Gromyko. The Russian foreign minister assured him the only Soviet military aid to Cuba was of a defensive nature.

The President now knew better. Two days later, having agreed with his advisers that blockage should be the response, he ordered preparations to go forward.

HE PREPARED to make the announcement at 7 P. M. Monday, Oct. 22.

America's allies around the world were filled in.

The Organization of American States would be called into session.

A letter would be drafted for Khrushchev.

One hour before Kennedy was to go on television with his fateful announcement, Secretary of State Dean Rusk summoned the Soviet ambassador, Anatoly F. Dobrynin.

Ambassador Dobrynin was his usual expansive, smiling

self on arrival. When he left the secretary 25 minutes later he was pale and shaken.

The President went on the air. He told Americans of a "secret, swift and extraordinary buildup" of Soviet missiles in Cuba, called it a deliberate and unacceptable provocation and revealed his orders for a quarantine of all offensive weapons for Castro. Soviet ships carrying such equipment would be turned back.

**KENNEDY USED** the word "quarantine," but it was blockade, and in international law, blockade is an act of war.

The United States — and the world — were stunned. So was Moscow. For 13 hours there was no response. Then a Kremlin statement, fuming about an unheard-of violation of international law, indignantly denied that offensive weapons had been installed in Cuba.

It was a nervous-sounding statement, however, betraying shock at having been caught red-handed.

The blockade took effect officially at 10 A.M. Wednesday, Oct. 24. At that time 25 Soviet merchant ships were heading toward Cuba and that night they were still on course.

**MOSCOW** said Kennedy's demands were unacceptable, but Khrushchev eagerly agreed to a proposal by U Thant, then acting U.N. secretary-general, that both sides halt all these activities for two or three weeks to permit talks.

Washington was cold to the proposal. It would not back down from its basic demand that nothing could be accomplished by negotiations until the Russians agreed to dismantle and remove the missiles.

On Thursday came the news that 12 of the 25 Soviet merchantmen had turned around.

Still, the crisis was far from ended. In the U.N. Security Council, Ambassador Adlai E. Stevenson challenged the Soviet delegate to answer "yes or no" whether Russian missiles were being placed in

Cuba.

**HE WOULD**, Stevenson said, "wait 'till hell freezes over" if necessary, for the answer. Then he produced huge blown-up photos of the damning evidence.

U. S. intelligence reported work on the Cuban bases now was proceeding at top speed, suggesting the Russians were trying to make them operational. The tension rose.

The Americans stepped up pressure by halting a Soviet merchantman, boarding and searching it and then letting it proceed.

The United States was prepared to bomb the bases only as a last resort and never seriously considered invasion, but the Kremlin couldn't know that.

**MESSAGE** after message cracked over wires between Washington and Moscow until at 4 A.M. Moscow time Oct. 27, Khrushchev implied he would withdraw the missiles if Kennedy would lift the blockade.

For a while Washington breathed easier. Then came another message on Saturday: Khrushchev would trade the missiles in Cuba for NATO missile bases in Turkey. Had he been overruled by his military?

The White House responded that it could not reply to conflicting proposals, nor would it negotiate while work continued on the Cuban bases.

**A NEW AND HIGHLY** dangerous element was added to the crisis. Shooting had begun.

A U-2 plane was missing over Cuba. Antiaircraft fired on another U. S. Reconnaissance craft. Fidel Castro, almost apoplectic with rage, was firing off all manner of oratorical threats. Washington called up 14,000 air reservists.

The White House now informed Moscow it would lift the blockade if Khrushchev would remove the weapons under U.N. supervision. In return Kennedy would promise not to have Cuba invaded.

**AT A MOMENT** when it seemed a nuclear clash might be around the corner, Moscow radio on Sunday morning

broadcast a message — Khrushchev's fifth to Kennedy who in turn had sent five to the Soviet leader.

Khrushchev announced he had ordered work on the bases stopped. He would



**JOHN F. KENNEDY**  
... 'either way'

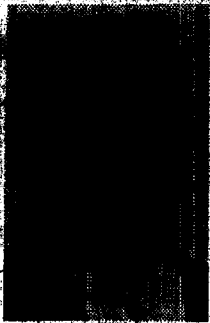
agree to U. N. supervision for the crating and shipment out of the weapons. He accepted the pledge of no invasion.

It was over at last. Kennedy called the Khrushchev decision "statesmanlike." The world drew a long breath of relief.

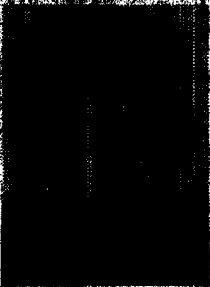
**IN THE DECADE** since, Castro's influence has declined in Latin America. He has run into one economic difficulty after another. The Russians armed him, free of charge, at great expense and by this year were spending \$750 million a year to support his always troubled economy.

Castro never was at any pains to hide his resentment of Soviet withdrawal of those missiles.

He had ranted at Anastas Mikoyan, sent to Cuba to calm him down. He had thrown pro-Moscow Commun-



KHRUSHCHEV  
tough red-handed



FIDEL CASTRO

ists — what he called the "microfaction" — out of his hierarchy where he could and purged some of them.

He had defiantly said he would go his own way as the leader of Latin American revolution.