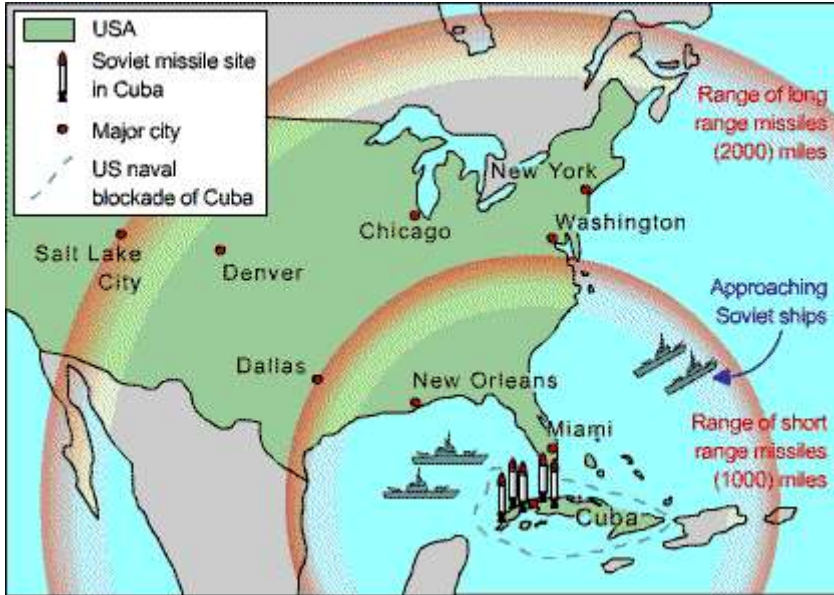


## II.2. The role of the United States during the Cold War

- The Cuba missile crisis (1962)

Key-question : *How did the Cuba missile crisis increase Cold war tensions ?*



A map showing the range of missiles fired from Cuba

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/schools/gcsebitesize/history/mwh/ir2/causesofthecubacrisisrev1.shtml>



Kennedy and Krushchev by **Herbert Block**, 1962

## The Cuba missile crisis.

### Introduction :

We have two documents, which both speak about the Cuba missile crisis in 1962. In 1959, Fidel Castro organized a Revolution in Cuba and nationalized the American economic interests.

The USA wanted to overthrow Castro, but they failed. They installed a blockade against Cuba. This decided Castro to approach USSR. Khrushchev seized the opportunity and installed nuclear missiles basis on Cuba. An arm wrestling began between Pdt Kennedy and Khrushchev. The world stopped breathing.

The first document is a map showing the range of missiles fired from Cuba. It comes from the BBC British website. The second document is a cartoon drawn by Herbert Block in 1962, the year of the Cuba missile crisis. Its name is Kennedy and Krushchev. We can logically wonder about the effects of this crisis on the cold war.

The first document lets us see a map of the United States of America. It shows us the missile range from Cuba, going all the way up to the north of the United States and Canada. It shows us all the important cities of the US such as Washington (the federal capital) or New York, the center of power of the state. It also shows us Soviet ships approaching Cuba and the blockade. This document actually tells us a lot about this crisis. This shows us that the world was about to enter a nuclear world war. The US and USSR ships were about to fire at each other and this is why we can say that the world stopped breathing during this event. With these missiles, the US were very vulnerable and they couldn't therefore allow such a thing as an armed communist state so near. This fear almost made the world fall in a war that would have destroyed everything because of the arms race.

It is too bad that this document doesn't show any precise data about the events even though we can't ask this much from a map. However this document is totally neutral since it only gives facts about this crisis.

The second document is a cartoon where we see two characters, the President of the United States in 1962 Kennedy and the leader of the USSR during the Cuba missile crisis, Krushchev. They are on a chest they are

trying to close. A massive monster-like hand is getting out of the latter along with dark smoke. « Nuclear war » is written on the chest. A dialog between the two leaders on the top of the cartoon says « Let's get a lock for this thing. ». This document shows us the fear that flew over this crisis, especially within both US and USSR governments. We can see that through the characters sweating. It actually shows us that they were themselves aware of the damages a Nuclear War could do all over the world. During this crisis they were almost not enemies. They used words instead of weapons to resolve this crisis and resolved themselves not to ever trigger a nuclear war that would completely destroy the world, shown as a monster in this cartoon. This was the first time in the Cold war that such a thing happened, a moment where the capitalism and the communism put their rivalry aside in order to keep the world from being completely blown away. The first calming period of a cycle alternating crisis and cooling down periods, a characteristic of this cold war.

This document is relatively neutral since it doesn't clearly choose a side. However here again no precise facts are mentioned. This can be explained by the fact that cartoons do not have the same aim as a manual.

Both documents are very useful to help us understand better the Cuba crisis and its effects on the cold war. In a way, we can say that this event has eventually increased the tensions between the US and the USSR. However, we can also say that it was the cause of the first calming period of this part of History. Both documents are relatively neutral. The first one is purely about facts, the second one is made to simplify the version of events.

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