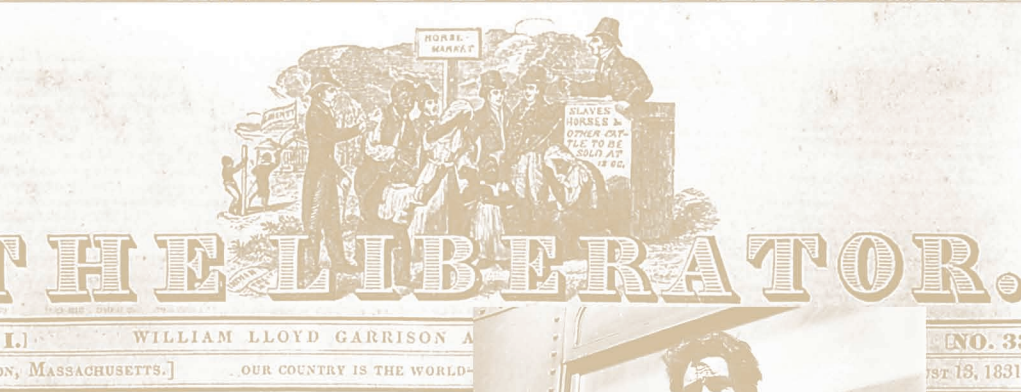




# UNITED STATES HISTORY

1959-1962

## On The Brink: From the Bay of Pigs to the Cuban Missile Crisis



**PLEASE SEE  
NOTES ON THE  
PDF, PAGE 6.**

# LESSONS IN U.S. HISTORY

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The publication of this booklet has been made possible largely through funding from GEAR UP Santa Ana. This branch of GEAR UP has made a distinctive contribution to public school education in the U.S. by creating intellectual space within an urban school district for students who otherwise would not have access to the research, scholarship, and teaching represented by this collaboration between the University of California, the Santa Ana Partnership, and the Santa Ana Unified School District. Additional external funding in 2005-2006 has been provided to HOT by the Bank of America Foundation, the Wells Fargo Foundation, and the Pacific Life Foundation.

## THE UCI HISTORY-SOCIAL SCIENCE PROJECT

The California History-Social Science Project (CH-SSP) of the University of California, Irvine, is dedicated to working with history teachers in Orange County to develop innovative approaches to engaging students in the study of the past. Founded in 2000, the CH-SSP draws on the resources of the UCI Department of History and works closely with the UCI Department of Education. We believe that the history classroom can be a crucial arena not only for instruction in history but also for the improvement of student literacy and writing skills. Working together with the teachers of Orange County, it is our goal to develop history curricula that will convince students that history matters.

## HUMANITIES OUT THERE

Humanities Out There was founded in 1997 as an educational partnership between the School of Humanities at the University of California, Irvine and the Santa Ana Unified School District. HOT runs workshops in humanities classrooms in Santa Ana schools. Advanced graduate students in history and literature design curricular units in collaboration with host teachers, and conduct workshops that engage UCI undergraduates in classroom work. In the area of history, HOT works closely with the UCI History-Social Science Project in order to improve student literacy and writing skills in the history classroom, and to integrate the teaching of history, literature, and writing across the humanities. The K-12 classroom becomes a laboratory for developing innovative units that adapt university materials to the real needs and interests of California schools. By involving scholars, teachers, students, and staff from several institutions in collaborative teaching and research, we aim to transform educational practices, expectations, and horizons for all participants.

## THE SANTA ANA PARTNERSHIP

The Santa Ana Partnership was formed in 1983 as part of the Student and Teacher Educational Partnership (STEP) initiative at UC Irvine. Today it has evolved into a multi-faceted collaborative that brings institutions and organizations together in the greater Santa Ana area to advance the educational achievement of all students, and to help them enter and complete college. Co-directed at UC Irvine by the Center for Educational Partnerships, the collaborative is also strongly supported by Santa Ana College, the Santa Ana Unified School District, California State University, Fullerton and a number of community-based organizations. Since 2003-2004, HOT has contributed to the academic mission of the Santa Ana Partnership by placing its workshops in GEAR UP schools. This unit, *On The Brink: From the Bay of Pigs to the Cuban Missile Crisis*, reflects the innovative collaboration among these institutions and programs.

## CONTENT COUNTS: A SPECIAL PROJECT OF THE NATIONAL ENDOWMENT FOR THE HUMANITIES

This is one in a series of publications under the series title Content Counts: Reading and Writing Across the Humanities, supported by a generous grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities. Content Counts units are designed by and for educators committed to promoting a deep, content-rich and knowledge-driven literacy in language arts and social studies classrooms. The units provide examples of “content reading”—primary and secondary sources, as well as charts, data, and visual documents—designed to supplement and integrate the study of history and literature.



A publication of Humanities Out There and the Santa Ana Partnership  
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# On The Brink: From the Bay of Pigs to the Cuban Missile Crisis

## LESSON INTRODUCTION FOR TEACHERS

### Teacher's Guide

This lesson guides students through the Cuban Revolution, the Bay of Pigs Invasion, and the Cuban Missile Crisis of October 1962 (California Content Standard 11.9.3). Studying events in Cuba enables students to conceptualize the conflict between the United States and Soviet Union as one in which these superpowers struggled to assert their influence over smaller nations in a rapidly decolonizing developing world. Students learn that while this “cold” war often involved relatively isolated contests for power in proxy states throughout Africa, Asia, and Latin America, these contests oc-

asionally threatened to spin out of control and touch off a nuclear holocaust.

Through the exercises in this lesson, the students become familiar with a number of important concepts. These concepts appear as a list of Key Terms that you can photocopy and distribute to students after they complete the lesson's initial vocabulary exercise. Other exercises ask students to analyze maps of the Cold War world and to decode a variety of primary-source materials from the period, including political cartoons and messages sent between John F. Kennedy and Nikita Khrushchev. Stu-

dents analyze these documents systematically by filling out a Primary Source Analysis Worksheet for each one; this worksheet asks students to situate primary sources within their historical context and to determine the author's point of view. Other exercises in the lesson require students to imagine that they are at the scene of these historical events, allowing them to recreate the drama of history and to come up with alternative outcomes. To conclude the lesson, the students write and perform a small playlet whose characters include Kennedy, Khrushchev, and Castro.

### Historical Background

The decades immediately following the conclusion of the Second World War were marked by the emergence of independent states in Africa and Asia that previously had been colonial possessions of Western nations like Great Britain, France, and Holland, as well as Japan (which also held Asian colonies prior to its defeat in the Second World War). At the same time, a number of nations in Latin America were agitated by nationalist movements directed against the hegemonic position of United States in that region. The world's reigning su-

perpowers at the time—the United States and the Soviet Union—both sought the allegiance of these nations. In a world made exponentially more dangerous by the appearance of powerful nuclear weapons in the late 1940s, the U.S. and the U.S.S.R. funded opposing factions in nations and regions throughout the rapidly decolonizing Third (or “Developing”) World. Rather than confront each other directly, a development that might likely have led to nuclear annihilation, the superpowers tended to play out their rivalry through these smaller nations.

On the island of Cuba, located only ninety miles from the southeastern tip of the United States, a terrifying manifestation of this Cold War struggle for economic, political, and military dominance threatened to spin out of control in October 1962. Cuba, though it had been formally independent since 1902, was largely under the influence of the United States. The American military maintained a naval base at Guantanamo Bay, and American capital, especially in the sugar and tobacco industries,

*Historical Background continues on page 3*

## **CALIFORNIA HISTORY-SOCIAL SCIENCE STANDARDS COVERED IN THIS LESSON**

### **Content Standards: Grade Eleven**

#### **■ 11.9 Students analyze U.S. foreign policy since World War II.**

- **11.9.3** Trace the origins and geopolitical consequences (foreign and domestic) of the Cold War and containment policy, including the following:
  - The era of McCarthyism, instances of domestic Communism (e.g., Alger Hiss) and blacklisting
  - The Truman Doctrine
  - The Berlin Blockade
  - The Korean War
  - The Bay of Pigs invasion and the Cuban Missile Crisis
  - Atomic testing in the American West, the "mutual assured destruction" doctrine, and disarmament policies
  - The Vietnam War
  - Latin American policy

### **Skills: Grades Nine through Twelve**

#### **■ Chronological and Spatial Thinking Skills**

- Students analyze how change happens at different rates at different times; understand that some aspects change while others remain the same; and understand that change is complicated and affects not only technology and politics but also values and beliefs.
- Students use a variety of maps and documents to interpret human movement, including major patterns of domestic and international migration, changing environmental preferences and settlement patterns, the frictions that develop between population groups, and the diffusion of ideas, technological innovations, and goods.

#### **■ Historical Research, Evidence, and Point of View Skills**

- Students identify bias and prejudice in historical interpretations.
- Students construct and test hypotheses; collect, evaluate, and employ information from multiple primary and secondary sources; and apply it in oral and written presentations.

#### **■ Historical Interpretation Skills**

- Students show the connections, causal and otherwise, between particular historical events and larger social, economic, and political trends and developments.
- Students recognize the complexity of historical causes and effects, including the limitations on determining cause and effect.
- Students interpret past events and issues within the context in which an event unfolded rather than solely in terms of present-day norms and values.
- Students understand the meaning, implication, and impact of historical events and recognize that events could have taken other directions.

## Historical Background *continued from page 1*

dominated the Cuban economy. American investment on the island was facilitated and protected by accommodating leaders like Fulgencio Batista, who was both anti-communist and in favor of keeping Cuban markets open to American corporations. This cozy relationship between Cuba and the United States was threatened after New Year's Day, 1959, when the revolutionary movement of Fidel Castro toppled the Batista government. Though the Eisenhower administration officially recognized the new Cuban government, Castro was determined to redress long-standing inequities plaguing his island-nation. He believed that American business interests, with the full support of the United States government, exercised a form of colonial control over the Cuban economy. Castro felt he was faced with a clear choice. He could be loyal to the Cuban people or he could be "loyal to American monopolies that exploited our country."<sup>1</sup> Castro soon began to nationalize American business interests in Cuba.

The United States was disturbed by the harsh punishment meted out to former members of the Batista regime and alarmed by growing whispers that Castro was a Communist (his brother Raul and close compatriot Che Guevara openly asserted their allegiance to Marxism). The U.S. reacted with alarm to Castro's nationalization program, and, predictably, this pushed Castro

closer to the open arms of the Soviet Union. The relationship between Cuba and the United States continued to deteriorate, and by March 1960 Eisenhower had approved a CIA plan to organize, train, equip, and support an invasion of Cuba by anti-Castro exiles.

The Kennedy administration inherited the plans, approved them, and pushed the invasion forward. As word began to leak out about this imminent invasion, Kennedy was asked during a news conference on April 12, 1961 how far the United States would go to support an anti-Castro uprising. He responded, "I want to say that there will not be, under any conditions, an intervention in Cuba by the United States Armed Forces. This government will do everything it possibly can . . . to make sure that there are no Americans involved in any actions inside Cuba."<sup>2</sup> Five days later, an invasion force of 1,400 Cuban exiles—trained, equipped, and transported by the United States—landed at Cuba's Bay of Pigs. The invaders expected to be supported actively by the American military, but this support never materialized in any significant way. They also expected, more crucially, that the people of Cuba would rise up in support of the invasion to join with the exiles in overthrowing the Castro regime. This popular uprising also failed to materialize. The invasion was crushed and its failure hugely embarrassed the

new American President. Castro, convinced that the Americans would renew their efforts to annul his revolution by stealth or outright invasion, sought military support from Soviet leader Nikita Khrushchev to forestall any further American attempts to overtake the island. Khrushchev, seeking to nurture a fledgling socialist state and, more significantly, looking for an opportunity to even the strategic balance with the United States, agreed and began to install nuclear missiles in Cuba. Because the United States had recently put missiles into Turkey, a nation very near the Soviet Union, Khrushchev may have reasoned that he was simply doing the same thing by putting missiles into Cuba. How could the Americans object? Wouldn't that look hypocritical?

By October 1962, American U2 spy planes discovered the Soviet missile installations in Cuba. The CIA informed President Kennedy on October 16, 1962 and he concluded immediately that he must reply to this provocation. He and his advisers were divided, however, as to what this reply should be. Some counseled an immediate air strike to destroy the missile sites, followed by an invasion. Others recommended going to the U.N. in order to apply international pressure and economic sanctions. Kennedy decided on a third option (first proposed by his brother Robert). As he announced to the nation in a televised address on

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<sup>1</sup> Castro's comment cited from a PBS *American Experience* video about his rise to power ([http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/amex/castro/esp\\_filmmore/pt.html](http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/amex/castro/esp_filmmore/pt.html)).

<sup>2</sup> Cited from Allan M. Winkler, *The Cold War: A History in Documents, Pages from History* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), p. 88

October 22, 1962, the American Navy would blockade, or “quarantine,” Cuba in order to prevent any additional offensive weapons from reaching the island. He was careful to call the proposed action a “quarantine” because a “blockade” was technically an act of war according to international law. Kennedy also called upon Chairman Khrushchev to remove the missiles from Cuba or face unspecified “further action.”

The next few days were filled with incredible tension. As the American and Soviet leaders attempted to negotiate their way out of the crisis, American ships took up positions around Cuba to enforce the quarantine, while Soviet ships, presumably loaded

with offensive weapons, continued to stream ever-closer. The world held its breath and fearfully contemplated the possibility of nuclear war between the U.S. and the U.S.S.R. An aide to President Kennedy, historian Arthur Schlesinger, later said: “This was not only the most dangerous moment of the Cold War. It was the most dangerous moment in human history.”<sup>3</sup>

For two days the Soviet ships continued to stream towards the American Navy. Then, as the ships reached the quarantine line on October 24th, they received word from Moscow to hold their positions. A number of the ships came to a halt, slowly turned around, and began heading back to the U.S.S.R. The next day,

when a single Soviet ship, the Bucharest, continued on past the blockade line, Kennedy decided to match Khrushchev’s restraint and allow it to pass after an inspection determined that it was not carrying offensive weaponry. Still, the tension continued until Khrushchev sent Kennedy word that he might be willing to compromise. Khrushchev offered to pull the missiles out of Cuba in return for a U.S. pledge not to invade Cuba. Although Kennedy never explicitly accepted the proposal, Khrushchev publicly announced over Radio Moscow, on October 28th, that the Soviet Union would dismantle its missiles in Cuba and ship them back to the U.S.S.R. The height of the crisis was past.

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<sup>3</sup> Cited from *BBC News, World Edition*, “Conference Shows How Close War Was.” October 12, 2002 (<http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/americas/2319485.stm>).

### **NOTES ON THE PDF:**

- 1) Please note that in this pdf document the page numbers are two off from the printed curriculum. For example, page 2 in the printed curriculum is now page 4 in this pdf document.
- 2) We apologize if some of the hyperlinks are no longer accurate. They were correct at the time of printing.
- 3) Full-page versions of the images in this unit—some in color—can be found at the back of this pdf.
- 4) You can easily navigate through the different parts of this document by using the “Bookmark” tab on the left side of your Acrobat window.

KEY TERMS (*highlighted in gray throughout the text*)

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## On The Brink: From the Bay of Pigs to the Cuban Missile Crisis

**Capitalism:** an economic system characterized by private or corporate ownership, by investments that are determined by private decision, and by prices, production, and the distribution of goods that are determined mainly by competition in a free market.

**Communism:** a system of government in which the state plans and controls the economy and a single, often authoritarian, party holds power. Communist states claim to be making progress toward a higher social order in which all goods are, theoretically, shared by the people.

**Corporation:** an organization that is granted a charter (by a state) recognizing it as a separate legal entity having its own rights, privileges, and liabilities distinct from those of its members.

**Dictatorship:** a government in which political power is exercised by a single individual who gains power and governs outside the normal means for doing so, often during a time of war or during an economic or social crisis.

**Exile:** one who lives away from one's native country, whether because of expulsion or voluntary absence.

**Nationalize:** to convert from private to governmental ownership and control.

**Quarantine:** a condition of enforced isolation.

**Regime:** a form of government (this term is generally understood to have negative connotations of repression and authoritarian rule).

**Revolution:** a drastic change that happens in a short period of time, effecting political or social institutions, or the culture or economy of a country or region.

## On The Brink: From the Bay of Pigs to the Cuban Missile Crisis

### Books

Blight, James G. and David A. Welch. *On the Brink: Americans and Soviets Reexamine the Cuban Missile Crisis*. New York: Hill and Wang, 1989. This collection of oral histories from surviving Cuban Missile Crisis participants highlights not only the gulf separating American and Soviet perspectives, but also the stark differences of opinion within the Kennedy administration itself. Kennedy's closest advisers were split. Some felt, and continue to feel, that there was no real danger of nuclear war and supported an aggressive military strike against Cuba. Others, terrified that they were pushing the world to the very brink of nuclear annihilation, resisted military action.

Brugioni, Dino A. *Eyeball to Eyeball: The Inside Story of the Cuban Missile Crisis*. New York: Random House, 1991. Brugioni, who was the supervisor of aerial reconnaissance during the Crisis, offers readers a dramatic day-by-day narrative of the events of October 1962. Brugioni's account benefits from his firsthand experience working for the CIA's National Photographic Interpretation Center, as well as from interviews he conducted and archival sources he researched. The book also uncovers new information provided by Brugioni's counterparts in Soviet intelligence.

Diez Acosta, Tomás. *October 1962: The 'Missile' Crisis As Seen From Cuba*. New York: Pathfinder Press, 2002. This book provides a Cuban perspective on the events that, according to many, threatened to engulf the planet in a nuclear holocaust. A retired Cuban army officer and military historian, Diez Acosta asserts that Castro sought Soviet assistance well before the Bay of Pigs invasion because of ongoing U.S. aggression. Intensely critical of both Khrushchev and Kennedy in negotiating the withdrawal of Soviet weaponry, Diez Acosta contends that the settlement denied Cuba any role in resolving the crisis and ignored Castro's plan for guaranteeing Cuban sovereignty and future security.

Fursenko, Aleksandr and Timothy Naftali. *One Hell of a Gamble—Khrushchev, Castro and Kennedy, 1958-1964*. New York: W.W. Norton, 1998. This is a concise narrative of the Missile Crisis that nonetheless employs an impressive range of materials from both American and Soviet sources. The authors integrate recent scholarship, interviews with key participants, and previously unavailable documents from Soviet sources such as the KGB, GRU, and Politburo to probe deeply into the roots of the Soviet-Castro partnership. The book argues that the world was much closer to nuclear war than people realized at the time, and that Kennedy and his advisers mistakenly believed the missiles in Cuba had yet to be armed with nuclear warheads. Fursenko and Naftali assert that not only were the missiles armed with nuclear warheads, but that Moscow came very close to granting authority to the Soviet commander in Cuba to use them at his discretion.

Kennedy, Robert F. *Thirteen Days: A Memoir of the Cuban Missile Crisis*. New York: W.W. Norton, 1999. Written by one of the primary participants in the crisis, the President's brother and Attorney General Robert F. Kennedy, this book argues that the 1961 Bay of Pigs embarrassment prompted the President to widen his circle of advisers in order to have access to more diverse points of view. While some argue that this account of the Missile Crisis self-servingly glorifies the Kennedy brothers and their response to it, the book remains a valuable first-person account of a crucial moment in American history. The book also retains the feel of a first draft, as Robert Kennedy was assassinated before he had the opportunity to complete it.

May, Ernest R. and Philip D. Zelikow. *The Kennedy Tapes: Inside the White House During the Cuban Missile Crisis*. Cambridge: Belknap, 1997. President Kennedy secretly recorded his meetings with the special executive committee (ExComm) that he assembled to deal with the Missile Crisis. This account of the Crisis is built on transcriptions made of these (often nearly undecipherable) recordings. For those



ExComm sessions that were not recorded, the authors have produced connecting text based on other documents such as personal notes, minutes of meetings, and personal memoirs.

## Films

*Fidel: The Untold Story* (2002). This documentary by Director Estela Bravo takes a look at the political and social impact that Cuban dictator Fidel Castro has had on the world during the 40-plus years he has been in power.

*The Fog of War: Eleven Lessons From the Life of Robert S. McNamara* (2003). Errol Morris' extended interview with former Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara does not focus exclusively on the Missile Crisis, but it provides a fascinating perspective on the Cold War world through the eyes of one of its principal participants.

*Thirteen Days* (2000). Director Roger Donaldson's dramatic reenactment of the Cuban Missile Crisis, starring Kevin Costner.

## Electronic Resources

Arms Control Today: Forty Years After 13 Days

[http://www.armscontrol.org/act/2002\\_11/cubanmissile.asp#mcnamara](http://www.armscontrol.org/act/2002_11/cubanmissile.asp#mcnamara)

This site features transcripts from a 2002 conference sponsored by the National Security Archives and Brown University, marking the fortieth anniversary of the Cuban Missile Crisis. Excerpts from the conference include McNamara's firsthand account and analysis of the crisis, including thirteen incisive questions he poses about Soviet and Cuban intentions. The site also has the transcript of a conversation between McNamara and two former Soviet officials, as well as excerpts from recently released documents that illustrate how the crisis developed for individuals from the U.S., the U.S.S.R., and Cuba.

History Out Loud: The Cuban Missile Crisis, October 18-29, 1962

<http://www.hpol.org/jfk/cuban/>

This site has audio recordings of JFK and his advisers debating how to respond to the Cuban Missile Crisis.

Latino Studies Resources: Cuban Missile Crisis Reunion, October 2002

<http://www.latinamericanstudies.org/missile.htm>

This site has a variety of resources for both teachers and students, including articles about the Cuban Missile Crisis written on the occasion of the 2002 reunion; U.S. government documents pertaining to the events of October 1962; and National Security Archive photographs documenting the crisis.

The National Security Agency and the Cuban Missile Crisis

<http://www.nsa.gov/publications/publi00033.cfm>

This site summarizes events during the Cuban Missile Crisis in language that students can easily understand.

The Cuban Missile Crisis, 1962: The 40th Anniversary

[http://www.gwu.edu/~nsarchiv/nsa/cuba\\_mis\\_cri/index.htm](http://www.gwu.edu/~nsarchiv/nsa/cuba_mis_cri/index.htm)

In addition to providing photographs, secret documents, and audio recordings about the Cuban Missile Crisis, this website documents the U.S. hunt for Soviet submarines during the period. It also features day-by-day and minute-by-minute chronologies of the events, and an analysis of the crisis by contemporary historians.

# On The Brink: From the Bay of Pigs to the Cuban Missile Crisis

*Essential Question:  
Who was to blame for  
“the most dangerous moment in human history”?*

## VOCABULARY EXERCISE AND PREPARATION

- 1) Working in small groups, and without using a reference aid such as a dictionary, sort the key terms below into categories and be prepared to explain how the terms within these categories are related.
- 2) Share your group’s categorizations with the class. How are the terms within each group related? Your teacher will keep track of your main ideas on the board.
- 3) As a class, use the best ideas from each group to create a final definition for each of the terms. You may use a dictionary if you are stuck and need help, or if you want to double-check the accuracy of your definitions.
- 4) On a separate piece of paper, write a sentence correctly using each of these words.

|              |             |
|--------------|-------------|
| Capitalism   | Revolution  |
| Communism    | Regime      |
| Dictatorship | Corporation |
| Nationalize  | Exile       |
| Quarantine   |             |

## Timeline

- January 1, 1959:** Fidel Castro overthrows the U.S.-backed regime of General Fulgencio Batista.
- April 1961:** Failure of the U.S.-backed Bay of Pigs invasion.
- October 16, 1962:** President Kennedy is shown photographs of offensive missile installations on the island of Cuba.
- October 22, 1962:** Kennedy announces the naval “quarantine” (blockade) of Cuba.
- October 24, 1962:** Soviet ships reach the quarantine line, but receive radio orders from Moscow to hold their positions.
- October 26, 1962:** Soviet leader Nikita Khrushchev sends President John F. Kennedy a letter stating that the Soviets will remove their missiles if Kennedy publicly guarantees the U.S. will not invade Cuba.
- October 28, 1962:** Khrushchev announces the dismantling of Soviet missiles in Cuba.
- November 20, 1962:** Kennedy orders an end to the quarantine of Cuba.

## HISTORICAL INTRODUCTION




In the years after the Second World War, many small nations throughout the world (especially newly independent nations throughout Asia, Africa, and Latin America) were caught up in the Cold War struggle between the two global superpowers: the United States and the Soviet Union (U.S.S.R.). The United States sought to spread its economic system, **capitalism**, to these smaller nations, while the Soviet Union wanted to extend its system, **communism**, throughout the world. There was often great conflict within these smaller nations over the question of whether they should be friendly to the United States and its capitalist system or to the Soviet Union and its communist system.



**IMAGE 1:** Herbert Block, "Lets Get A Lock for This Thing." From *Herblock: A Cartoonist's Life* (Times Books, 1998).

1. Based on the work you did with the vocabulary exercise on page 8, how would you characterize the differences between these two systems, capitalism and communism?
2. Try and think of at least one reason each why a person might be attracted to capitalism and one reason why someone might be attracted to communism.

3. List at least one reason each for why someone might hate capitalism, and why someone might hate communism.

Now, take a look at the world map on the next page, which illustrates the state of the global struggle between American-style capitalism and Soviet-style communism in 1960. The countries in  were **aligned** with the United States, and those in  were aligned with the Soviet Union. Those in  were non-aligned.

*Then, answer these questions:*

4. Study the map on the next page. What sorts of trends, or patterns, can you **discern**? Find at least three and write them below.

1)

2)

3)

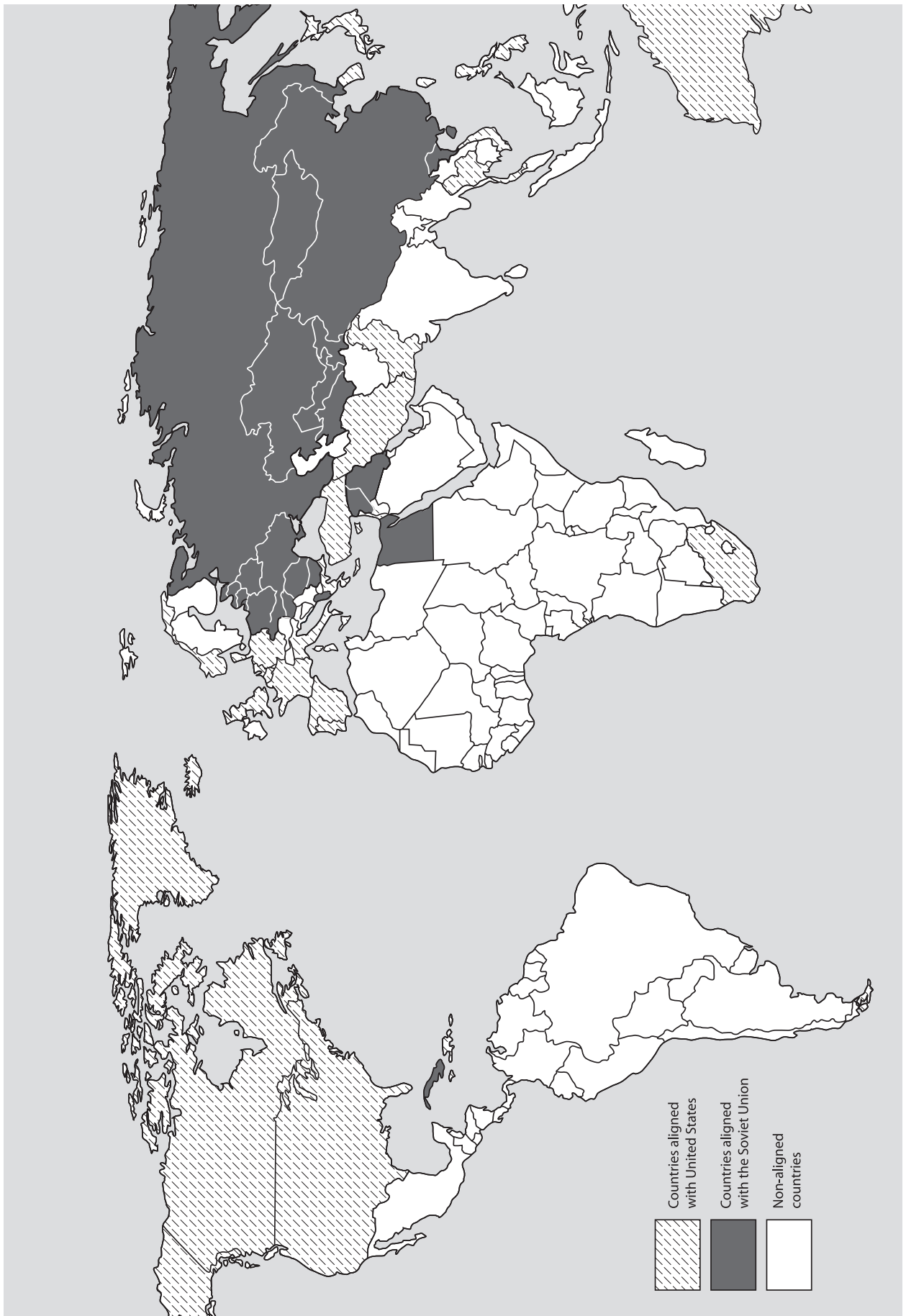
5. Which Soviet-aligned country was located closest to the United States in 1960? Locate this country on the map and write down your answer below.

.....

## Glossary

**align:** to ally (join with) one side of an argument or cause.

**discern:** to recognize or detect with the senses.



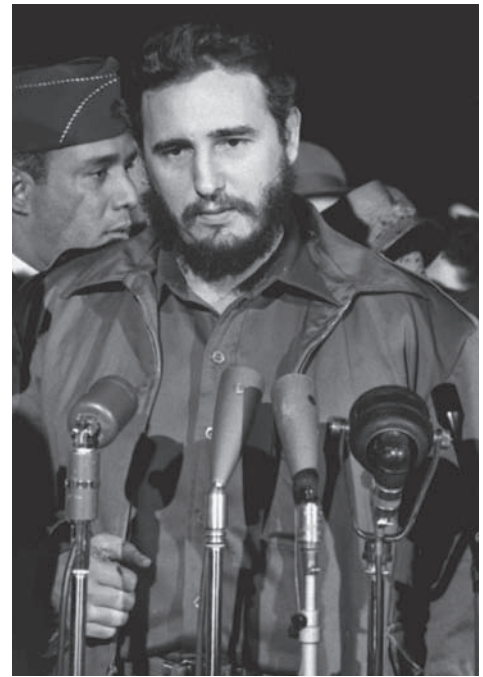
**IMAGE 2:** The Cold War World: 1960s

## REVOLUTION IN CUBA

By 1960, the small island nation of Cuba, only 90 miles from the southeast coast of the United States, had aligned itself with the Soviet Union. In this section, we will take a look at how this happened and at some of the consequences of Cuba's turn to communism.

On New Year's Day, 1959, Cuban revolutionary Fidel Castro overthrew the **dictatorship** of Fulgencio Batista. Batista had been very friendly with the United States and the Americans had supported his **regime** until just before he was forced from power. The United States supported

the Batista regime mainly because it was anti-communist and protected the numerous American business interests (companies) in Cuba that made very good money producing and exporting Cuban sugar and tobacco, among other products, to the United States. Due to Castro's successful **revolution**, however, Batista was forced to **flee** Cuba. The American government was suspicious of Castro's new government and his **left-wing politics**, as well as his harsh treatment of members of the former Batista government. Also, he seriously angered the United States when he began to



**IMAGE 3:** Fidel Castro arrives at MATS Terminal, Washington, D.C., April 15, 1959

**nationalize** some of the American **corporations** located in Cuba.

1. What does it mean to “nationalize” foreign property? (Refer to the exercise you did at the beginning of this lesson, if necessary).
2. Why might Castro have sought to nationalize American businesses in Cuba?
3. How might you have reacted, if you had been an American business owner, when Castro nationalized your company's assets in Cuba? Who might you have turned to for help?

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## Glossary

**flee:** to run away, as from trouble or danger.

**left-wing politics:** a term referring to a set of political beliefs in support of the ideology of socialism or communism.



**IMAGE 4:** Herbert Block's October 20, 1960 cartoon, "What happens when they run out of foreigners?" from *Straight Herblock* (Simon & Schuster, 1964).

*Examine the political cartoon above, which was created in response to Castro's decision to begin nationalizing foreign assets in Cuba. Answer the questions on the Primary Source Analysis Worksheet on the next page as you carefully analyze the cartoon. Remember to refer to specific aspects of the cartoon when answering the questions.*

## **PRIMARY SOURCE ANALYSIS WORKSHEET**

### ***Content:***

1. Who is the author of this cartoon?
2. When was it created?
3. What is the author describing; in other words, what is the author's subject? In answering this question, you will need to explain what the four different pictures within the picture stand for; each of these can be identified by the words or phrases included in the cartoon (Hint: you can come to a good understanding of this cartoon by analyzing the words or phrases and interpreting their relationship to each other).
4. How does the title of the cartoon help you to understand its meaning?

### ***Perspective:***

1. How does the author portray, or picture, the subject of this cartoon? In other words, what is the author's perspective?
2. Does the author seem to have positive or negative feelings about the subject of this cartoon? How can you tell?
3. How might the author have been trying to influence the way that you, the reader, feel about the subject of this cartoon?

### ***Context:***

1. What was happening around the time when this cartoon was created that might have affected its content?

### ***Corroboration and Significance:***

1. Does this cartoon support or challenge what you already know or have learned about its subject? If so, how?
2. What can this cartoon teach us about the past?

### ***Conclusions***

1. From whose perspective, or point of view, was this cartoon created?
2. What is the message, or thesis, that the author is attempting to communicate to the reader?

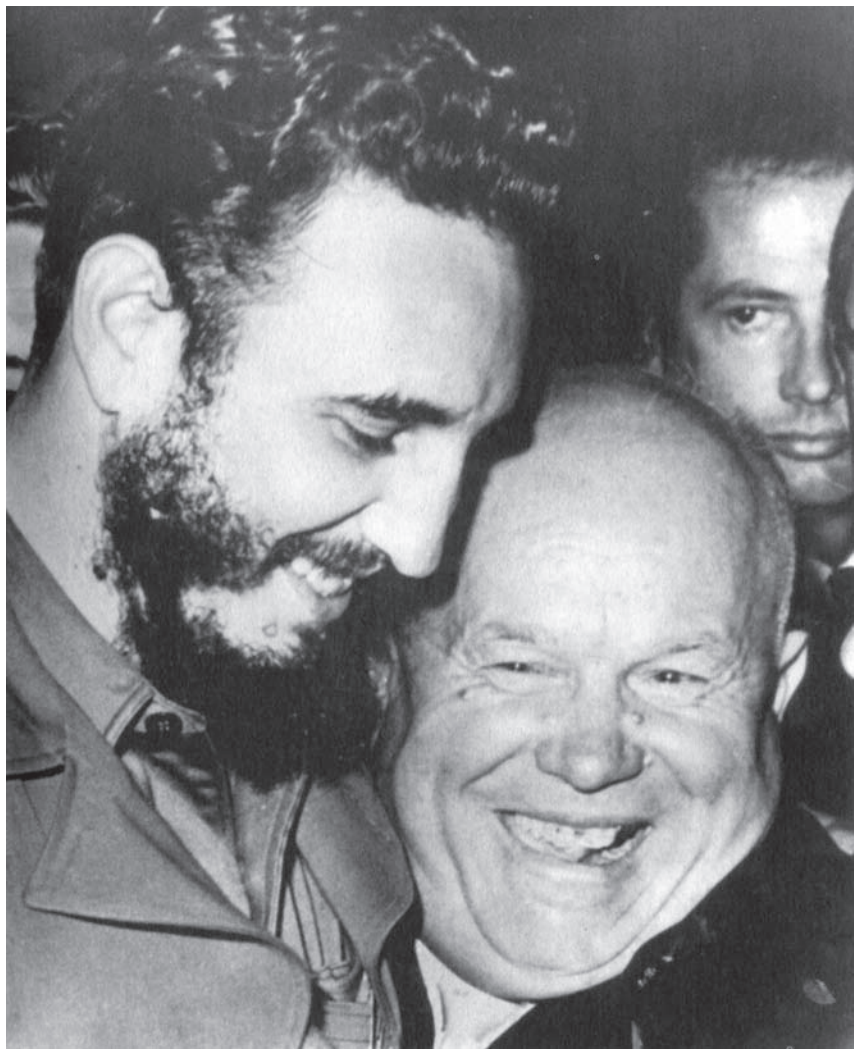


## The Bay of Pigs

America's growing fury with Castro, and the Cuban Revolution in turn, pushed the Cubans closer to America's great enemy, the Soviet Union. Castro and the Soviet Chairman [leader] Khrushchev became more and more friendly, and as a result, Soviet-style communism came to dominate Cuba.

Castro's growing friendship with the Soviet Union made the United States, unsurprisingly, even more upset. The American government also worried that Communism would spread from Cuba to other Latin American countries, like Mexico.

It is important to recognize how deeply Americans feared the Soviet Union. Although the two countries had fought together to defeat Nazi Germany just fifteen years before, many people in the United States believed that the U.S.S.R. wanted to take over the world and force everyone to embrace communism. By 1960, both the Soviet Union and the United States possessed thousands of nuclear missiles that were so powerful that a full-



**IMAGE 5:** Khrushchev and Castro at the United Nations, 1960

scale nuclear war between the two countries could have destroyed life on this planet. When Cuba, only 90 miles from the U.S., moved towards communism and friendship with the U.S.S.R., Americans were intensely concerned.

The U.S. government decided that Castro had to go. The Americans wanted to

get rid of Castro and replace him with a Cuban leader who would be friendly to the United States and to American companies (as Batista had been). After all, Americans said, Cuba was "right next door" to the United States.



**IMAGE 6:** Cuba's distance from the United States: only 90 miles!

1. In your opinion, did the United States have the right to try and change the government in Cuba by force? Why or why not?

In order to get rid of Castro, the United States began to give money, weapons, and military training to a group of unhappy, anti-Castro Cuban **exiles** who were preparing for an invasion of Cuba. These exiles wanted to **depose** Castro and rid Cuba of communism.

On April 17, 1961 the

United States helped about 1,400 of these anti-Castro Cubans to invade Cuba at a place called *Bahía de Cochinos*, The Bay of Pigs. Although the United States denied actively taking part in the invasion, the world soon found out that this was not exactly true. Many nations, especially the Soviet

Union and its allies, spoke out against American military support for the Bay of Pigs invasion. Soviet Chairman Khrushchev and President of the United States John F. Kennedy exchanged a series of messages during the invasion.

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## Glossary

**depose:** to remove from office or power.

Read the messages between Kennedy and Khrushchev. Pay special attention to each man's perspective, or point of view, and what each wanted to achieve in, or for, Cuba.

**Letter from Chairman Khrushchev to President Kennedy (April 18, 1961):**

Mr. President [Kennedy]: I send you this message in an hour of alarm, **fraught with** danger for the peace of the whole world. Armed aggression has begun against Cuba. It is a secret to no one that the armed bands invading this country were trained, equipped and armed in the United States of America. The planes which are bombing Cuban cities belong to the United States of America, the bombs they are dropping are being supplied by the American Government. . . Your statement a few days ago that the USA would not participate in military activities against Cuba created the impression that the top leaders of the United States were taking into account the consequences for general peace and for the USA itself which aggression against Cuba could have. . . As far as the Soviet Union is concerned, there should be no mistake about our position: We will **render** the Cuban people and their government all necessary help to **repel** armed attack on Cuba.

**Reply From President Kennedy to Chairman Khrushchev (April 18, 1961):**

Mr. Chairman [Khrushchev]: You are under a serious **misapprehension** in regard to events in Cuba. For months there has been evident and growing resistance to the Castro dictatorship. More than 100,000 refugees have recently fled from Cuba into neighboring countries. . . It cannot be surprising that, as resistance within Cuba grows, refugees have been using whatever means are available to return and support their countrymen in the continuing struggle for freedom. Where people are denied the right of choice [the ability to choose a different form of government besides Communism], **recourse** to such struggle is the only means of achieving their liberties. . . You should recognize that free peoples in all parts of the world do not accept the claim of historical **inevitability** for Communist revolution. What your government believes is its own business; what it does in the world is the world's business. The great revolution in the history of man, past, present and future, is the revolution of those determined to be free.

.....

## Glossary

- fraught with:** full of.
- render:** to give or make available; provide.
- repel:** to offer resistance to; to fight against.
- misapprehend:** to apprehend incorrectly; to misunderstand.
- recourse:** act of turning to for assistance.
- inevitability:** the quality of being unavoidable.

Kennedy and Khrushchev obviously had very different opinions about the Bay of Pigs invasion. Use the chart below to summarize the two leaders' viewpoints about Castro and the Cuban revolution, as well as their objectives (what they wanted to achieve). Then answer the questions that follow.

|   | President Kennedy (U.S.A) | Chairman Khrushchev (U.S.S.R.) |
|---|---------------------------|--------------------------------|
| <b>Point of view,</b><br>or perspective,<br>regarding Fidel<br>Castro and the<br>Communist<br>Revolution in<br>Cuba |                           |                                |
| <b>Objective</b><br>(what each<br>leader wanted to<br>achieve in Cuba)  |                           |                                |

2. How might Kennedy and Khrushchev's different objectives help explain how both men could look at the same historical event (the Bay of Pigs invasion) and yet come to such opposite conclusions about it?

The American government expected the people of Cuba to rise up in support of the invasion and help the invaders to overthrow Castro's communist government. The Americans were disappointed. There was no popular uprising in Cuba against Castro, and the communist government easily defeated the invasion. President Kennedy was angry and humiliated.

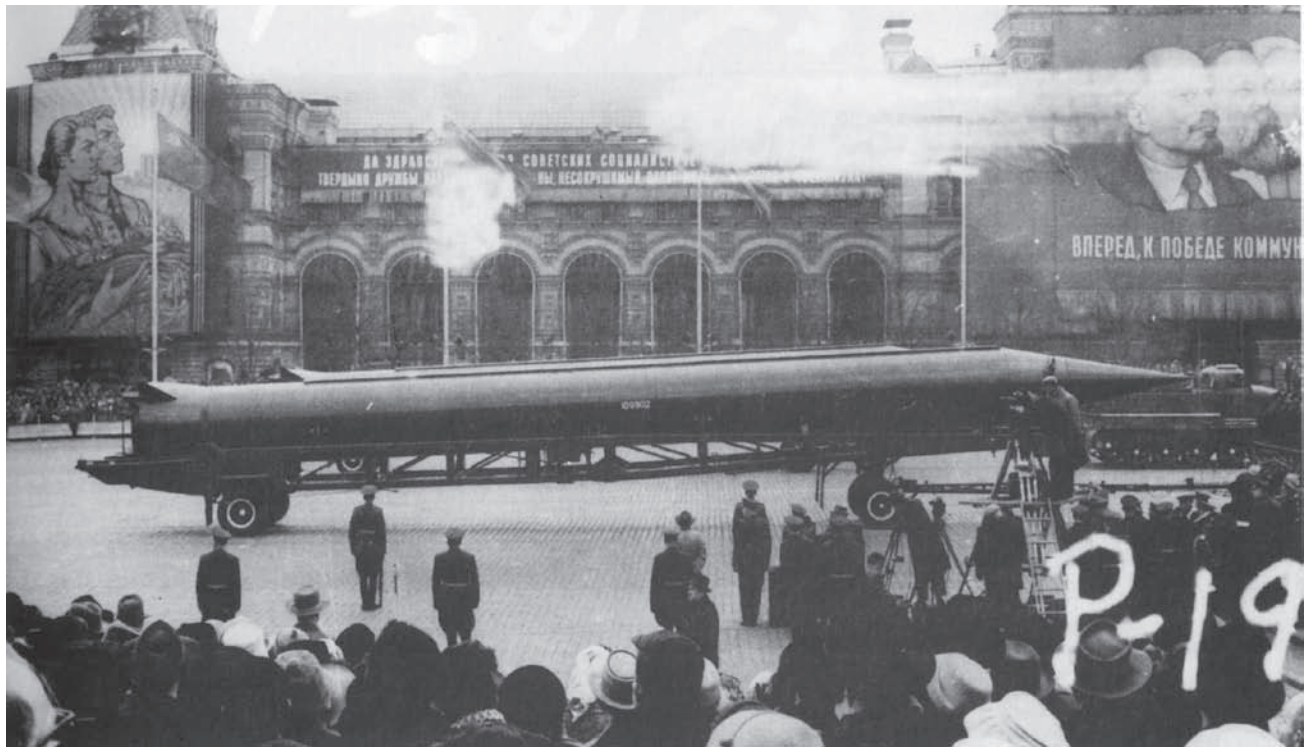
3. What might be some of the reasons that people of Cuba failed to rise up against Castro and overthrow his dictatorship?

## The Cuban Missile Crisis

Although he had defeated the Cuban exiles' invasion at the Bay of Pigs, Castro was afraid the United States

still wanted to invade Cuba in order to get rid of him, change the government, and destroy Cuba's Commu-

nist Revolution. So he asked his friend, Soviet Chairman Khrushchev, for more help. He got it.



**IMAGE 7:** The SS-4 SANDAL MRBM on parade in Red Square, Moscow. It could launch a three-megaton warhead to an estimated range of 1,020 nautical miles.

1. Can you tell what is pictured in the photo above? Why might pictures such as these have deeply disturbed Americans?

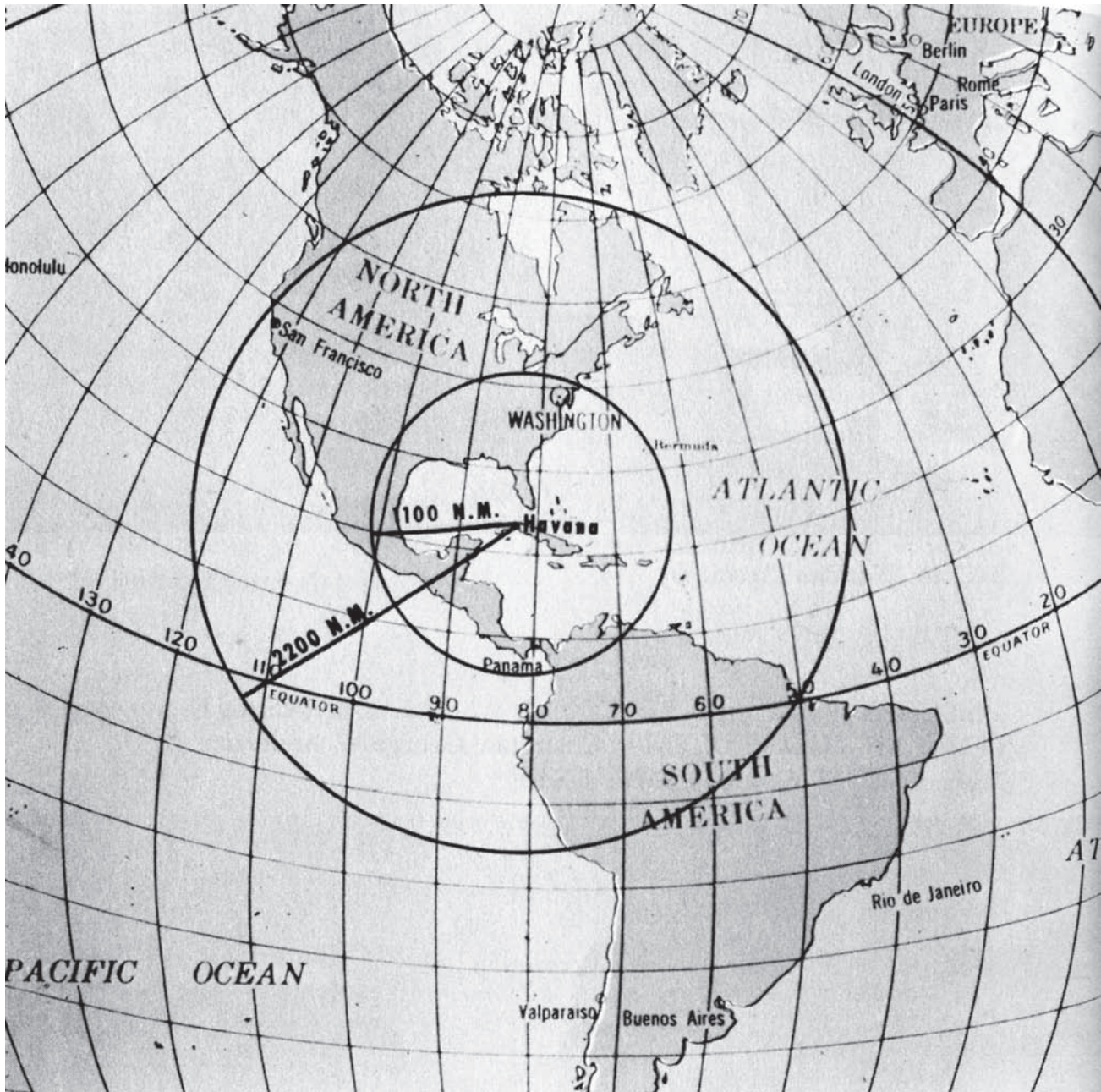
Khrushchev secretly began sending nuclear missiles to Cuba. Weapons of mass annihilation were now only 90 miles away from the United States. It is likely that Khrushchev and Castro believed that these deadly missiles would convince the United States to leave Cuba alone. They were wrong.

The United States, using special spy planes equipped with powerful cameras, discovered that missile sites were being built and also came to the conclusion that Soviet ships were sailing from Russia to Cuba with offensive missiles (they did not know that some of these missiles had already

reached Cuba).

President Kennedy and his advisers were horrified by these discoveries. They felt that they had to respond to this situation. The problem was: "how?" What should they do about the possibility of nuclear missiles pointing at them from only 90 miles away?

Study the map below and answer the questions that follow.



**IMAGE 8:** Range of missiles

2. What do you think this map shows?
3. How might a map like this have influenced how President Kennedy responded to the growing “missile crisis”?
4. What would you have advised President Kennedy to do? Why?

Some of Kennedy's advisers recommended going to the United Nations and asking for its help. Other advisers, especially leaders in the American military like General Curtis LeMay (under whose command the

United States had dropped nuclear weapons on Japan at the end of the Second World War), told Kennedy that the United States must invade Cuba immediately in order to destroy the nuclear missile sites and defeat the

Castro government. LeMay argued, essentially, that the United States would have to invade Cuba sooner or later so they might as well do it now. Kennedy, however, resisted attacking Cuba right away.

*In the boxes below, summarize the possible options Kennedy had in dealing with the issue of Soviet nuclear weapons in Cuba. You should also note what you think each option's likely outcome would be (the first two boxes have been completed to help get you started).*

|                                | Response  | Likely outcome   |
|--------------------------------|---|--|
| Least aggressive response      | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Do nothing</i></li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Increasing fear in the United States.</i></li> <li>• <i>Anger at President Kennedy for allowing the Soviets to bring more and more nuclear missiles into Cuba— only 90 miles from the United States.</i></li> <li>• <i>Political opponents will likely charge that by doing nothing about the missiles, Kennedy is allowing communist power and influence to spread through Latin America and endanger the United States.</i></li> </ul> |
| Moderately aggressive response |   |  |
| Most aggressive response       |   |  |

**Instead of attacking Cuba, Kennedy made this famous speech on October 22, 1962:**

*I have directed that the following **initial** steps be taken immediately: To halt this **offensive** [military] buildup, 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. . . Should these offensive military preparations continue, thus increasing the threat to the hemisphere, further action will be **justified**. I have directed the Armed Forces to prepare for any **eventualities**. . . It shall be the policy of this Nation to regard any nuclear missile launched from Cuba against any nation in the Western Hemisphere as an attack by the Soviet Union on the United States, requiring a full **retaliatory** response upon the Soviet Union. . . I call upon Chairman Khrushchev to halt and eliminate this **clandestine**, reckless, and provocative threat to world peace and to stable relations between our two nations. I call upon him further to abandon this course of world domination, and to join in an historic effort to end the **perilous** arms race and to transform the history of man.*

5. Summarize this speech that Kennedy made in response to the Soviet military build-up in Cuba. What did he say the United States was going to do?
6. How does Kennedy characterize the actions of the Soviet Union?
7. In your opinion, why did Kennedy not invade Cuba immediately to destroy the missiles? After all, Cuba is not a very big country. The American military could have easily defeated the Cubans.

.....

## Glossary

**initial:** first; occurring at the beginning.

**offensive:** designed for attack.

**justify:** to demonstrate or prove to be just, right, or valid.

**eventuality:** something that may occur; a possibility.

**retaliatory:** returning like for like, especially evil for evil.

**clandestine:** kept or done in secret, often in order to conceal an illicit or improper purpose.

**perilous:** dangerous.





**IMAGE 9:** Cuba within the larger Caribbean geographical context

8. Use the map above (Image 9) to explain what Kennedy meant when he said he was beginning a strict **quarantine**, or blockade, of Cuba with the American Navy.
  
9. Why did he do this? What was the point of the “quarantine”?



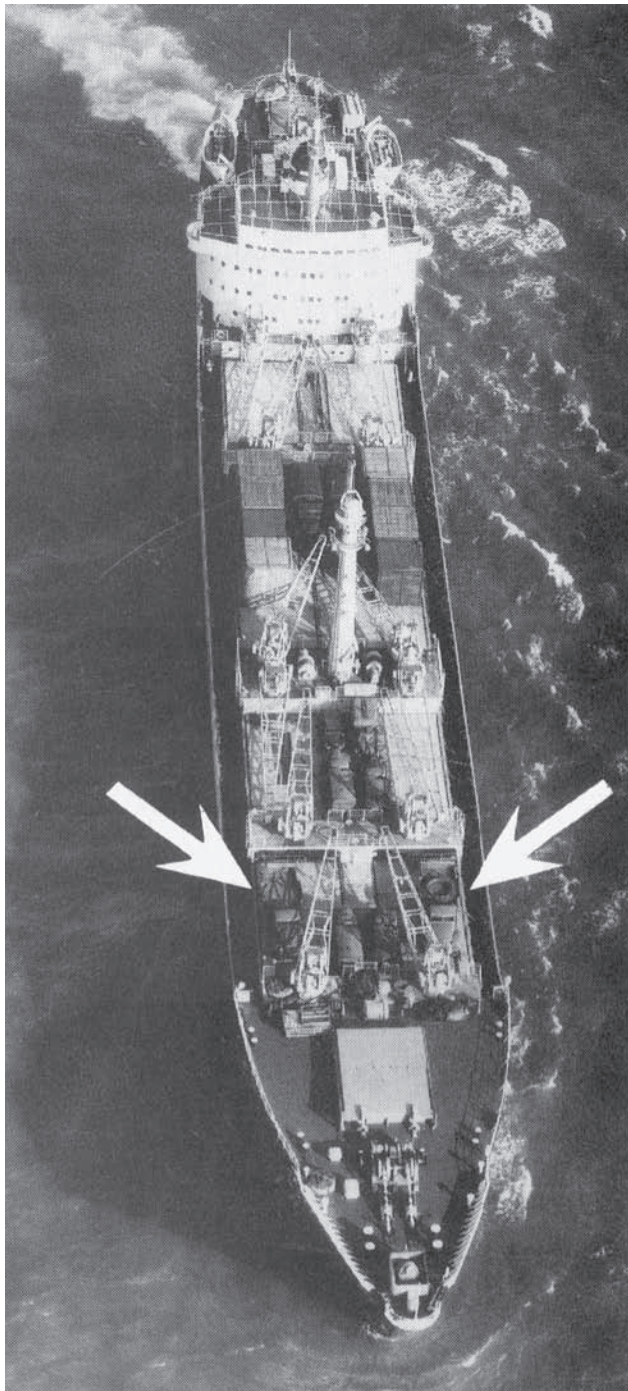
**IMAGE 10:** JFK Signs Quarantine Proclamation, October 23, 1962

The United States declared that it would not allow any Soviet ships carrying missiles or military equipment to pass through

its blockade (“quarantine”) and reach Cuba. In response, the Soviets proclaimed that such a blockade was illegal and that they would contin-

ue sending supplies to their friends in Cuba.

No one knew what would happen next.



How would the Americans react if the Soviet ships did not stop at the blockade line? What if the Soviet ships refused to turn around and go back to the U.S.S.R.? What would the Soviets do if the Americans tried to stop the ships by force? Would America, as Castro feared, invade Cuba to destroy the missile sites and his revolution?

The Soviet ships kept traveling, coming closer and closer to the American blockade. The whole world wondered: was there going to be a war between the world's two most powerful nations?

The historian Arthur Schlesinger, who at the time was an aide to President Kennedy, later said:

*This was not only the most dangerous moment of the Cold War. It was the most dangerous moment in human history.*

**IMAGE 11:** The Soviet ship Poltava on its way to Cuba on October 24, 1962 carrying IRBM missiles (launch rings identified)

10. What did Schlesinger mean when he said this was “the most dangerous moment in human history”? Why was this moment so incredibly dangerous? After all, weren't the United States and the Soviet Union only having an argument about a weak little country called Cuba? What was the big deal?

As the Soviet ships reached the American quarantine line on October 24th, they stopped. The world held its breath. And then, most of the ships slowly turned around and began heading back to Russia.

As American Secretary of State Dean Rusk said,

*We're eyeball to eyeball, and I think the other fellow just blinked.*

11. What do you think Rusk meant by this statement?

Although one Soviet ship continued through the quarantine line, the Americans let it continue after searching it and determining that it carried no offensive weaponry.

Still, the crisis continued and remained unresolved until after October 28th, when Kennedy and Khrushchev worked out a deal to resolve the crisis peacefully.

What had happened?

How were the United States and the Soviet Union able to avoid a nuclear holocaust?

## Resolving the Crisis

### **Here is the message that Chairman Khrushchev sent to President Kennedy on October 28, 1962:**

*In order to eliminate as rapidly as possible the conflict which endangers the cause of peace. . .the Soviet Government has given a new order to **dismantle** the arms which you described as **offensive**, and to crate [box them up] and return them to the Soviet Union*

*. . . Mr. President, I should like to repeat what I had already written to you in my earlier messages [which were sent on October 26th and 27th]—that the Soviet Government has given economic assistance to the Republic of Cuba, as well as arms, because Cuba and the Cuban people were constantly under the continuous threat of an invasion of Cuba [by the United States]. . .The threat of invasion of Cuba and all other **schemes** for creating tension over Cuba are designed to strike the Cuban people with a sense of insecurity, intimidate them, and prevent them from peacefully building their new life. . .I regard with respect and trust the statement you made in your message of October 27, 1962, that there would be no attack, no invasion of Cuba. . .[therefore] the motives which **induced** us to render assistance of such a kind to Cuba disappear.*

*Use a separate piece of paper and answer the questions.*

1. Summarize Khrushchev's message.

In Khrushchev's message, he **implies** that the United States and the Soviet Union came to a **compromise** in order to **resolve** the crisis and avoid nuclear war over Cuba.

2. What did the United States (President Kennedy specifically) do or say that convinced the Soviets to turn their ships around and, more importantly, to take apart their missiles in Cuba and send them back to the Soviet Union?

.....

## Glossary

**dismantle:** to take apart or disassemble; to tear down.

**offensive:** an attitude or position of attack.

**scheme:** a secret or devious plan; a plot.

**induce:** to lead to a course of action by influence or persuasion.

**imply:** to express or state indirectly; to suggest.

**compromise:** a settlement of differences in which each side makes concessions.

**resolve:** to settle conclusively.

Fill in the graphic organizer below to help you clarify the nature of the compromise **implicitly** arrived at by the U.S.A. and the U.S.S.R. Remember, to compromise means that both sides in a dispute agree to do something they might not have wanted to do or to give something up that they wanted to keep, in order to achieve a larger agreement that benefits both parties.

| <b>The Key to Compromise</b>  |   |  |
|---|---|--|
| What did the Soviet Union agree to do or to give up in order to reach a compromise? | + | What did the United States agree to do or to give up in order to reach a compromise? |
|   |   | = Resolution   |
|   |   | no nuclear war   |

Though the United States and the Soviet Union were able to come to a compromise and peacefully resolve the Cuban Missile Crisis, not everyone was satisfied by this outcome. The leader of Cuba, Fidel Castro, was very unhappy.

It is said that Castro, upon hearing of the compromise between the United States and the Soviet Union, screamed

*Nikita [Khrushchev] sold us out!*

3. What do you think Castro meant by this?
4. Why might he have been so upset by the compromise?

.....

## Glossary

**implicit:** implied; not directly expressed.

## Assessment Activity

In order to demonstrate your understanding of the events surrounding the Cuban Missile Crisis, as well as the different perspectives of those involved, you will

work with three classmates to write and perform a short scene that imagines what a televised panel discussion between Kennedy, Khrushchev, and Castro during the

height of the 1962 Crisis would have been like. Each character must have a minimum of five speaking lines. The scene will contain four characters:

- 1) President of the United States John F. Kennedy
- 2) Soviet Chairman Nikita Khrushchev
- 3) Cuban leader Fidel Castro
- 4) An international reporter who will ask questions of the three leaders about the Crisis

The scene, as written by you and your classmates, should use the reporter's questions to the three leaders and their responses to illustrate what was happening between the United States, the U.S.S.R., and Cuba in October 1962. Make sure your scene explains the reasons for the Missile Crisis and, importantly, how it was

resolved. The three leaders in your scene should interact not only with the news reporter but also with each other. The scene should accurately reflect the positions and beliefs of these three men regarding the Cuban Missile Crisis. In addition, you will need to create background visuals and props to help bring your

scene to life. Finally, you can use the title below ("On the Brink") or come up with one of your own.

You will be evaluated on the script that you create (including the background visuals and props), as well as on your performance of the scene.

*Here is the rubric your teacher will use to evaluate your efforts:*

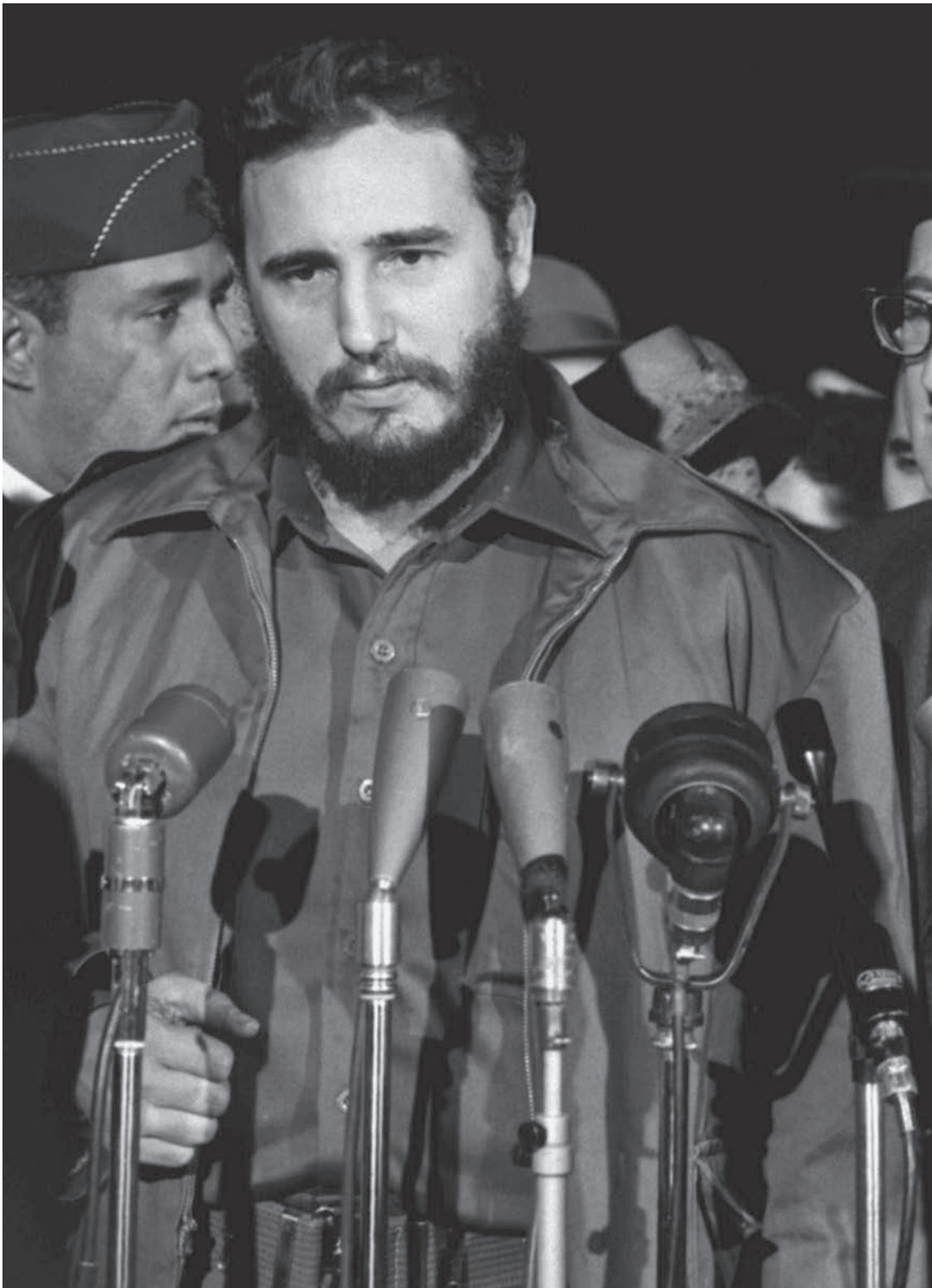
| <b>Student Written and Performed Historical Scene "On The Brink"</b> |   |
|--|---|
|  | Did the script and performance accurately portray Kennedy, Khrushchev, and Castro's perspectives on the Cuban Missile Crisis? |
|  | Was there a minimum of five speaking lines for each person?   |
|  | Did the actors use loud speaking voices?  |
|  | Was the acting used to show emotion and portray events?   |
|  | Were backgrounds and props used to help bring the play to life?   |
|  | Was each group member serious and professional?   |

***The very first line of your script should read:***

**International reporter conducting the interview** (*addressing Kennedy, Khrushchev, and Castro*): Thank you very much to all three of you for joining us tonight as we try to better understand the very dangerous situation that has developed regarding the island nation of Cuba. Chairman Khrushchev, I would like to begin by asking you why the Soviet government would risk upsetting the Americans by attempting to put nuclear missiles in Cuba, a nation only 90 miles away from the southeastern tip of the United States?

**Khrushchev:** [*the rest of the interview is up to you....*]

## On The Brink: From the Bay of Pigs to the Cuban Missile Crisis

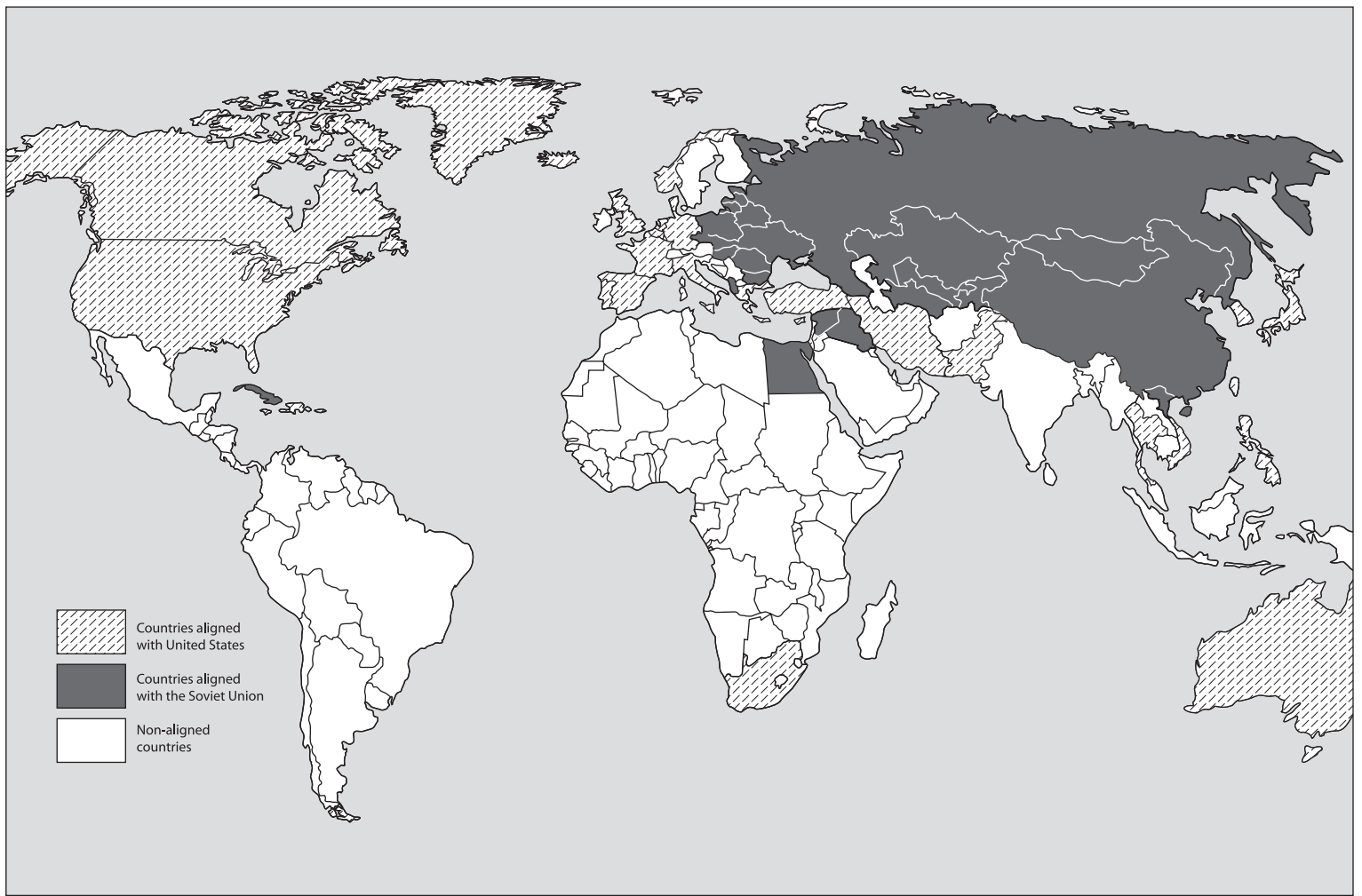


**COVER IMAGE / IMAGE 3:** Warren K. Leffler, “Fidel Castro arrives MATS Terminal, Washington, D.C.” 15 April 1959. Reproduced from the Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division, Reproduction number LC-U9-2315-6. <http://hdl.loc.gov/loc.pnp/ppmsc.03256>.





**IMAGE 1:** Herbert Block, "Lets Get A Lock for This Thing." 1 November 1962. Reproduced from Herbert Block, *Straight Herblock* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1964), p. 77. Courtesy of the Herb Block Foundation.



**IMAGE 2:** “The Cold War World: 1960s.” Adapted from map in Samuel P. Huntington’s *The Clash of Civilizations: Re-making of World Order* (New York: Touchstone, 1997), pp. 24-25. Redrawn by Susan Reese.



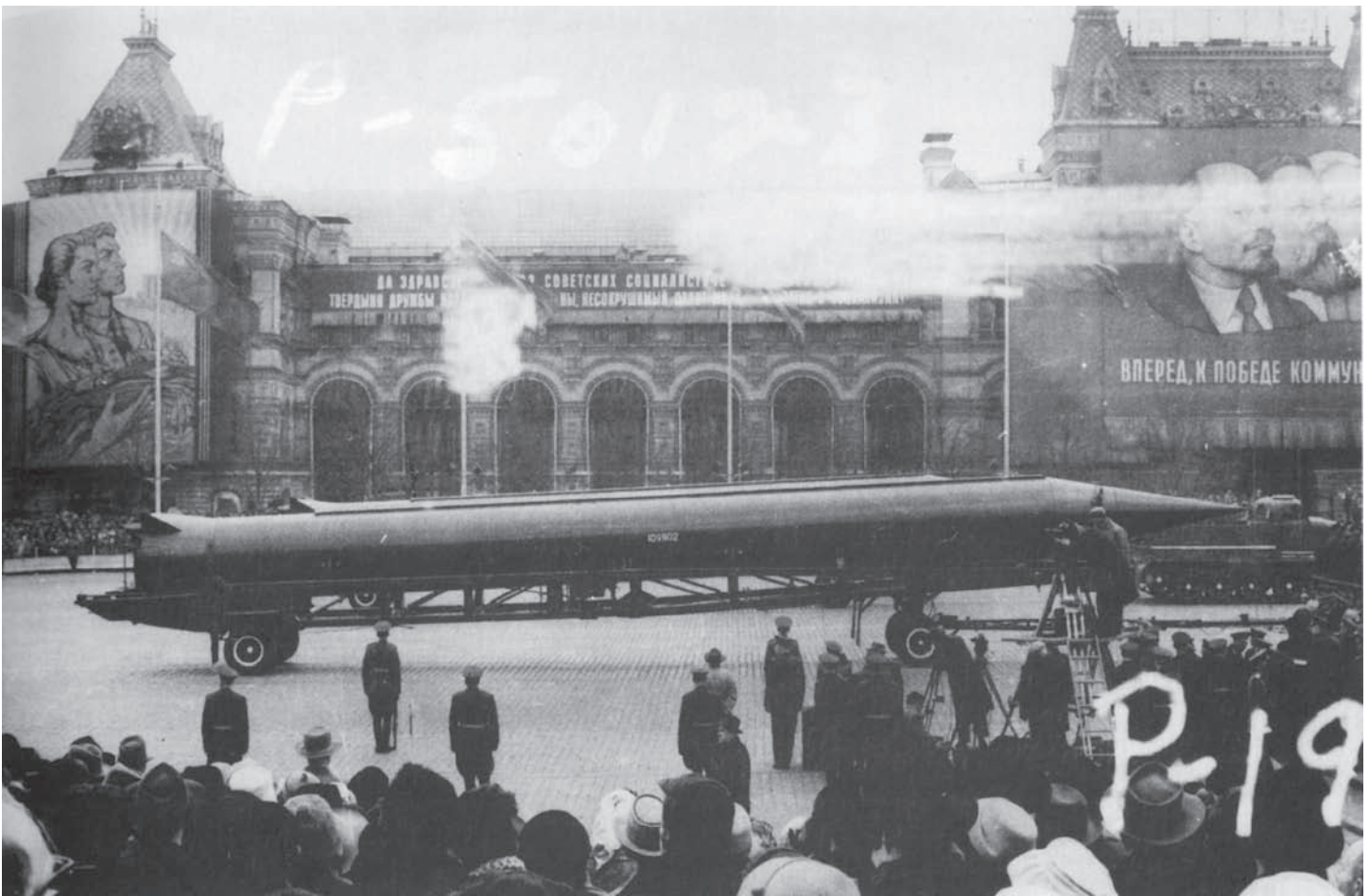
**IMAGE 4:** Herbert Block, "What happens when they run out of foreigners?" (*Washington Post*). 20 October 1960. Reproduced from Herbert Block, *Straight Herblock* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1964), p. 72. Courtesy of the Herb Block Foundation.



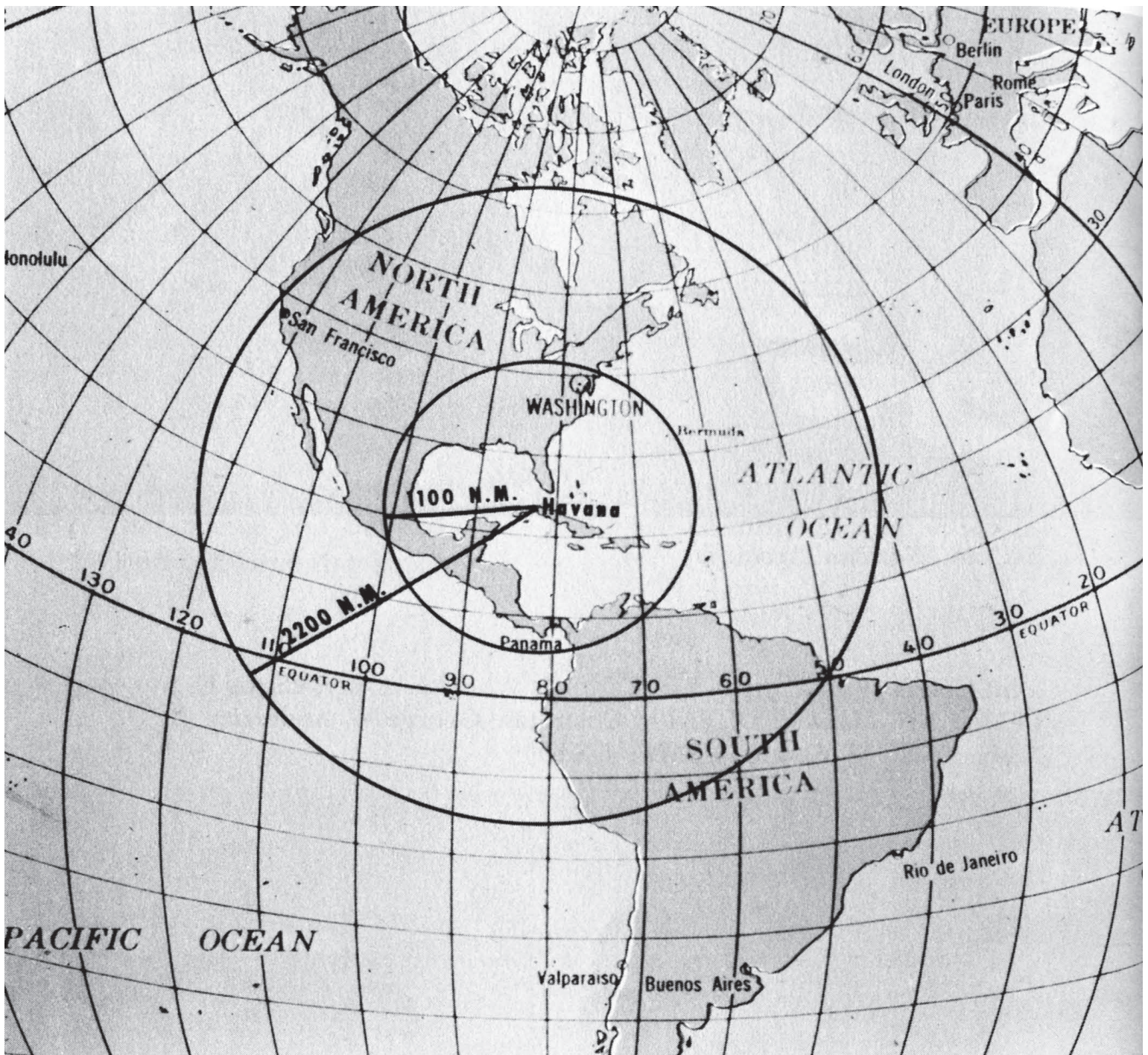
**IMAGE 5:** “Khrushchev and Castro at the United Nations.” 20 September 1960. Reproduced from Katherine A. Sibley, *The Cold War* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1998), n.p.



**IMAGE 6:** Susan Reese, map of Cuba with distance to the United States highlighted.



**IMAGE 7:** “The SS-4 SANDAL MRBM on parade in Moscow.” Reproduced from Dino A. Brugioni, *Eyeball to Eyeball: The Inside Story of the Cuban Missile Crisis*. Ed. Robert F. McCort (New York: Random House, 1991), n.p.



**IMAGE 8:** "Range of Missiles (U.S. Air Force)." Reproduced from David Detzer, *On The Brink: Cuban Missile Crisis, 1962* (New York: Crowell, 1979), p. 216.

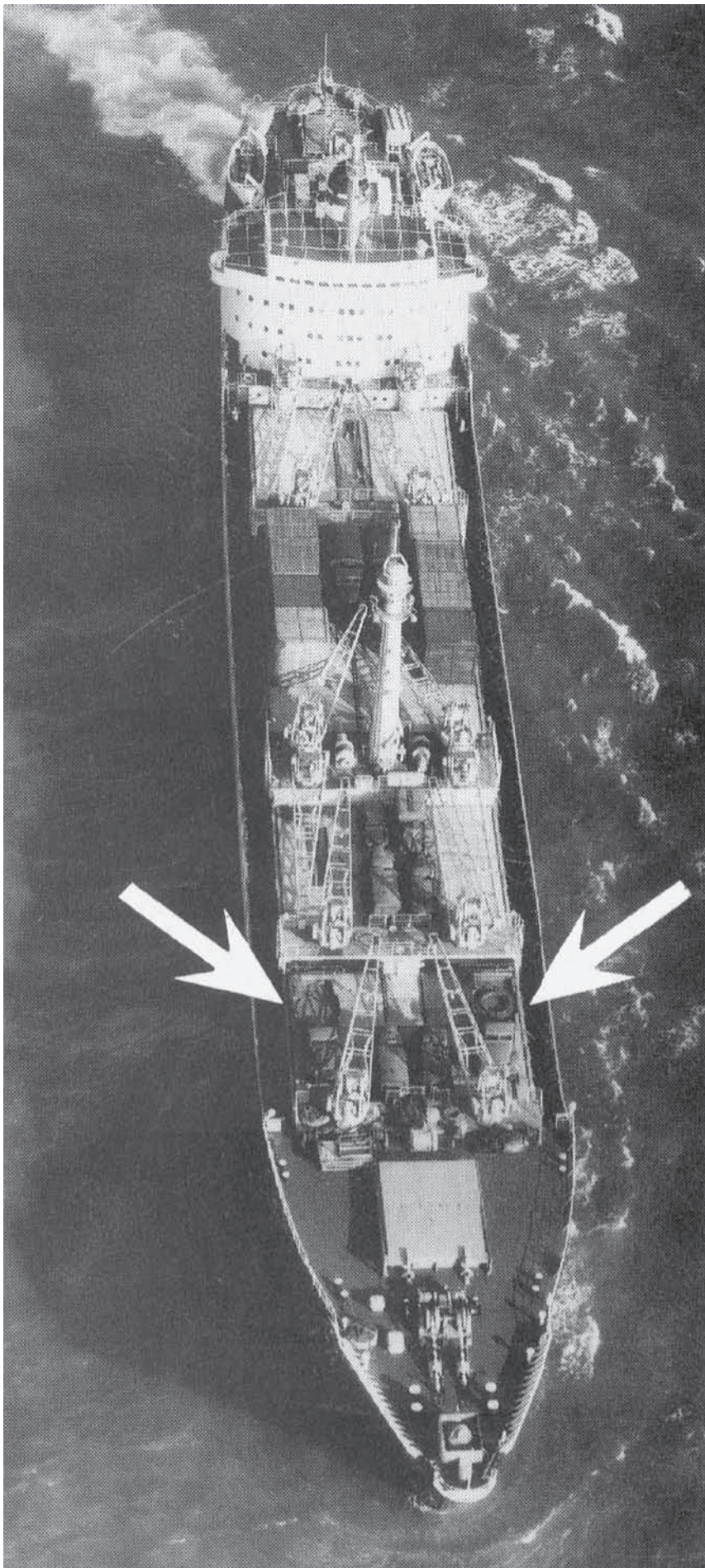


**IMAGE 9:** Susan Reese, map, Cuba within the larger Caribbean geographical context.





**IMAGE 10:** “J.F.K. signs quarantine proclamation” (John F. Kennedy Library). 23 October 1962. Reproduced from Dino A. Brugioni, *Eyeball to Eyeball: The Inside Story of the Cuban Missile Crisis*. Ed. Robert F. McCort (New York: Random House, 1991), n.p.



**IMAGE 11:** “On the deck of the Soviet ship Poltava on its way to Cuba and the American naval blockade.” 24 October 1962. Reproduced from Dino A. Brugioni, *Eyeball to Eyeball: The Inside Story of the Cuban Missile Crisis*. Ed. Robert F. McCort (New York: Random House, 1991), n.p.

# Acknowledgments

## THE UCI CALIFORNIA HISTORY-SOCIAL SCIENCE PROJECT

Dr. Robert G. Moeller, Faculty Director and Professor of History

Dr. Stephanie Reyes-Tuccio, Site Director

Dr. Eileen Luhr and Matthew Mooney, Program Directors

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## HUMANITIES OUT THERE

Dr. Julia Reinhard Lupton, Faculty Director and Professor of English and Comparative Literature

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### SANTA ANA COLLEGE

Dr. Sara Lundquist, Vice-President of Student Services

Lilia Tanakeyowma, Director of the Office of School and Community Partnerships and

Associate Dean of Student Development

<http://www.sac.edu>

This unit would not have been possible without support of Professor Karen Lawrence, Dean of the School of Humanities at the University of California, Irvine; Professor Robert G. Moeller, Faculty Director of the UCI California History-Social Science Project, who provides ongoing intellectual leadership in all areas touching on historical research, interpretation, and teacher professional development; Dr. Manuel Gómez, Vice Chancellor for Student Affairs, who provided funding and has been a steadfast supporter of our work; and the leadership of the Santa Ana Partnership, including Dr. Juan Lara, Director of the UCI Center for Educational Partnerships; Dr. Sara Lundquist, Vice-President of Student Services at Santa Ana College; Lilia Tanakeyowma, Director of the Office of School and Community Partnerships and Associate Dean of Student Development at Santa Ana College; and Dr. Lewis Bratcher, Assistant Superintendent of Secondary Education at the Santa Ana Unified School District.

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Book design by Susan Reese

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—Alice Fahs, Associate Professor of History,  
The University of California, Irvine

## CALIFORNIA HISTORY-SOCIAL SCIENCE STANDARDS ADDRESSED

### Content Standard

#### 11.9.3

Students trace the origins and geopolitical consequences (foreign and domestic) of the Cold War and containment policy, including the the Bay of Pigs invasion, the Cuban Missile Crisis, and Latin American policy.

### Skills

- Students construct and test hypotheses; collect, evaluate, and employ information from multiple primary and secondary sources; and apply it in oral and written presentations.
- Students interpret past events and issues within the context in which an event unfolded rather than solely in terms of present-day norms and values.
- Students understand the meaning, implication, and impact of historical events and recognize that events could have taken other directions.

