

THE

POINTING VECTOR

Jamaica, New York, USA

September 16, 1962
October 28, 1962

THE TIME HAS COME TO SAY

NO !!!

Whenever the leadership of a nation has made a hopeless muddle of its affairs, it seeks to divert the inevitable criticism by provoking a crisis. Then, miraculously, public opinion is supposed to come to the support of the government. "In this time of dire emergency, we forget our petty political differences and unite behind our leader to..." - but why spin out the rest of this tired phrase?

On the evening of October 22, President John F. Kennedy announced a U. S. blockade of Cuba. The use of the word "quarantine" rather than "blockade" means nothing. In effect, the United States has seized the right to exercise control over the imports of another country.

With this act, the United States abandons the high moral position from which it condemned the 1956 Soviet invasion of Hungary. It has now become an accepted principle of international diplomacy, acted upon by both major world powers, that no small nation has the right to establish a political-economic system antagonistic to that of any nearby great power. As "nearby" becomes a term describing greater and greater distances, we are brought that much nearer to the End.

The President was stimulated to announce the blockade by the report that atomic missile bases have been constructed in Cuba. But for several years the United States has had atomic missile bases in Turkey, adjacent to the Soviet Union. Other countries bordering on the USSR and in military alliance with the United States are Norway and Iran. If the Soviet Union were to announce a blockade of American arms shipments to any of these countries, what furious outcries there would be in Washington, what fiery pleas to break the blockade! Have we so little confidence in the superiority of our system that we cannot afford to have nearby nations in military alliance with the USSR, while the USSR has not taken this drastic step against nearby nations allied with the United States? Is this a confession that America can succeed only by force of arms, since its tactics in the competition of ideologies have been abandoned?

More immediately, what can the average citizen, aware of the horrors of nuclear war, do about drawing the government back from the reckless brinkmanship of the Cuban blockade? In 1957, the Eisenhower administration proposed "unleashing" the Chinese Nationalists in the Taiwan Straits. The risks of this stand aroused such a storm of protest in letters to the White House that these plans were abandoned for a continuation of the uneasy but quiescent status quo. Another such storm of protest can end the Cuban blockade.

For a blockade is an act of war, and has been traditionally so regarded throughout the history of naval warfare. As an act of war, it will provoke other acts of war on the part of Cuba and its allies, and so on until the End.

One of the things that is supposed to make the American system of government superior to the Soviet system is the right of free choice in elections. This crisis is a test of that alleged superiority. Where does the voter go next week to protest acts of his government which overtly lead to war? Have we a free choice if there is no way of registering opposition to such an important and portentous decision?

In most states the only alternative is between Democrats who docilely support the blockade, and Republicans who want Cuba served for breakfast tomorrow morning. Peace candidates are running only in a few districts...mainly in large cities, who know who will be the first to die if war comes. In New York, there is one ticket on the ballot which opposes the blockade. It is the Socialist Workers Party - a bunch of tired sectarians who are still fighting the issues which animated the Left 30 years ago, and who haven't had a fresh idea since the Prophet Trotsky was brained with an ax in 1940, but who at least are not afraid to protest the President's reckless brinkmanship. The SWP ticket, on Line D of the voting machines, is:

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|---------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| Governor - Richard Garza | Att'y-General - Leroy McRae |
| Lt. Governor - Sylvia Weinstein | Controller - Allen Taplin |
| Senator - Carl Feingold | |

Consideration of this ticket is recommended to every New Yorker.

Needless to say, it is the cities that are most concerned that this blockade does not escalate into a war. Peace demonstrations protesting the blockade have taken place in New York and Chicago, and will continue to take place. No amount of retaliatory power can alter the fact that the cities will go in the first instant of a war.

If the cities die, more than their populations will die with them. It is the great cities of the world which are the repositories of five thousand years of human history, the centers of science, culture, industry, and trade. It is also the cities which have nurtured the growth of mutual understanding, tolerance and acceptance among people of different racial, cultural, and religious backgrounds. If the cities die, the rest of mankind will be thrown back into barbarism - will be nothing but a peasantry, tied to the soil of their birth, ruled over by equally narrow war-lords. Is humanity willing to pay this price for changing the government of one West Indian island?

There are no political, economic, or social issues in the Cuban blockade which are equal in importance to the question of avoiding war. Humanity faces no task so important as preventing war. No ideology can justify the use of war as a threat to gain its aims.

Of course, there have been other crises which have not brought about the End. From Berlin to Laos, crisis has succeeded crisis. Each time the two powers claimed that their vital national interests were involved, and that retreat could not be considered. Each time nuclear war was avoided, though sometimes at a frightful cost in lives as the conflicts were "localized". Perhaps the present blockade will be resolved the same way, with a freezing of the status quo whereby Cuba keeps the arms it has already imported but can import no more. No considerations of "national honor" can keep men of flesh and blood from recoiling in horror at the prospect

of nuclear war.

And then the next crisis will come. Again these same considerations will animate all parties. How often will this happen? How often will "national honor" be invoked? Can we be sure that these risks will not be taken too often? Or are the stakes just going to be raised until we come to the End?

* * *

It has been most interesting to watch the reactions to the Cuban blockade among the students at Brooklyn College. All last week there was an unusually high absence rate - I can't really say that I blame them. I hear such remarks as "Are we going to study trajectories today?" and "See you tomorrow if there is one." An attitude of futility affects some of them, although this may be as much due to the fact that the average grade on the first Physics I departmental quiz was about 55.

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Since making the election recommendations in POINTING VECTOR #11, I have come across further information about some of the candidates, and therefore make the following changes in recommendations for members of the House of Representatives:

Maryland, At Large: Len Sickles, D
New York, 15: Francis Dorn, R
New York, 17: Martin Dworkis, D-L

* * *

"Accept, O God," said Abraham, "My son instead of ram or lamb. "At Thy command I've brought my knife "To sacrifice young Isaac's life." God smiled. "'Tis well, good Abraham!	In many a kindlier era since, This tale has made boys' fathers wince... Yet when the God of War feels gory, Even today, do fathers falter? No - like old Abraham in the story They lay their sons upon the altar.
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"But this time I will take the ram." - Clarence Day

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And now a word to my fellow liberals. What have we got to complain about? Didn't we all vote for this in 1960?

KING LOG IS GONE - LONG LIVE KING STORK!

* * *

Of course, we could let just Mississippi fight Cuba. If Cuba wins, we get rid of a dictatorship which has damaged the US in its foreign relations far more than Cuba has ever done. If Mississippi wins - well, naturally, they wouldn't trust Negroes with guns, so they'll just send a white army to Cuba, and the Negroes will take over at home. And if they destroy each other, the US will be rid of both troublesome southern dictatorships. I'm even willing to throw in South Carolina into the bargain.

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And, speaking of trusting men with guns, if the Cuban people are so anti-Castro, what are these 650,000 militiamen doing, or not doing, with the guns they keep with them all the time?

* * *

If Khrushchov had a sense of humor (a quality lacking in most national leaders these days) he could just repeat Kennedy's October 22 speech, substituting "Turkey" for "Cuba" throughout. Jules Feiffer has expounded on this theme in his cartoon of last week - see the New Republic, Village Voice, or New York Post.

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John Boardman
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166-25 89th Avenue
Jamaica 32, New York
U. S. A.

"When armies begin to move and flags wave and slogans pop up watch out little guy because it's somebody else's chestnuts in the fire not yours. It's words you're fighting for and you're not making an honest deal your life for something better. You're being noble and after you're killed the thing you traded your life for won't do you any good and chances are it won't do anybody else any good either.

"Maybe that's a bad way to think. There are lots of idealists around who will say have we got so low that nothing is more precious than life? Surely there are ideals worth fighting for even dying for. If not then we are worse than the beasts of the field and have sunk into barbarity. Then you say that's all right let's be barbarous just so long as we don't have war. You keep your ideals just as long as they don't cost me my life. And they say but surely life isn't as important as principle. Then you say oh no? Maybe not yours but mine is. What the hell is principle? Name it and you can have it.

"You can always hear the people who are willing to sacrifice somebody else's life. They're plenty loud and they talk all the time. You can find them in churches and schools and newspapers and legislatures and congresses. That's their business. They sound wonderful. Death before dishonor. This ground sanctified by blood. These men who died so gloriously. They shall not have died in vain. Our noble dead.

"...But what do the dead say?"

- Dalton Trumbo
Johnny Got His Gun