



Background
Guide



HCC:
CUBAN MISSILE
CRISIS

2023

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Letter from the Executive Board

Greetings Delegates,

The Executive Board of the Historical Committee welcomes you to Orpheus MUN 2023. The EB hopes that you all are in good health and ready for the committee. We aim to make this as comfortable an experience for you as possible. Please do not refrain from sharing your doubts with us. As senseless as they might seem to you, trust us, even we had them when we were beginners. Your confidence will grow gradually as you get familiar to your surroundings in committee. Come with an open mind, and most importantly come with a willingness to try. It is our personal experience that public speaking is really compelling. Give yourself that first chance and it will grow on you.

This guide has been created to serve as a starting point to your research and to give you a brief overview of the subject matter. We would highly encourage you to research well. Know that the background guide is only the first step of your research and only when you are well versed in the nuance of the topic will you be able to extract the most out of the event. We would also highly recommend you to be attentive and coordinate with your fellow committee members in order to come up with creative and effective solutions. Furthermore, it is important to note that this committee can only be dealt with if you have the willingness to research extensively and translate research into ideas.

We wish you all the best and hope that we can make this a fruitful experience for you. The Executive Board will always be there to help you with any or all confusions that you might face during the course of the committee, please feel free to reach out to us without any hesitation. Best of luck with your preparation!

Best Regards,

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Introduction

For thirteen days in October 1962, the world waited—seemingly on the brink of nuclear war—and hoped for a peaceful resolution to the Cuban Missile Crisis.

In October 1962, an American U-2 spy plane secretly photographed nuclear missile sites being built by the Soviet Union on the island of Cuba. President Kennedy did not want the Soviet Union and Cuba to know that he had discovered the missiles. He met in secret with his advisors for several days to discuss the problem.

After many long and difficult meetings, Kennedy decided to place a naval blockade, or a ring of ships, around Cuba. The aim of this "quarantine," as he called it, was to prevent the Soviets from bringing in more military supplies. He demanded the removal of the missiles already there and the destruction of the sites. On October 22, President Kennedy spoke to the nation about the crisis in a televised address.

Historical Background

October 1917: The government of Alexander Krensky is overthrown by the Bolshevik's Revolutionaries lead by Vladimir Lenin.

March 3, 1918: Russia signs the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk, which cedes large chunks of land to the Germans. Finland, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Ukraine, Georgia, Armenia and Azerbaijan declare their independence from Russia as a result of the treaty.

1918-1920: Civil War in Russia between the Bolshevik's (the Reds) and the anti-Bolshevik's (the Whites). War communism takes hold, leaving millions to starve to death due to the army needing the food for its soldiers.

December 29, 1922: Russia, Ukraine, Belarus, and the Trans Caucasus sign the Treaty on the Creation of the Soviet Union.

January 21, 1924: Lenin dies. After internal power struggle between Joseph Stalin and Alexi Rykov, Stalin takes command of the USSR.

November 16th, 1933: The United States formally recognizes the USSR.

1936-1938: President Stalin makes public a plot to undermine his regime, lead by Leon Trotsky. Stalin proceeds to purge thousands of dissidents by way or death or long-term imprisonment.

August-September 1939: USSR signs a non-aggression pact with Nazi Germany. German invasion of Poland starts World War II. Soviet troops proceed to enter Poland, leading Germany and the USSR to split Poland.

1940: Soviet troops take Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia, which are then incorporated into the USSR.

April 13th, 1941: USSR signs the Soviet-Japanese Neutrality Pact.

1941-1945: German invasion of USSR leads to Soviet counterassault on the Nazi regime, ending with Soviet forces taking East Berlin.

February 4-11, 1945: Yalta Conference. Cold War 'begins'.

August 29th, 1949: USSR successfully explodes its first atomic device.

1949-1950: Soviet recognizes communist Chinese government, signs 20-year alliance treaty with said government.

1950-1953: Korean War represents first indirect military confrontation between the Soviet and American governments.

March 5th, 1953: Joseph Stalin dies. Georgi Malenkov becomes Prime Minister and Nikita Khrushchev becomes Secretary of the Central Committee of the Communist Party.

May 14th, 1955: Warsaw Pact signed.

October 4th, 1957: Soviets launch Sputnik.

March 27th, 1955: Nikita Khrushchev becomes Prime Minister.

May 1st, 1960: Soviets shoot down American U2 spy plane over Soviet territory.

April 1961: American trained Cuban exiles launch unsuccessful invasion at the Bay of Pigs in Cuba.

The Start of the Cold War

Great Britain was one of the 'Big Three' and France was also a considerable power in Europe, but the destruction of the war and the weakening of the economy of mainland Europe left the US, which had joined the war only in 1941 following the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbour, and the USSR relatively unscathed. The US and USSR, the two nations that emerged as the two world superpowers following World War II, were at war over their respective influences over other nations, one fighting for democracy, the other for communism. The Cold War was essentially a hostile stalemate that represented the power struggle between these two powers, and it threatened the safety of the entire world for more than four decades as each tried to gain favour with other nations that were forming new governments. As mentioned above, the USSR forced its influence over Poland, scaring the US about the USSR's growing 'sphere of influence' and thus its growing power.

The Berlin Blockade

In 1948 the US, Great Britain, and France began reforming their occupied zones of Germany, which came to be known as West Germany (vs. East Germany, held by the USSR), to prepare it to assume self-governance. Through this process they introduced a new currency that would allow it to participate and compete economically internationally. However, the USSR did not like the prospect of a currency in Germany that it would not be able to control, and the USSR was concerned about a powerful Germany considering its experience during WWII, having been invaded by Hitler's forces. West Germany received supplies through routes controlled by the USSR that went through East Germany. The USSR decided to levy its power over these supply routes to implement a blockade against West Germany that would force the western powers, the US, Great Britain, and France, to basically rethink its Germany-recovery strategy. However, the US and other western powers responded to the Berlin Blockade by airlifting supplies to the people in Western Germany for almost one year. Furthermore, the blockade encouraged the western powers to equip Germany with the economic capabilities needed to ensure that it would not be a victim to communism. They also formed the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) in 1949, which basically served as a public statement by the nations in NATO against the USSR.

Cuba and the Bay of Pigs

Cuba became a communist nation under the rule of Fidel Castro (1959) and diplomatic relations deteriorated with the US. US President Eisenhower approved a secret plan, "A Program of Covert Action Against the Castro Regime", codified as JMARC, to overthrow the Castro regime. Essentially, the CIA trained Cuban exiles who invaded Cuba in 1961 but were stopped by Castro's army. By which time John F. Kennedy had assumed the presidency in the US. The plan failed

miserably but succeeded in increasing tensions between Cuba and the US, and ultimately between the USSR and the US

The Cuban Missile Crisis (CMC)

It is October 1962. The US has found out that the USSR, led by Premier Nikita Khrushchev, is planning on working with the communist Castro regime, with whom the US's relations have come essentially to a standstill, especially following the Bay of Pigs invasion, to place nuclear missiles on the Cuban island that will bring the targeted US within range of USSR missiles. The US also recently placed missiles in Turkey. The USSR's presence in Cuba poses a significant threat to the integrity and safety of the US. JFK is seeking the advice of his executive committee (Ex-Comm) to deal with the crisis at hand. If the USSR does not agree to stop importing its missiles to the island, JFK will consider imposing quarantine on the island.

Contemporary issues and challenges

The struggle between superpowers:

The Cold War reached its peak in 1948–53. In this period the Soviets unsuccessfully blockaded the Western-held sectors of West Berlin (1948–49); the United States and its European allies formed the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), a unified military command to resist the Soviet presence in Europe (1949);

The Soviets exploded their first atomic warhead (1949), thus ending the American monopoly on the atomic bomb; the Chinese communists came to power in mainland China (1949); and the Soviet-supported communist government of

North Korea invaded U.S.-supported South Korea in 1950, setting off an indecisive Korean War that lasted until 1953.

From 1953 to 1957 Cold War tensions relaxed somewhat, largely owing to the death of the long-time Soviet dictator Joseph Stalin in 1953; nevertheless, the standoff remained. A unified military organization among the Soviet-bloc countries, the Warsaw Pact, was formed in 1955; and West Germany was admitted into NATO that same year. Another intense stage of the Cold War was in 1958–62. The United States and the Soviet Union began developing intercontinental ballistic missiles, and in 1962 the Soviets began secretly installing missiles in Cuba that could be used to launch nuclear attacks on U.S. cities. This sparked the Cuban missile crisis (1962), a confrontation that brought the two superpowers to the brink of war before an agreement was reached to withdraw the missiles.

Questions to consider:

1. Considering what really did happen during the Cuban Missile Crisis, what else could have happened had either side taken different actions?
2. Who were the main decision-makers?
3. What was the underlying cause of the crisis? What could have prevented this?
4. The United Nations' role was not explored in detail in the guide. Look closely at how the UN was involved throughout the Cold War. What could the UN mean to the crisis at hand?
5. What is the Berlin Wall? What is its significance?
6. What are the implications of the CMC?