

Cuban Missile Crisis | Topic Notes

Castro comes to power

Cuba had been a holiday destination for rich Americans – economy was dominated by US.

Fidel Castro overthrew **General Batista**.

Many executions.

He took over American-owned companies.

Many fled to America. Domestic pressure was put on US government to act against Castro.

Eisenhower administration placed a trade embargo on Cuba.

In 1961, Kennedy approved a plan to help Cubans overthrow Castro.

CIA trained 1500 men – they landed at the **Bay of Pigs**, but were easily defeated.

Very embarrassing for the US. Castro responded by declaring Cuba socialist.

The crisis begins

Cuba went to the USSR for help resisting the US.

Khrushchev *secretly* placed medium-range nuclear missiles in Cuba to defend it.

Also it helped the USSR to catch up in the arms race – most US cities were within range.

However, the US found out quickly (noticed more Soviet ships, U-2 plane took photos).

The disaster and its resolution

The US could not allow this – Kennedy ordered secret meetings with a special group (**Executive Committee of the National Security Council – EXCOMM**) to discuss tactics.

Options:

- Bomb the missile sites – could lead to Soviet military retaliation.
- Invade Cuba – could be seen as the US bullying Cuba.
- **Blockade Cuba** (prevent Soviet ships from arriving at Cuba) – put pressure on Khrushchev without humiliating him, allowed for diplomatic solution.

Kennedy called a press conference to tell the world about the missiles and the blockade, and to call on Khrushchev to stop the “threat to world peace”.

People panicked because of the potential conflict.

Soviet ships stopped.

Negotiations:

USSR offered to remove them if US promised not to invade Cuba.

The next day, they added the condition that the US had to publicly remove their missiles from Turkey.

Relations further worsened when a U-2 plane was shot down over Cuba.

Secretly, **Robert Kennedy** offered USSR a promise not to invade Cuba and to remove their missiles from Turkey in six months.

Khrushchev was extremely worried about the crisis, and so agreed.

Thaw in Cold War

The leaders were shocked into reducing tensions.

Hotline established between Kremlin and White House for emergency communication.

Negotiations on limiting nuclear weapons testing began.

Test Ban Treaty was signed – banned tests in atmosphere, underwater, and in space.

Limited arms race, reduced environmental impact.

However, tensions still continued

Fought for allies in decolonised countries, on opposite sides in Arab-Israeli conflict.