## The Cuban Missiles Crisis: 1. Causes

The Cuban Missile crisis is the crisis-point of the Cold War. It is the time when the world came nearest to annihilating itself.

#### **Causes**

Tensions between East and West are never far below the surface but in the lead up to the crisis they had become very dangerous.

#### 1. Tension between USA and USSR

#### a. The Arms Race

In 1949 the USSR produced its own atomic bomb. This started an arms race with the USA:

- 1952: **Hydrogen Bomb** produced by the USA; the USSR followed suit the next year.
- 1957: **ICBM** (Inter-continental ballistic missile) developed by the USSR, which could reach the USA from a firing point in the USSR; The USA responded with their own ICBM (the *Atlas*) soon afterwards, which they placed in Turkey.
- 1958: **Sputnik 1** (the first earth satellite) launched by the USSR; the USA launched their own a few months later.

By 1960, the Soviet Premier, Khrushchev, felt like a man boxed in by enemies. For example, he cited the U.S. missiles in Turkey just 150 miles from the U.S.S.R. Cuba is only 90 miles off the coast of Florida but the 60 mile difference is "nothing for a missile," Khrushchev said. Most of all, however, Khrushchev feared a first-strike by the U.S. If the Soviet Union lost the arms race so badly, he worried, it would invite a first-strike nuclear attack from the U.S. Consequently, Khrushchev began looking for a way to counter the United State's lead.

## b. Hot Spots

East and West had also come very close to direct conflict on a number of occasions since 1945:

• Berlin Blockade (1949)

Korean War (1950-53)

Berlin Wall (1961)

## 2. Tension between USA and Cuba

# a. Fidel Castro gets friendly with USSR

- **1959**: the Communist Fidel Castro took power in Cuba. This is very threatening to the USA because it is right next to America.
- 1960: Castro made a trade agreement with Russia, whereby Cuba sent sugar to Russia, in return for oil, machines and money. This frightened the Americans more, and they stopped trading with Cuba. In retaliation, Cuba nationalised all American-owned companies.

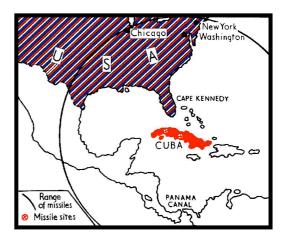
## b. The Bay of Pigs and its aftermath

- 1961: In April 1961 the CIA encouraged, funded and transported an attempt by anti-Castro Cuban exiles to invade Cuba at the <u>Bay of Pigs</u>. It failed miserably, greatly embarrassing Kennedy. In September 1961, therefore, Castro asked for and Russia publicly promised weapons to defend Cuba against America.
- 1962: The US Armed Forces conducted a mock invasion of a Caribbean island to overthrow a fictitious dictator whose name, Ortsac, is Castro spelled backwards. Additionally, the U.S. is drafting a plan to invade Cuba (Operation Mongoose). The mock invasion and invasion plan are devised to keep Castro nervous.

# 3. The Outcome: The World comes to the brink of Nuclear Holocaust

On **14 October** an American U2 spy-plane took pictures of a nuclear missile base being built on Cuba. Kennedy's advisers told him he had 10 days before Cuba could fire the missiles at targets in America.

The diagram to the left shows the range of the missiles based in Cuba. The situation now looked deadly serious.



#### Tack:

- 1. Produce a Mindmap outlining the causes of the Cuban Missile Crisis. Use illustrations and extra details from the textbook as appropriate.
- 2. Produce a Venn diagram showing how
- USSR
- USA
- Cuba

Is responsible for the Crisis.

3. Using your completed diagram, answer this question: "Which country is most responsible for the Cuban Missile Crisis?"