

Today, the Cuban Missile Crisis is remembered as the zenith of cold war tensions, the embodiment of a conflict that was always on the brink of catastrophe. While life ultimately went on as it had before, the Crisis was an incredibly important event for both the Cold War and the future of negotiations surrounding nuclear weaponry, as it was the closest the world has ever come to mass nuclear warfare. The negotiations of the Crisis had a profound effect on the future relationship between the United States and the Soviet Union, as both sides learned valuable lessons which would shape their future strategies in diplomacy and decision making.

The diplomacy of the Crisis was far from polished, as the US attempted to defuse a situation the Soviets had initiated and continually complicated. Although Soviet leader Nikita Khrushchev claimed to be instrumental in the peaceful resolution of the Crisis, he was, in fact, the opposite, as his actions only worsened it, increasing the tension in a situation already involving the fate of the world. We see this in how he lied about Soviet activity in Cuba, overestimated his negotiating power, sent conflicting messages to American President John F. Kennedy, and in how Kennedy's handling of the crisis shows the Soviet leader's role in the exacerbation of the Crisis.

The Cuban Missile Crisis was the result of a series of miscues, mostly by the Soviet Union, the most significant of which was their shipment of several missiles to the newly Socialist island of Cuba, the act that brought the conflict to a head. In 1959, Fulgencio Batista, who had been the Cuban dictator for seven years, was ousted by a group of young Socialist revolutionaries, led by Fidel Castro. This change in power was primarily a function of the Batista administration's disintegration, as the revolutionaries were able to seize power without military confrontation. Castro's main focus was to separate Cuba completely from the United States, because during Batista's rule, the dictator had allowed the United States to essentially take control of Cuba through their Embassy (Pope 3). This caused Castro to start his Socialist movement, which he saw as the best way to separate Cuba from the capitalist, and, as he saw it, imperialist, United States. Cuba, however, was not ready to be completely independent: they still lacked the necessary infrastructure and supplies to function on their own, so they turned to their socialist compatriots, the Soviets. Soviet aid began in 1960, when they set up a 'trade-for-aid' agreement, effectively trading Cuban sugar (and some money) for Soviet equipment, and was substantial by the beginning of 1962. After the trade-for-aid agreement had been established, Castro proceeded to seize all United States-owned oil refineries that refused to process Soviet oil, and later, all United States property in Cuba (Pope 5). In response, the United States cut off most of their Cuban sugar importation. A divide was formed, as the United States was clearly uncomfortable with Cuba's socialism, a feeling that would manifest itself in the Bay of Pigs invasion.

In April of 1961, John F. Kennedy had just taken office, and Cuba

had gone socialist two years before. In the final years of his administration, Dwight D. Eisenhower initiated a plan for an attack on Cuba, with the goal of killing Castro. It was called the Bay of Pigs, the name of the inlet where the invasion was planned to begin. The United States used 1,500 Cuban exiles trained by the CIA, who set out to invade and instigate a revolution that would overthrow the Castro regime. Unfortunately for the United States and their CIA operatives, their goal of starting an insurrection did not gain popular support from the general Cuban population as they had hoped, instead, they were greeted by the Cuban military, who had managed to acquire intelligence of the invasion in advance. After several hundred were killed, Kennedy considered sending in air support, but ultimately decided to cut his losses and leave the remaining 1,113 men to be taken prisoners. They were only returned after the Crisis, in exchange for \$53 million worth of food and medicine for the still-developing country (, "Bay of Pigs Invasion,").

The failed attack at the Bay of Pigs caused the Soviet Union to reevaluate their role as allies of Cuba, to start considering assuming the role of a protector against the United States. It also caused the divide between the United States and Cuba to grow drastically, as Cuba grew towards a style of socialism closer to the Soviet Union, "s. In response, Kennedy made it clear that the United States, " goal of ending socialism in Cuba would not be ended by the failure of the Bay of Pigs; he was not keen on allowing socialism to threaten capitalism in western hemisphere (Pope 7). Khrushchev, "s response was the missile plan. He thought of it randomly in April of 1962, as a way to protect Cuba, but more importantly, to balance the nuclear power struggle between the United States and Soviet Union (Frankel 9-10). The plan accomplished both of these goals efficiently, and, Khrushchev believed, effectively.

The Soviet Union was falling far behind the United States in the development of nuclear weapons; their long-range missiles, known as ICBMs (Inter-Continental Ballistic Missiles), were too weak to reach the United States from the Soviet Union, while the United States, " missiles could reach the Soviet Union easily. In addition, the United States had missiles in Turkey as part of a NATO base, adding to their nuclear power over the Soviets. Unbeknownst to the United States, Khrushchev sent 36 MRBMs (Medium-Range Ballistic Missiles) with 24 mobile launchers, 21 IRBMs (Intermediate-Range Ballistic Missiles) with 16 mobile launchers, and 144 anti-aircraft launchers, as well as miscellaneous weaponry and a few hundred soldiers to install all of it (Frankel 15-16). Khrushchev had been worried that Castro would not comply because he wanted independence, but ultimately Khrushchev was able to persuade him, showing Castro the progress it would make with the defense of Cuba and spread of communism.

The shipment of the missiles began during the summer of 1962. The United States noticed an increase in Cuban military activity, and by August and September, reports of nuclear missiles in Cuba began to come in to the United States. Kennedy made it clear that if such rumors were true, "the

gravest of consequences would arise, (Coleman). They were confirmed on October 14, when a United States U-2 reconnaissance plane captured images of long, thin, cylindrical objects covered in canvas at a Cuban military base. Analysts soon confirmed that they were MRBMs, easily within range of the United States. Days later, the presence of IRBMs was also confirmed, but by then the United States had already formed an Executive Committee to deliberate on what action to take, and had begun to mobilize for a possible invasion of Cuba.

Before we look at the failures of Khrushchev's diplomacy, we must first look at the United States' decision to set up a blockade, or a "quarantine," as the Soviets called it, of Cuba, which prevented any more materials to be shipped into or out of the country, as it was the focus of Khrushchev's early negotiations. Faced with the Soviet missiles, Kennedy and the ExComm were forced to make difficult decisions regarding how to respond. Their ultimate goal was to have the missiles removed, and to accomplish this, they deliberated on three main options (Gibson 75). Their first option was to attempt to resolve the conflict in a purely diplomatic fashion, likely at a conference with Khrushchev in person, but this was deemed too passive (Garthoff 30). This left the other two options: a blockade, or a direct attack on Cuba through an airstrike or, less likely, an invasion. The latter was supported by many of the war hawk ExComm members, including McGeorge Bundy, C. Douglas Dillon, John McCone, Maxwell Taylor, and even John's brother Robert F. Kennedy, who wanted either an airstrike or a land invasion (Gibson 79). As the discussion progressed, however, the idea of a blockade, first suggested by Robert McNamara (who had originally advocated for an airstrike), was adopted by John Kennedy as choice. He saw it as the only way to get what he wanted from the Soviets with the lowest risk of instigating a nuclear war. He was then able to gain enough support in the ExComm to go through with it, while continuing to prepare for any military action that hopefully would not be necessary. On the Soviet side, Khrushchev's confidence was still high, and it would remain high going into his negotiations with Kennedy.

The roots of Khrushchev's worsening of the Crisis are in his initial interaction with the United States surrounding Soviet activity in Cuba, which was filled with lies and deception. We know the decision to defy the United States was his own, because when he was warned by one of his advisors, Anastas Mikoyan, that the United States would have an inflammatory reaction to the presence of missiles in Cuba, he responded by saying they would "make a fuss, make more of a fuss, and then accept" (Frankel 11). The Soviets then proceeded to lie outright to United States officials about his activity in Cuba. Days before the crisis had begun, United States Attorney General Robert F. Kennedy had been told by Soviet Embassy counselor Georgi Bolshakov that "no missile capable of reaching the United States will be placed in Cuba" (Garthoff 27). This was after Kennedy had been told by Andrei Gromyko, Soviet Minister of Foreign Affairs, that there would be no "offensive arms" in Cuba. Gromyko did

not, however, make any statements about defensive weapons. With this approach to the conflict, Khrushchev demonstrated the excess of confidence he had in the power of his weapons: he believed that their presence would put the United States at his command, a belief he would carry into his early negotiations with Kennedy.

With a foundation based in lies and presumptuousness, Khrushchev's early diplomacy continued to exacerbate the Crisis, as his letters to Kennedy showed no willingness to compromise. Kennedy was the first to reach out; he sent a letter to Khrushchev on October 22 while he addressed his country on national television, informing them of the nature of the Soviet activity in Cuba (Pope 21). In the address, he made known his plans for a blockade of Cuba, saying,

A strict quarantine on all offensive military equipment under shipment to Cuba is being initiated. All ships of any kind bound for Cuba from whatever nation or port will, if found to contain cargoes of offensive weapons, be turned back (Kennedy, "Cuban Missile Crisis Address to the Nation").

Kennedy's first letter was a clear, concise document, written after meeting with the ExComm several times since the 16th, demanding that Khrushchev remove the missiles as soon as possible, saying, as he had previously when he had heard the first rumors of missiles, saying, "I made clear that...the United States would not tolerate any action on your part which in a major way disturbed the existing overall balance of power in the world" (Kennedy October 22). He also insinuated that the United States was prepared to engage the Soviets in combat if they did not comply. Any hope for a quick and easy resolution was erased by Khrushchev's response. Khrushchev's letter of the following day was one of incredible defiance and confidence, as he attempted to use the new balance of power he perceived to his advantage.

The United States has openly taken the path of grossly violating the United Nations Charter, path of violating international norms of freedom of navigation on the high seas, the path of aggressive actions both against Cuba and against the Soviet Union...naturally, neither can we recognize the right of the United States to establish control over armaments which are necessary for the Republic of Cuba to strengthen of its defense capability (Khrushchev October 23).

Kennedy responded later that day, in a brief letter in which he pointed out to Khrushchev that he had initiated the current events by furtively sending the missiles to Cuba, and asked again for Khrushchev to respect the quarantine. The Soviet leader responded the following day, in a long message explaining his views and feelings, still as confident in the negotiating power of the Cuban missiles as he was in his first letter. His thesis was that the United States had "flung a challenge" (Khrushchev October 24) at the Soviets, and with the quarantine they were "setting

forth an ultimatum and threatening that if we do not give into your demands you will use force.,À He then turned to a more colloquial, intimate style of writing, asking Kennedy to imagine himself in his place, saying, ,ÀI think that in your own heart you can recognize that I am correct. I am convinced that in my place, you would act the same way.,À Then, giving the same argument as he had in his letter of October 23 surrounding the United Nations Charter, Khrushchev stated that he would not instruct Soviet captains to recognize the United States,À blockade, calling it ,Àpiratical.,À His argument then began to fall apart when he accuses the United States of quarantining Cuba for ulterior motives, including considerations for United States elections (Khrushchev believed that Kennedy,Às aggressive response was a function of a desire to appeal to his political opponents for the November elections) imperialism, and hatred of the Cuban people and their government, statements that, based on the lack of support provided by Khrushchev, were only speculation¹. The conclusion clearly demonstrates his aforementioned confidence, stating that he was prepared to take any action deemed necessary against the blockade, and that the Soviets ,Àhave everything necessary to do so.,À After Kennedy,Às response to this, his letter of the 25th, in which he simply stood his ground, we see a dramatic shift in Khrushchev,Às communication. Gone was his confidence, as his bluff had been called by Kennedy. In his next letter to Kennedy, Khrushchev was suddenly willing to compromise his positions in exchange for a peaceful agreement (Khrushchev October 26). The next section will look at this offer, along with the conflicting one Khrushchev sent immediately after, in more detail.

In this next stage of diplomacy, a backpedaling Khrushchev tried to get out of the conflict without making the mistakes of his initial correspondence too obvious. Nevertheless, he failed at this as well, sending a pair of conflicting offers for a resolution of the conflict, which only led to confusion for the United States and further aggravated the Crisis. The first, sent on October 26, was the conclusion of message focused on Khrushchev,Às newfound desire for peace. He maintains parts of his argument, for instance, that the missiles were meant solely for defensive purposes, stating that they were clearly not meant for invasion, because only troops were capable of this, and they were clearly not to be fired only to destroy, because ,Àthose who destroy are barbarians, people who have lost their sanity,À (Khrushchev October 26). Despite going on for a while on these points, Khrushchev does back down from them, recognizing Kennedy will never take them as the truth. From this, he proposes a simple resolution to the crisis, offering a promise that no more missiles would be sent if the United States promised not to attack Cuba or assist in attacking her. Then, Khrushchev said, the armaments would no longer be necessary for defending Cuba, and would be removed. This is a remarkable change from where Khrushchev stood only one letter earlier, when he threatened the United States and refused to observe their blockade, showing the Soviet leader,Às realization that the presence of the missiles in Cuba

did not bolster his negotiating power, as he had hoped. This proposal likely would have led to a quick and easy resolution had Khrushchev not made the situation even more complicated with a second offer, sent the next day, which negated the progress that had been made towards a solution.

Before Kennedy could respond to Khrushchev's first offer, Khrushchev sent another one on the 27th that made no reference to the first. It began with praise for Kennedy for his response to United Nations leader U Thant's proposal, which was essentially the same as the one Khrushchev had suggested. He then went on a long-winded complaint about the United States' military presence around the Soviet Union, especially the missiles they had in Turkey, all of which was not mentioned in the previous letter. He questioned the fairness of Kennedy's demands surrounding the Cuban missiles, saying, "you have the right to demand security for your own country and the removal of all weapons you call offensive, but do not afford the same right to us...This is irreconcilable" (Khrushchev October 27). This new position was apparently a response to a Washington Post article by Walter Lippman, from which the Soviets felt there were implications that the United States would be willing to make such a deal involving Turkey (Gibson 139). This deal called for Kennedy to remove his missiles from Turkey along with a promise not to invade or interfere with Cuba, while Khrushchev promised to do the same for Cuba and Turkey, respectively (Khrushchev October 27). In the larger picture, however, Khrushchev knew that those missiles, and that NATO base, were obsolete, which we will see later when he accepts a deal from Kennedy that does not include the Turkey deal (at least publicly). Furthermore, Kennedy had already planned to remove them months before the Crisis (Pope 17). So by bringing up Turkey in this second offer, it is clear Khrushchev was making a desperate attempt to save his image as a negotiator, to avoid the weakness portrayed in his first offer. This selfish act only heightened the tension of the Crisis for no reason, as Kennedy and the ExComm were then forced to decide how to respond to Khrushchev's enigmatic proposals.

We continue to see how the diplomacy of Khrushchev worsened the crisis by looking at how it affected the American leaders. Within the ExComm, there was major controversy which proposal to respond to, adding to the stress that had been building throughout the Crisis. The main point of disagreement within the committee was whether Khrushchev would accept anything without the Turkey clause; Kennedy predicted that no, they would not, while much of the ExComm believed the Soviets would still accept a response to the first proposal. Robert Kennedy was one of the chief supporters of responding to the first letter, a plan known as the "Trollope Ploy"; in ExComm's deliberations on the subject, he said, regarding "I think we just say he made an offer and we accept the offer" (Gibson 154). The transcripts of this deliberation also suggest that Robert had more support within the ExComm, as it got to the point where he jokingly suggested Kennedy leave so the rest of them could go forward with their response. Despite the opposition he faced, Kennedy stood firm in his

belief that Khrushchev would not accept any deal without a promise to remove the Turkey missiles, so while he satisfied his advisors by responding chiefly to Khrushchev, his first offer in his response of the 27th, he made sure to recognize that the second letter had been sent, and mention that after the deal had been carried out, they could work towards a more general arrangement regarding other armaments (Khrushchev October 28 Letter to Kennedy). He did not stop there, however; after the letter had been approved, Kennedy met with a small group within the ExComm, as he was still uneasy with the amount of consideration given to the Turkey missiles, and instructed his brother Robert to tell Soviet ambassador Anatoly Dobrynin that Kennedy would remove the missiles once the crisis was resolved (Pope 17). While Khrushchev did accept Kennedy's proposals, the effort Kennedy had to put forth and the uncertainty he had to deal with during his deliberations demonstrate the extent to which Khrushchev increased the intensity of the Crisis. If Khrushchev had been consistent and stuck with the proposal his first letter, the tension created by the second letter would have been eliminated, and a resolution would have been reached much sooner.

With the conclusion of the negotiations, we must look at how a peaceful resolution was reached, and how the road reaching it was lengthened and twisted by Khrushchev. The main reason Khrushchev's diplomatic action prevented the sides from easily reaching a peaceful resolution is that his role in the conflict was that of a fraud. We see this in his recounting of the Crisis in a speech given to a Soviet audience, where he expressed that he considered the outcome to be a success for the Soviets, in that they accomplished their goals of protecting Cuba and avoiding a nuclear war. In his explanation of the resolution, he acknowledged that the United States was reasonable in the process, but makes it seem like he had scared them into making the deal, saying, "if the American armed forces kindled war in Cuba, and if Cubans and Soviet people were consumed in this conflagration, then no force could restrain the Soviet Union from a crushing retaliating blow." (Khrushchev Report on the International Situation). This, we know, is extremely inaccurate. Harold Macmillan, Prime minister of Great Britain at the time of the crisis, believed that Khrushchev was forced to extract the missiles, in fear of a US invasion, and decided to cut his losses rather than risk losing Cuba (Pope 234). Khrushchev also does not mention the ways in which he prolonged the Crisis through his early correspondence and enigmatic proposals.

The only possible way Khrushchev could be seen as a helpful force in the resolution of the crisis is through an examination of his correspondence with the other leader involved in the Crisis: leader Cuban Dictator Fidel Castro. Castro, Khrushchev's ally in the conflict, advocated for an invasion of the United States. After the Bay of Pigs invasion, Castro believed that the future of Socialist Cuba was in jeopardy, because the Americans were focused on destroying it, because

Americans would never accept a Communist country so close to them (Blight, Lang, Whyte, and Masutani 27). In a letter to Khrushchev on October 26, Castro told Khrushchev that he believed „aggression (by the United States) is almost imminent within the next 24 to 72 hours,“ (Castro October 26). He went on to state that in the event of such an invasion, they would need to „eliminate such danger forever through an act of clear legitimate defense.“ Khrushchev, „was not one of support for a violent defense, but one of calming instruction. He told Castro „not to be carried away by sentiment and to show firmness,“ (Khrushchev October 28 Letter to Castro). While this correspondence shows Khrushchev, „willingness to prevent the Crisis from becoming any worse, it does not come close to outweighing all the ways he did make it worse. Furthermore, by the time he sent the letter to Castro on October 28, he had already been assured by Kennedy that the United States would not invade Cuba, removing the possibility of a need for soviet involvement, and from the aforementioned thesis of Harold Macmillan, we know Khrushchev had no desire to stand up to a United States invasion.

The Cuban Missile Crisis was a defining moment for the two leaders involved; a positive one for Kennedy, the man who rectified the disaster, and a negative one for Khrushchev, who ignorantly aggravated it. The Crisis has served as a learning experience for all international conflicts that have arisen since it happened, and will continue to provide valuable lessons for the future, evident in the fact that no similar conflicts have occurred since. For the Soviets, the most important lesson has been that „crisis avoidance (is) better than crisis management,“ (Garthoff 127), referencing Khrushchev, „lack of intelligence in initiating and prolonging the Crisis. On the American side, the focus has been on conflict management, and the necessity of compromise in the resolution of any contentious situation, not that Kennedy failed in this, but that he exemplified the favorable results of not pressing one, „power too far. The Crisis also demonstrated the importance of direct communication, as it was essential to a harmonious resolution to the Crisis. However, with this resolution and the way it played out, Khrushchev came away as the villain, as he continually added stress to a conflict that did not need any more of it, and did nothing to help solve it.