

US History

The Cold War – B

Learning Target:

I can evaluate the evolving performance of JFK in dealing with the Soviets from the Bay of Pigs to the Cuban Missile Crisis.

3. The Cuban Missile Crisis

Causes of the Crisis

Soviet Insecurity –

- Soviet Union had fallen behind in the arms race
- Incapable of striking the US mainland with offensive weapons
- US had also installed offensive weapons in Turkey

Possible Cuban Invasion –

- Fidel Castro feared a possible US invasion
- Asked the Soviets for help and embraced the idea of nuclear weapons

The Crisis Begins

- October 1962 – US spy planes show missile sites being built in Cuba
- Capable of handling medium & long range nuclear missiles
- Missiles not believed to be in place yet - Incorrect
- They would be capable of hitting most of the United States

Kennedy's Options –

1. Bomb the missile sites
2. Launch an invasion
3. Blockade Cuba and insist that the sites be dismantled

Kennedy's Choice –

- Kennedy eventually chooses to blockade Cuba and calls it a quarantine
- Used the term quarantine because it was more diplomatic
- Received tremendous pressure to launch an air strike against Cuba
- Learned from his Bay of Pigs experience

Kennedy Addresses the Nation –

- Monday, October 22 at 7:00 PM Kennedy came on TV
- Explained the situation to the nation and announced the quarantine
- Also gave a warning that any launch would be considered an attack by the Soviet Union and the US would retaliate immediately
- The speech infuriated Khrushchev and he considered the quarantine an act of war

Tension Increases –

- Soviet ships carrying missiles were headed towards Cuba
- For almost a week world on brink of nuclear war
- Khrushchev does not break the quarantine and has his ships turn around

Two Offers

First Offer –

- Khrushchev sends an impassioned appeal to Kennedy to end the conflict
- Offers to remove the missiles if the US publicly announced to never invade Cuba

Second Offer –

- Khrushchev second letter has a more formal tone
- Speculated that Soviet hard-liners pressured him to take a more aggressive stance
- Added the condition that the US needed to remove their missiles from Turkey

Turkey Missiles –

- Kennedy could not publicly remove these missiles from a NATO ally
- Privately Kennedy had wanted to remove the outdated missiles anyway
- Khrushchev had backed Kennedy into a corner
- Kennedy could ask no more of Khrushchev and could also not accept the offer

A Deal Is Reached

- Kennedy decides to respond to the first letter as if he never received the second letter.
- Khrushchev accepts Kennedy's offer and a deal is made with the following conditions

1. US would not invade Cuba
2. USSR would remove missiles
3. US would privately remove Turkey's missiles at a later date

Conclusions

1. A successful and diplomatic application of Containment
2. JFK learned from his mistake of weakness at Bay of Pigs