

Cuban Missile Crisis | A1 Sample Answer

Cuban Missile Crisis: Notes

Cuba is a small island that is located 90 miles off the coast of Florida, USA. It had always been a US ally and had held US military bases there. There had also been many US corporations set up there. The USA supported Batista, the dictator there.

In 1959 there was a revolution led by Fidel Castro and he overthrew Batista. He then established a communist government. He took over all US corporations, much to the dismay of the Americans.

The US was determined to fight back. They cut off diplomatic relations with Cuba in January 1961 and decided to invade in April. This was called the Bay of Pigs and turned out to be a resounding failure. 1400 anti-Cuban exiles attempted to overthrow Castro but it would have never worked. The Cuban people were actually more supportive of Castro than the Americans could have ever guessed: he was meeting their needs and many Cubans were very anti-American. The rebels were not supported and the Bay of Pigs ended in an embarrassing defeat for the Americans.

By autumn 1962, Cuba was receiving 1000s of missiles, planes and other weapons from the friendly USSR. The USSR was interested in Cuba because it was a new, flourishing communist state and because it was so close to America. It provided a necessary launch base for Russian missiles, similar to the ones America was keeping in Turkey.

In October 1962, a US U2 spy plane took photos of what was identified to be a USSR missile base in Cuba. Ships were also spotted heading to Cuba from the USSR carrying more weapons. They were worried it could be finished in less than a week so they had to act fast.

On the 20th of October, JFK decided that blockading Cuba was the safest way to act. He publicly called on the USSR leader, Khrushchev, to remove these weapons and call off the delivery but he refused to even acknowledge it existing. As the ships from the USSR approached the blockaded zone, it seemed America was minutes away from full out war with the USSR. But, in a turn of luck, Khrushchev ordered the ships to turn back around.

However, work continued on the missile sites in Cuba, much to Kennedy's dismay. However Khrushchev then offered to stop all work on these missiles in return for a removal of the blockade and the threat of the US invading Cuba. He amended this later to order the removal of missiles from Turkey too. After a US U2 plane was shot down over Cuba, Kennedy agreed the first terms but still refused to remove the missiles in Turkey and the missiles in Cuba were dismantled.

Cuba remained communist and heavily armed after this but no longer had nuclear weapons that would severely threaten America. A permanent hotline was set up between the White House and the Kremlin in case of further disputes. This crisis showed that the alternative of co-operation and containment worked, mainly because the threat of nuclear war was far too severe.