

# John F. Kennedy—A Profile in Courage

(By The Associated Press)

John Fitzgerald Kennedy, 35th president of the United States, was the first American chief executive to face the imminent possibility of nuclear war and to move to protect American interests despite the awful risk involved.

In the waning months of the second year of his first term he confronted Soviet Russia's Premier Nikita Khrushchev with a demand to remove Russian nuclear missiles set up in Cuba and pointing at the United States, 90 miles away.

He ordered a naval quarantine on such offensive weapons being sent to the island nation, said ships carrying them would be turned back and called on the Russian premier to withdraw the weapons already there.

## The World Waited

For five days the nation and the world waited for word from Khrushchev, sworn foe of the Free World. On Sunday, Oct. 28, 1962, came intense relief. Khrushchev announced he had ordered work stopped on missile bases, said the missiles would be crated and returned to Russia and promised that the United Nations would verify the dismantling.

Although Khrushchev's retreat was interpreted as a step forward for the United States and the Free World in the Cold War, there still were trouble spots around the earth, imperiling the peace.

Perplexing problems which plagued Kennedy during his first year still awaited settlement.

Unsolved was the question of West Berlin which Khrushchev sought to free of Allied occupation troops. The United States and Russia still were unable to agree on disarmament and banning of underground nuclear tests. Communist penetration continued in Southeast Asia. Communist China had invaded India. Latin America, poor and economically backward, was a target of propaganda from Cuban Prime Minister Fidel Castro. And in Africa newly emerged nations groped their way unsteadily toward stability, often with violence.

To help evaluate these problems Kennedy had an acquaintanceship, at least, with the world leaders. There had been a summit meeting with Khrushchev in Vienna. He had met abroad and at the White House with British Prime Minister Harold Macmillan, West German Chancellor Konrad Adenauer and French President Charles de Gaulle. A steady stream of heads of smaller governments appeared at the executive mansion.

On the home front Kennedy still faced recurring problems. He received some solace from the fact that expected Republican inroads in the 1963 off-year election failed to materialize. However, the nation was troubled by desegregation and the business community viewed Kennedy with distrust.

## The Race for Space

The race into space quickened. Although the United States had sent men into orbit around the earth, Russia, spectacularly, at least, seemed ahead. It had sent two men simultaneously into twin orbits and for many more circuits of the globe.

The Cuban crisis in October 1962 was not the first time Cuba worried Kennedy.

Soon after he was inaugurated Jan. 20, 1961, Cuban refugees with United States backing invaded their homeland in an attempt to wrest it from Castro. The invasion was a fiasco.

While the invasion was in progress Khrushchev warned Ken-



A typical view of President Kennedy. He often conducted business while sitting in his rocking chair. (AP Photo)

ned to "call a halt to the aggression" or else Russia would give "all necessary assistance" in resisting the invasion. But the President replied: "In the event of any military intervention by outside force, we will immediately honor our obligations under the inter-American system to protect this hemisphere against external aggression."

Later, Kennedy warned communist foes and non-communist friends that the United States would act on its own against Cuba's Reds if United States security was threatened.

This is what he did in October 1962.

The nation's first inkling came Sunday, Oct. 21. On Monday it was announced, Kennedy would address the nation at 7 p.m. on a matter of greatest urgency. Meanwhile, it was learned that Congressional leaders had been summoned back to the capital.

## A Stand on Cuba

At the appointed hour a serious, stern President could be seen on the television screen. Without wasting words he outlined evidence of atomic missile sites in Cuba. He put the blame squarely on Soviet Russia which had been assuring the United States it was sending only defensive weapons to the island. Said Kennedy:

"This secret, swift and extraordinary build-up of communist missiles in an area well known to have a special and historical relationship to the United States and the nations of the western hemisphere is a deliberately provocative and unjustified change in the status quo which cannot be accepted by this country, if our courage and our commitments are ever again to be trusted by either friend or foe."

He ordered a quarantine on all such offensive weapons for Cuba and said ships carrying them would be turned back.

He called on Khrushchev to withdraw weapons already there and cease preparation of missile sites. If this were not done, he said, "further action" would be taken. Aerial surveillance would continue, he added.

The days following the quarantine announcement were tense. Military forces were built up in the southeast. The Organization

of American States met the next day and unanimously adopted a resolution offered by Secretary of State Dean Rusk authorizing "the use of force individually or collectively" to enforce the blockade. With that legal backing, Kennedy issued the proclamation to become effective at 10 a.m. the next day.

## Crisis Grows

Tension mounted. The Kremlin stalled. On Friday, Oct. 26, the State Department called attention to the President's speech in which he said if missile site preparation continued "further action will be justified."

At 9 p.m. that night a letter arrived from Khrushchev. The following day—Saturday—a second note from Russia offered to trade Cuba bases for U.S. bases in Turkey.

The United States, parrying the Turkey bid, advised Khrushchev if he was offering to remove offensive weapons for an end to the quarantine and a U.S. promise not to invade Cuba, it was a deal. Khrushchev's fateful message came the next day. He agreed.

But the crisis still was unresolved. Castro, thrust in the background during the tension-filled days, announced he would not permit U.N. on-the-spot inspection.

Russia announced 42 medium-range missiles had been dismantled and shipped home. The U.S. Navy verified it by inspecting freighters en route from Cuba to Russia.

But the United States insisted 30 or more IL-28 jet bombers also must go and continued to demand verification.

## JFK in Control

Observers of the President noted a change in him during the second Cuban crisis. In the first he was described as inexperienced, uncertain and immensely impressed with older and more experienced advisers. In the second he was called poised and assured.

With the Cuban crisis still simmering, West German Chancellor Adenauer flew to Washington to confer with Kennedy on the Berlin problem. It was the aged Adenauer's third visit to the young President and during each the Berlin issue dominated the discussions. Kennedy inherited the Berlin

problem. It had been a thorn since the end of World War II. Khrushchev called West Berlin a bone that must come out of the Russian throat. He threatened to sign a separate peace treaty with East Germany and turn over access to West Berlin to the East German communist regime.

Throughout the spring and summer of 1962 Kennedy issued warnings to Khrushchev that the Western Allies intended to remain in West Berlin. He repeatedly asserted that the United States would stand by its pledge to defend West Berlin.

West Berlin was not Kennedy's only worry. The United States was involved with the communists in such far off places as Laos and the Republic of Vietnam in Southeast Asia.

## The Threat in Asia

In May of 1962 Kennedy dispatched U.S. naval, air and land forces to the Thailand-Laos border because of a pro-communist seizure of control of most of northern Laos.

Two months later a treaty establishing the neutrality of Laos was signed in Geneva by a 14-nation conference. The treaty carried a protocol providing for withdrawal of foreign troops.

Kennedy hailed the accord as a "significant milestone in our efforts to maintain and further world peace." He said, "It is a heartening indication that difficult and at times seemingly insoluble international problems can in fact be solved by patient diplomacy."

As the year drew to a close there were indications, however, that Laos' coalition government of neutralist, right-wing and left-wing was frail and insecure. There were prospects of renewed fighting in the jungle country.

Fighting raged in Vietnam where the communist Viet Cong from the north sought to overrun the country.

## Sums Up 1st Year

In an assessment of his first year in office Kennedy said that failure to reach agreement with the Soviet Union on a nuclear test ban had been his greatest disappointment. Negotiations for a treaty to ban nuclear testing still were in progress as Kennedy began his third year as president. Russia still refused to accept on-site inspection to police underground explosions.

Nuclear testing had been a constant problem. In September, 1961, Russia junked a three-year

moratorium in atomic weapons, attributing its decision to pressure from "imperialistic countries."

Kennedy called the decision "utter disregard of the desire of mankind for a decrease in the arms race."

Russia proceeded with the tests in central Asia between September and November. Khrushchev said one blast in the series was on the plus side of 50 megatons (a 50-megaton blast is equivalent to 50 million tons of TNT).

The Soviet action caused a wave of angry protest and alarm over the danger to humanity that it created. The White House denounced it as a device to incite "fright and panic."

## More U.S. Tests

After Russia's renewal of nuclear detonations, Kennedy announced resumption of underground and laboratory tests by the United States. Such tests do not create the hazard of fallout.

"We have no other choice in fulfillment of the responsibilities of the United States to its own citizens and to the security of other free nations," he said.

The United States resumed atmospheric tests in April 1962 but only after Russia rejected an enforceable treaty prohibiting all tests. Russia promptly resumed tests in mid-summer and the United States followed with more tests in the autumn.

In 1963, however, Russia, the United States and Great Britain agreed to ban all nuclear tests except those underground.

At home Kennedy found himself at odds with the business community and deep in the Civil Rights program.

Industry gasped when he cracked down on United States Steel for announcing a \$6 a ton price increase after signing a wage agreement with the United Steelworkers Union.

## Steel Versus JFK

When Roger M. Blough, president of U.S. Steel, personally advised Kennedy of the price increase, Blough touched off 72 hours of governmental activity which he and his colleagues could not have expected.

Some other steel companies followed the lead of U.S. Steel. Kennedy held a news conference.

In a cold fury—aides said he felt he had been double-crossed by the industry—Kennedy denounced the increase as "wholly unjustifiable and irresponsible defiance of the public interest." (Continued on Page 9, Col. 1)



President Kennedy sprained his back in 1961 during a tree-planting ceremony in Canada and had to use crutches for several weeks after the accident. (AP Photo)