

## 'At the heart of the crisis' from the Süddeutsche Zeitung (25 October 1962)

**Caption:** On 25 October 1962, the German daily newspaper Süddeutsche Zeitung considers possible solutions to the Cuban missile crisis and analyses US policy towards the Soviet Union.

**Source:** Süddeutsche Zeitung. Münchner Neueste Nachrichten aus Politik, Kultur, Wirtschaft und Sport. Hrsg. Dürrmeier, Hans ; Herausgeber Proebst, Herman. 25.10.1962, Nr. 256; 18. Jg. München: Süddeutscher Verlag. "Im Kernpunkt der Krise", auteur:Fackler, Maxim , p. 1.

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## At the heart of the crisis

by Maxim Fackler

It is impossible to foresee when the major crisis over Cuba that has blown up between the Soviet Union and the United States — between East and West — will reach its climax, or to predict what course it will take. Kennedy's decree on the partial blockade of the island has come into force. To avoid a terrible clash, both sides have appealed to the United Nations Security Council: Cuba, henchman of the opposing party, has done the same. At least this has meant that not only do we have proclamation countering proclamation, and possibly warship confronting warship, but now the diplomats also sit facing each other. At least for a moment this dreadful confrontation has been put on hold. Even a breathing space of just a few hours could prove significant. If the Security Council fails to make a decision because of the veto, then the spotlight will shift to the General Assembly. In the meantime, admittedly, the tension continues undiminished.

Certainly, the United Nations can only seek to defuse the crisis with, as it were, conventional means and methods. It would be beyond its might to get to the heart of the matter and settle the issues once and for all. Only Khrushchev and the high command of Moscow Communism can take the sole decision that matters, given the nature of the crisis. The UN can appoint commissions and committees of enquiry, it can endeavour to define the terms 'attack' and 'aggressor', it can put in place some kind of delaying mechanism. At the same time, it appears that all concepts are likely to be interpreted in two different ways, and therein for the UN lies the impossibility, should it succeed in sorting out this critical dispute, of going on to secure a permanent peace. The Soviet Union invokes its variant of the right of self-determination: Cuba for the Cubans. However, this is obviously a pretext, as in his most recent interview (with the former Belgian minister Schreyver) Khrushchev said that the differences between social classes were much more important than any differences between nations.

For Cuba, this means that it is to be pulled into the Communist bloc by force, and will indeed serve as an outpost, for which purpose it has been equipped quite publicly with Soviet missiles. With this action, Khrushchev has broken out of the circle that hitherto delimited his world. It is not that Kennedy was seized with panic-stricken fear at the missiles stationed in Cuba. The longest-range missiles are no less harmful to America if they are launched in the Soviet Union. What set alarm bells ringing was the fact that Khrushchev to some extent went back on his word, that is to say his assertion that any disputes he had with the West were only concerned with 'clearing up problems left over from the last war'. There is, however, nothing of this kind to clear up in the Caribbean. The primary issue is, of course, the United States and the Western hemisphere in relation to the Monroe Doctrine. In the Council of American States, that hemisphere has, incidentally, expressed its approval of the line Kennedy has taken.

America has, then, taken the risk that Kennedy's initiative involves, first and foremost for itself and its hemisphere. The President has not pursued a rollback strategy out of sheer recklessness, but because Communism has advanced, and this is the way in which Kennedy's engagement should be viewed by the whole Western world. He did not consult the Allies in advance, nor did he declare the blockade to be a NATO action. It is the United States that has placed itself in the way of Soviet expansion, but it has done it as our lead power. Amongst other things, it has been done with a view to ensuring that Khrushchev does not upset the status quo — however unstable it may be — when 'clearing up the problems left over from the Second World War' in Europe. Truman feels that he has been transported back to his own period in office, when that very status quo (whose importance was emphasised here yesterday) took its present form. When NATO was created, and with it the American bases, the aim then too was to prevent Soviet Communism stepping violently beyond the borders the war had given it. The American bases in Turkey and Greece, for instance, are there to maintain the existing state of affairs. They do, admittedly, reinforce the division of the world into two opposing blocs, but only the maintenance of this situation can help prevent the outbreak of war.

The United Nations is toiling honestly to stop the world plunging into the abyss. The UN is, however, only the sum of its members and one of them is the Soviet Union. It swears by the strains of the Internationale and also brings its words and melody to bear on the 'international spirit' that the UN is there to serve. In this

head-on dispute between the two superpowers, the UN can only smooth the way, and it may be that its 'conventional' methods will allow the Soviet Union to step back into its own circle. If not, how much would Moscow gain for its doctrine of salvation, which has, after all, created this crisis?