**Key topic 2: Cold War crises, 1958–70**

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Lack of prosperity in East Berlin. Use of West Berlin as an escape route for refugees. USSR desire to stem flow of refugees and Khrushchev’s demand that the West withdraw.


Cuba as US sphere of influence prior to Castro’s rebellion. Actions after revolution such as nationalisation of US-owned facilities, US reduction of sugar imports and Cuban deal with Soviet Union for sugar exports, and Castro’s adoption of communism.

Failure of Bay of Pigs operation in attempt to overthrow Castro regime, driving Castro closer to Soviet Union.

Opposition in Czechoslovakia to Soviet control: the Prague Spring, Dubcek’s reforms such as relaxation of censorship, legalisation of political opposition groups, the right to criticise the government, more power to regional governments and to the Czech parliament and the introduction of elements of capitalism in the economy; production of new literature supporting the changes.

The construction of the Berlin Wall, 1961. Erection of fence, followed by construction of more permanent structure, dividing the city and preventing refugees travelling from east to west Berlin.

The events of the Cuban Missile Crisis. Key events, for example photographs of Soviet missile bases in Cuba, Kennedy’s decision to blockade Cuba, confrontation of Soviet ships, US plans for invasion of Cuba, messages from Khrushchev (agreement to remove the missiles if US promise not to invade Cuba; request that USA withdraws missiles from Turkey), public acceptance by Kennedy of first message, private agreement to second.

The Brezhnev Doctrine and the re-establishment of Soviet control in Czechoslovakia. Brezhnev’s fear of reforms in Czechoslovakia and reaction, for example invasion and re-establishment of control by Warsaw Pact troops and tanks, resistance from ordinary citizens but not Czech army, Brezhnev Doctrine statement that Eastern bloc countries would not be allowed to go their own way.


Cuban Missile Crisis as climax of US policy of brinksmanship. Realisation of need for improved communications: ‘hot line’ allowing immediate contact between the US and Soviet leaders. Limited Test Ban Treaty ban on the testing of nuclear weapons above ground and under water.


International reaction to Soviet measures in Czechoslovakia. Some opposition to the USSR. USA protest but lack of action. Mixed response from Eastern European countries.