



James B. Donovan
Reveals:

"The Castro I Know"

■ EDITORS' NOTE: A year ago this week—on Oct. 22, 1962—the United States imposed its blockade of Cuba to break the dangerous buildup of Russian military power on the island. This show of strength impressed Khrushchev, and he eventually backed down. But in the meantime the world teetered on the brink of possible nuclear war. No one who lived through those awful days last October will ever forget how the evil designs of Cuba's fanatical dictator, Fidel Castro, can affect all of us. Here is a personal appraisal of this dangerous man, who still works to destroy our way of life, by the American who probably knows him best.

By **BILL SURFACE**

FIDEL CASTRO glared suspiciously from behind a long table at the Presidential Palace in Havana as he was introduced to James B. Donovan, the stocky, white-haired New York lawyer.

Donovan was there to ransom the 1,163 Bay of Pigs invasion prisoners. But Castro's hostility indicated he might actually believe Havana television's warnings that "Agent Donovan is in Havana camouflaging another invasion."

The Cuban demagogue's eyes, already agitated, seemed to boil when he met Donovan's two stony-faced Cuban interpreters—both fathers of invasion prisoners. This is going to be a hostile day, Donovan said to himself.

Castro, a born orator, launched into a fiery anti-American speech. Donovan systematically countered, breaking Fidel's momentum by requesting translations. The confrontation dragged on for four hours but accomplished nothing. "We only felt each other out and parted," Donovan said when I interviewed him recently.

But fortunately, 15 meaningful—sometimes even amiable—discussions stretching over five weeks followed, as Castro and Donovan negotiated for the release of the invaders plus 7,300 relatives and political prisoners. Thus, Donovan's personal evaluation of Castro is, in all probability, the only accurate, current portrait we have of the inflammable Cuban dictator.

Donovan related his Cuban adventures to me as he relaxed in his New York office. On his desk

