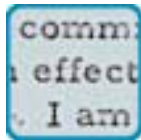


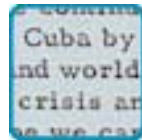


Source 7

Message from Kennedy to Khrushchev, 27 October 1962
(Catalogue ref: FO 371/162388)



7a



7b

Questions

1. How convincing are the arguments used by Kennedy in this letter about:
 - a. wanting to achieve a quick, peaceful solution to the Cuban missile problem,
 - b. reducing tensions between the two sides in general?
2. Having read this letter, do you regard Kennedy as someone recklessly risking world peace or as a reasonable leader prepared to compromise?



HEROES & VILLAINS

Kennedy & Cuba > Why didn't this lead to nuclear war?

Source 7a

Dear Mr. Chairman:

I have read your letter of October 26th with great care and welcomed the statement of your desire to seek a prompt solution to the problem. The first thing that needs to be done, however, is for work to cease on offensive missile bases in Cuba and for all weapons systems in Cuba capable of offensive use to be rendered inoperable, under effective United Nations arrangements.

Assuming this is done promptly, I have given my representatives in New York instructions that will permit them to work out this weekend -- in cooperation with the Acting Secretary General and your representative -- an arrangement for a permanent solution to the Cuban problem along the lines suggested in your letter of October 26th. As I read your letter, the key elements of your proposals -- which seem generally acceptable as I understand them -- are as follows:

- 1) You would agree to remove these weapons systems from Cuba under appropriate United Nations observation and supervision; and undertake, with suitable safeguards, to halt the further introduction of such weapons systems into Cuba.
- 2) We, on our part, would agree -- upon the establishment of adequate arrangements through the United Nations to ensure the carrying out and continuation of these commitments -- (a) to remove promptly the quarantine measures now in effect and (b) to give assurances against an invasion of Cuba. I am confident that other nations of the Western Hemisphere would be prepared to do likewise.



HEROES & VILLAINS

Kennedy & Cuba > Why didn't this lead to nuclear war?

Source 7b

If you will give your representative similar instructions, there is no reason why we should not be able to complete these arrangements and announce them to the world within a couple of days. The effect of such a settlement or easing world tensions would enable us to work toward a more general arrangement regarding "other armaments", as proposed in your second letter which you made public. I would like to say again that the United States is very much interested in reducing tensions and halting the arms race; and if your letter signifies that you are prepared to discuss a detente affecting NATO and the Warsaw Pact, we are quite prepared to consider with our allies any useful proposals.

But the first ingredient, let me emphasize, is the cessation of work on missile sites in Cuba and measures to render such weapons inoperable, under effective international guarantees. The continuation of this threat, or a prolonging of this discussion concerning Cuba by linking these problems to the broader questions of European and world security, would surely lead to an intensification of the Cuban crisis and a grave risk to the peace of the world. For this reason I hope we can quickly agree along the lines outlined in this letter and in your letter of October 26th.

(s) John F. Kennedy

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