To what extent was the USA responsible for causing the Cuban Missile Crisis?

Cambridge International AS/A Level – October/November 2017
Syllabus 9389
Paper 43

In my opinion both the USA and USSR are to blame for the start of the Cuban Missile Crisis. For example, after Fidel Castro overthrew Batista at the end of the 1950s the USA should have funded him to prevent the USSR from getting involved. Nevertheless, they refused to lend him funds so he sided with the USSR instead. The USSR should have known that by funding a Socialist Government, only ninety miles away from Florida, would have created tension with the USA.

On the one hand, the USA are to blame by the way they handled the matter after Fidel Castro came to power in 1959. They should have tried to improve relations between the US and Cuba by funding Castro and helping the Cuban Economy. Nevertheless, he was seen as a threat due to his Socialist views and was isolated and refused support. The US even put embargoes on all of Cuba’s exports, except food and medicine, in an attempt to destabilise the economy. Moreover, the Bay of Pigs invasion, aided by the CIA, was seen as one of the major reasons to why the US were to blame. 1,214 of the 1,400 soldiers that were sent over were either killed or captured which resulted in the attack being a disaster for the US. The survivors were released for 50 million dollars’ worth of food and machines which incremented Castro's popularity and support amongst his people. Overall, the attack confirmed that the US were anti-Cuba, resulting in Castro seeing them as an enemy and siding with the USSR. Now it is known that the CIA were to blame for the massacre as the troops lacked training, ammunition and air support. If the invasion was a success then Castro could have been overthrown which would have led to the Soviet nuclear warheads never touching Cuban soil.

The CIA continued to carry out covert operations to sabotage Cuba’s economic targets like its sugar and petroleum deposits. Furthermore, they even attempted to assassinate Fidel Castro and his advisers, and isolate Cuba from diplomatic decisions. These were all carried out under ‘Operation Mongoose’ which was mainly a failure. Furthermore, in 1962 the USA expelled Cuba from the ‘Organisation of American States which once again created more tension between the two countries. The US doing military exercises off the coast of Puerto Rico definitely didn’t improve relations either. Moreover, by the Bay of Pigs Invasion it was clear to the USSR that the US were keen to overthrow the now ‘Marxist’ Castro and remove the ICBMs. Nevertheless, the Soviets were justified to keep the missiles in Cuba to help balance their nuclear global power with the US. If they were removed it would have been seen as the defeat of Communism, also the US could not be trusted not to invade Cuba if the nuclear weapons were removed. Many historians believe that the nuclear warheads in Cuba were not a threat to the USA as they had nuclear missile facilities in Turkey to retaliate with. The move by the USSR was an attempt to balance military power with the USA.

On the other hand, the USSR is also to blame for the start of the Cuban Missile Crisis by how they intervened in Cuba, knowing it would arouse suspicion and threaten the US. After the