# United States History

# Cuban Missile Crisis Reader’s Theater

**Narrator**

# Nikita Khrushchev: Premier of the Soviet Union.

# Anatoly Dobrynin: Soviet Ambassador to the United States.

**Robert McNamara**: Secretary of Defense for the United States.

**John F. Kennedy**: President of the United States.

**Fidel Castro:** Prime Minister of Cuba.

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| *Narrator* | *It is 1959. The people of Cuba, led by Fidel Castro, have overthrown the U.S. supported dictator Fulgencio Batista. Scorning the United States, the Cubans turn toward the Soviet Union for help as Americans set an embargo on Cuba.* |
| Nikita Khrushchev**1960** | The Soviet Union is raising its voice on behalf of, and is offering help to, the people of Cuba who are fighting for their independence. Soviet artillerymen can support the Cuban people with their rocket fire, should the aggressive forces in the Pentagon dare to start intervention against Cuba. |
| *Narrator* | *Americans plan an invasion of Cuba to overthrow the communist government of Fidel Castro. In 1961, the Americans support exiled Cubans in a failed invasion at the Bay of Pigs. The failed invasion brings shame upon Americans.* |
| **Secretary McNamara****1961** | What size Cuban force was considered necessary to buildup enough strength to overthrow Castro?  |
| Nikita Khrushchev**1961** | 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. |
| **John F. Kennedy****1961** | I have previously stated, and I repeat now, that the United States intends no military intervention in Cuba. While refraining from military intervention in Cuba, the people of the United States do not conceal their admiration for Cuban patriots who wish to see a democratic system in an independent Cuba.  |
| **Castro****1961** | Throughout the whole world there are demonstrations in support of us and against the United States. They are surprised because in less than 72 hours we have destroyed the invasion which was prepared by the brains of the Pentagon with all the tactics and preparations of a war. Their plans were defeated. This they cannot accept. |
| ***Narrator*** | *The failed invasion at the Bay of Pigs leads the Cubans to grow even closer to the Soviets. Because the United States had placed missiles in Turkey (close to the Soviets), the Soviets decided to place missiles on Cuba, only 90 miles from America. Americans also began to fly spy planes over Cuba to document the missile activity.* |
| **Dobrynin 1962** | I interrupted Kennedy and asked him, what right American planes had to fly over Cuba at all, crudely violating its sovereignty and accepted international norms? How would the USA have reacted if foreign planes appeared over its territory? |
| **McNamara****1962** | “I don’t know quite what kind of a world we live in after we’ve struck Cuba, and we’ve started it.... How do we stop at that point?” |
| **Kennedy****1962** | Information has reached this Government in the last four days from a variety of sources which establishes without doubt that the Soviets have provided the Cuban Government with a number of anti-aircraft defense missiles.  |
| Nikita Khrushchev**1962** | The Soviet Union, like the other Socialist countries, stretched out a hand of assistance to the Cuban people because we understand full well Cuba’s situation. |
| ***Narrator*** | *President Kennedy and his advisors debate on how to handle the crisis. Can America afford a nuclear war with the Soviet Union?*  |
| **Robert****McNamara****1962** | “I don’t know quite what kind of a world we live in after we’ve struck Cuba, and we’ve started it.... How do we stop at that point?” |
| **Nikita Khrushchev****1962** | You, Mr. President, are not declaring a quarantine, but rather issuing an ultimatum, and you are threatening that if we do not obey your orders, you will then use force. |
| **Anatoly****Dobrynin****1962** | Even though the President himself is very much against starting a war over Cuba, an irreversible chain of events could occur against his will. |
| **Fidel****Castro****1962** | Cuba demands an end to the economic blockade, infiltration by spies and saboteurs, pirate attacks, violations of our air space, and return of Cuban territory to the people of Cuba. |
| **Robert McNamara****1962** | We were eyeball to eyeball and the other guy blinked. |
| **Narrator** | *At the last minute, the Soviets backed down and did force their way to Cuba. President Kennedy worked out a deal with the Soviets. The United States would remove its missiles from Turkey and the Soviets would withdraw from Cuba. The Soviets and the Americans would establish a hotline—the famous “redphone”—to communicate with each other in the future. Kennedy also suggested the need to talk about reducing nuclear weapons.* |
| **John F.****Kennedy****1962** | I agree with you that we must devote urgent attention to the problem of disarmament, as it relates to the whole world and also to critical areas.  |
| **Nikita Khrushchev****1963** | What is the position of the Soviet Union regarding nuclear tests? We stand for the cessions of all tests for all time, where ever they may be carried out. |