

Cuba is an island in the Caribbean Sea about ninety miles off the coast of the United States. In 1962 because Cuba was friendly with the Soviet Union, it was considered an enemy of the United States. President Kennedy and many Americans were nervous about having an enemy country so close to the United States. American spy planes watched Cuba carefully.

In early 1962 American planes flew over Cuba and took pictures that showed Soviet missiles being set up on the island. These missiles would be able to drop a hydrogen bomb on any city in the eastern part of the United States before we could do anything. President Kennedy decided that it was dangerous to have missiles so close to us in Cuba.

Kennedy told the United States Navy to put a blockade around the island of Cuba to keep any more Soviet ships from bringing missiles into the island. Kennedy also told American soldiers all over the world to be prepared for war.

At first it looked as though the Soviet ships would try to get through to Cuba. Everyone knew that if an American ship had to shoot at a Soviet ship, it might start World War III. If this happened both countries might drop hydrogen bombs on each other, killing millions of people. All over the world people listened to their radios and TVs and wondered if this would be the end of the world.

The leaders of the Soviet Union were in a difficult position. The American spy planes had caught them sneaking missiles into Cuba. They were embarrassed, but they didn't want to look silly or weak by backing down. At the same time, they didn't want to start a war with the United States because they knew there was no way they could win the war.

Just before reaching the ships of the United States Navy, the Soviet ships got orders to turn back. As one man in the United States government said, "We were eyeball to eyeball with the Soviets, and I think they just blinked." After this, the Soviets took their missiles off the island of Cuba and back to Russia.

This event was considered by some to be one of President Kennedy's best moments. People believed it took a lot of courage for him to face down the Soviets, and it took restraint not to start a war. What would have happened if the Soviet ships hadn't stopped?

Over twenty years later more of the story became known. Kennedy had made a secret agreement with the Soviets. He told them that if they would publicly remove their missiles from Cuba, he would quietly remove American missiles from Turkey, a country bordering the Soviet Union. Kennedy also agreed not to invade Cuba.

1. Why did people think Cuba was an enemy of the United States?

2. How did the United States keep an eye on Cuba?

3. What did American spy planes find was going on in Cuba in 1962?

4. Why was this so dangerous?

5. What is a blockade?

6. What might have happened if an American ship had sunk one of the Soviet ships?

7. Why might many people have been killed in a war between the United States and the Soviet Union?

8. Why didn't the Soviets want to back down?

9. What did the Soviets do?

10. Do you agree with the way Kennedy acted? Explain why.

## Guess Whom I Just Bumped Into?

9

When Gerald Ford was president, he made a visit to Hartford, Connecticut. As is usual when the president leaves Washington, the Secret Service went ahead of him to Hartford with his special bulletproof limousine. They worked with the Hartford police to make sure no one would try to harm President Ford.

After giving a number of speeches, the president got into his car, and the Secret Service drove toward the airport. The president's limousine drove with its lights flashing through the streets of Hartford. Several carloads of bodyguards and reporters rode in cars right behind the president.

Suddenly a car came out of a side street toward the president's limousine. The driver swerved, but the car smashed right into the front of Mr. Ford's car, flinging him and the other passenger to the floor on top of one another. The Secret Service, who are trained to react in emergencies like this, leaped out of their cars, drew their guns, and surrounded the car that had just smashed into the limousine. They thought the driver had driven into Ford's car on purpose, as part of an assassination attempt.

What they found in the other car was a bunch of high-school boys who were driving home from a party. The boys were terrified at the sight of all these men pointing guns at them. They had no idea what was going on. The Secret Service got them out of the car and searched them while President Ford's driver roared off toward the airport; he didn't want to take any chances by sticking around. There was very little damage to the limousine because it was so heavily protected by thick metal, but the other car was seriously damaged.

The Secret Service and police found some beer in the boys' car, but the boys weren't drunk. The driver of the other car, a nineteen-year-old boy named James Salamites, claimed that the president's car had gone through a red light. He said he was in the right, that the accident was the fault of the president's driver.

The police investigated and found that the boy was right. When the president's car drives through a city, it doesn't pay attention to red and green lights. Stopping for lights would increase the chance of someone being able to take a shot at the president. But the police are supposed to stop traffic at each intersection. In this case a Hartford police officer had forgotten to stop traffic. Fortunately, no one was hurt.

1. Why does the president take his own car to other cities?

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

2. Why was the president in Hartford?

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

3. What happened as the president's limousine went through an intersection?

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

4. Why did the Secret Service draw their guns and surround the other car?

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

5. What do you think went through the boys' minds right after the accident?

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

6. Why didn't the president stick around to see what happened?

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

7. Why was the other car so much more heavily damaged than the president's car?

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

8. Whose fault was the accident?

\_\_\_\_\_ Why? \_\_\_\_\_

9. Who do you think should pay for the damage to the boy's car?

\_\_\_\_\_

Why? \_\_\_\_\_