

LOOKING BACK

THE CUBAN MISSILE CRISIS

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THE October Crisis, also known as the Cuban Missile Crisis, brought the world to the brink of nuclear war. This episode, which took place in 1962, cannot be seen separately from the wave of heavy economic pressure brought to bear by the US government against the Cuban revolutionary process from the very start, with the goal of destroying it.

From October 22 to 28 of that year, a series of events occurred involving Cuba with the United States and the Soviet Union, the two world powers at the time, focusing the eyes of the world on the little Caribbean island.

When the United States announced that it was placing a naval blockade around Cuba and preparing for direct aggression on account of the presence in Cuba of Soviet medium and intermediate-range nuclear missiles, Cuba's leadership had already declared a combat alarm, and had mobilized 300,000 people. These were instructed to protect the population and the country's main military, political and economic objectives, to combat the aggressor, and to prepare the conditions for engaging in guerrilla warfare in the mountains if the invader occupied any part of the country.

The background of economic warfare against which these events took place, and this most recent attempt at military aggression, were part of a plan previously drawn up by Washington.

Measures taken by various US administrations aimed at strangling the Cuban economy began to appear in 1959, right after the triumph of the Revolution. When the Agrarian Reform Act was passed and the country's wealth nationalized, a series of US laws were passed creating an economic, commercial and financial blockade of Cuba by the United States.

In February 1962, just eight months before the October Crisis, a total blockade on trade between the United States and Cuba was declared. Previously, as a result of the legislation and pressure from Washington, diplomatic relations were broken off, the northern nation's doors were abruptly closed to Cuban products, Cuba saw itself politically isolated at a regional and international level, and the island was deprived of its supplies of oil and military and strategic materials.

In order to reinforce all these measures, in October all US ports were closed to ships that transported any type of goods to Cuba and which attempted to dock in the United States on the same trip.

Finally, with the crisis now in full swing, the US government prohibited the delivery of offensive weapons to Cuba.

The direct use of weapons to overthrow the Cuban revolutionary government began to be seen as a more and more favorable option in the minds of high-ranking US officials after the defeat of the Bay of Pigs invasion.

It was necessary to erase the bad memory of the swift defeat suffered in Cuban territory. To do so, Washington gave the green light to Operation Mongoose; its objective was to put into practice every form of aggression, including military aggression, against Cuba.

The military measures against Cuba included recruiting and organizing groups on the island that would rise up in arms against the government. Cuba had no choice but to increase its defensive capacity.

In the midst of this situation, the Soviet Union proposed to Cuba that it place rockets in Cuban territory. Cuba accepted, but emphasized the need to announce the bilateral agreement, which recorded that Cuba's response was not solely for the country's defense, but to improve the defensive power of the socialist bloc and to dissuade the United States from attacking.

The Soviet Union's silence with respect to the positioning of the weapons and the discovery of this by the United States led to all sides going through an extremely tense time.

The October Crisis was solved via diplomatic channels. In talks between the United States and the Soviet Union -without consulting Cuba - it was agreed to withdraw the rockets that had been placed in Cuba, with verification guarantees.

For its part, Cuba refused to allow any inspection of its territory and established criteria for negotiations. The first of these was to end the economic blockade and the US trade pressures against Cuba.

After 46 years, the US administration is still maintaining its hostility against Cuba's economy. Neither have the dangers of military aggression disappeared. The willingness of the Cuban people to defend their land also has not abated. □□□

*[C o u r t e s y : G r a n m a
I n t e r n a t i o n a l , H a v a n a]*

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