

The History of the Time that Almost Ended History

Does everyone remember the Cuban Missile Crisis? Of course you do...unless, of course, you were born too recently. At least, you learned about it in school, right? Those were exciting times back then. Even before that, schools were teaching the kids what to do in case of nuclear war: crawl under your desk, curl up, and kiss your ass goodbye.

They didn't say it quite that way, but if your school was in a major city, that would have probably been the truth. As we know, we never had a nuclear war, but the closest we ever came to one was during the Cuban Missile Crisis.

As the story has been told, the USSR, with Castro's permission, was installing nuclear-armed missiles in Cuba, and when President Kennedy found out, he courageously made the Russians back down and remove them, after some tense negotiations and a US blockade of Cuba. JFK saved the day, and we all lived happily ever after. Well, we all lived, anyway.

That's the official version, but it leaves out some details.

The Real Cuban Missile Crisis

Everything you think you know about those 13 days is wrong.

http://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2013/01/the-real-cuban-missile-crisis/309190/?utm_source=fbb

What we didn't fully learn until years afterward, is that Kennedy himself had created the situation that led to the crisis, and the crisis itself. Recordings of executive security council meetings were then declassified, and the conversations revealed in detail that demanding the removal of the Cuban missiles was entirely unnecessary, and the standoff at the brink of war was a dangerous game that did not need to be played-- and Kennedy and his advisors knew that.

When the USSR removed the missiles, it was not because Kennedy had demanded it but because he had secretly accepted the deal to remove our missiles in Turkey in exchange. The actual story is much more fascinating than the official, inaccurate, one.

There is a hero in the story, though, even though it was not John F, Kennedy. He was Vice Admiral Vasili Arkapov, and he actually saved us all from an actual nuclear war. Appropriately enough, there is a song for him that tells that story.

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The Day Vasili Saved the World <https://soundcloud.com/davidrovics/vasili>

It's a good song. We should remember Vasili.

-cosmicrat Jan 6, 2017

