

THE AMERICAN PERSPECTIVE

On Tuesday morning, October 16, 1962, shortly after 9:00 o'clock, President Kennedy called and asked me to come to the White House ... [I]n his office, he told me that a U-2 had just finished a photographic mission and that the Intelligence Community had become convinced that Russia was placing missiles and atomic weapons in Cuba.

That was the beginning of the Cuban missile crisis—a confrontation between the two giant atomic nations, the US and the USSR, which brought the world to the abyss of nuclear destruction and the end of mankind.

R. Kennedy (1971), *Thirteen Days*, W.W. Norton, New York, p. 1.

THE SOVIET PERSPECTIVE

I want to make one thing absolutely clear: when we put our ballistic missiles in Cuba, we had no desire to start a war ... our principal aim was only to deter America from starting a war. We were well aware that a war which started over Cuba would quickly expand into a world war ... Our goal was precisely the opposite: we wanted to keep the Americans from invading Cuba, and, to that end, we wanted to make them think twice by confronting them with our missiles. This goal we achieved—but not without undergoing a period of perilous tension.

N. Khrushchev (1977), *Khrushchev Remembers*, Penguin, London, p. 528.



Fidel Castro, 1959

THE CUBAN PERSPECTIVE

... it was a strategic issue, it was necessary for the socialist bloc, to strengthen the socialist bloc, and if we wanted the socialist countries to fight for us, we could not refuse to provide this cooperation ... to the socialist bloc... [W]e unanimously agreed on the issue of the missiles in spite of all the disadvantages we thought it would entail. We were aware of them, but we were not that concerned about Cuba's image with other governments, because in general those governments in Latin America were more or less manipulated by [the] US.

Fidel Castro (1992), recording from the 'Reflections on a Crisis', a tripartite conference on the Cuban Missile Crisis held in Havana, 9–12 January. Recorded by the Havana Cuba Vision Network.

THE UNITED NATIONS PERSPECTIVE

The Cuban Crisis was presented to the Security Council in October 1962 during the meetings of what were known as the 45 neutral countries. On 24 October U Thant, the Secretary General of the United Nations, decided to make an appeal to the three powers, Cuba, the USSR and the United States.

I called upon Premier Khrushchev to suspend the arms shipments to Cuba voluntarily for two or three weeks ... President Kennedy to lift the quarantine voluntarily ... then I called upon Your Excellency to voluntarily suspend the construction of the missile bases ... [T]he following day I learned that Soviet ships are approaching the quarantine area. I sent a second appeal to Premier Khrushchev and to President Kennedy asking them to avoid a direct confrontation on this matter ... On the same day I send you a letter [about] the suspension of missile base construction in Cuba ...

<http://www.marxists.org/history/cuba/archive/castro/1962/11/02.htm>

- 1 How does Robert Kennedy describe the beginning of the crisis?
- 2 What was Khrushchev's goal in placing the missiles in Cuba?
- 3 What reasons does Castro give for agreeing to the Soviets?
- 4 Assess the effectiveness of the United Nations in the crisis.
- 5 Using all four perspectives and the known facts, assess who was responsible for the crisis and give reasons for your interpretation.