

## ***From Berlin to Cuba: Background to the Cuban Missile Crisis***

**Germany** Cold War tensions persist in spite of 'thaw'  
1955: West Germany joins NATO  
East Germany joins the Warsaw Pact  
E. German gov't not recognized by the West  
West Berlin a "capitalist provocation" in the heart of East Germany  
Since 1949, 3 million Eastern Europeans fled to the West  
through West Berlin  
West German rearmament and its EEC membership puts it  
militarily and economically in the western bloc

1958: Khrushchev plans to hand over control of East Berlin to E. Germany and  
calls for Berlin to be made a "free city" and withdrawal of allied armies.  
Means that access to Berlin to be under East Germany's control  
1959: Khr visits US and meets with Eisenhower to discuss Berlin issue  
US-Soviet summit meeting planned for Paris 1960  
But, U2 spy plane sent by US shot down over Russia May 1960, on the  
eve of summit; pilot Gary Powers is captured  
Khr demands apology; Ike refuses to apologize or abandon spy flights

### Consequences:

- \*Summit meeting fails to resolve Berlin question
- \*Berlin Wall built in Aug. 1961
- \*US: rapid military build-up (already increased after 1957 Sputnik  
Soviet launch of first space satellite)
- \*Khr embarrassed by U2 revelations of actual Soviet military  
strength (less than he claimed)

US concern about being behind in the arms race (the so-called 'missile  
gap') is unfounded:  
US has 1000 bombers, 48 Polaris, 40 ICBMs, 100 intermediate range  
missiles in Europe  
Soviets couldn't threaten continental US with their 200 bombers, 10  
ICBMs

**Sino-Soviet Split** Khr fears appearing weak to China which accuses him  
of 'selling out' the communist revolution

Khr attempts to regain prestige, credibility and strategic advantage by seizing  
on opportunity presented by Castro's communist revolution in Cuba in 1959.  
Also a show of Soviet support for 'wars of liberation' (context: Third World  
decolonization) in its rivalry with China as leader of communist world.  
Consequence: Soviets cultivate Castro as an ally; place defensive and then  
offensive missiles in Cuba in 1962 leading to Cuban Missile crisis (Cold War  
climax).