

CRISIS IN BERLIN

The German Problem again

In 1961, Berlin was again to become the focus of international attention. West Berlin was a thorn in the communist flesh. It provided a route of escape from communist rule. Its capitalist affluence and splendor stood in dark contrast to life in the East. It was a centre for western espionage activities.

Khrushchev provoked crisis in 1958 when he threatened to hand over western access routes into West Berlin to East Germany. He demanded a final settlement of German frontiers and issued a directive that occupying armies withdraw from West Berlin. The West did not yield and Khrushchev backed down.

In January 1961, America had a new ambitious and resolute president. In his inaugural address to the American people, John F Kennedy declared.

‘Let every nation know, whether it wishes us well or ill, that we shall pay any price, bear any burden, meet any hardship, support any friend, oppose any foe to assure the survival and success of liberty.’

When Khrushchev met Kennedy in Vienna in June 1961, he once again emphasized determination to remove the western powers from the outpost in East Germany and to halt the tide of defections from East to West. Kennedy was defiant. In a radio broadcast on July 25th he proclaimed “West Berlin has many roles. It is more than a showcase of liberty, a symbol an island of freedom in communist sea. It is even more than a link with the free world, a beacon of hope beyond the Iron Curtain, as escape hatch for refugees. West Berlin is all that, but above it all, it has become as never before the great testing place of Western courage and will.”

The Berlin Wall

The frontier between East and West Germany was a formidable defence barrier of watch-towers, barbed wires, search lights, minefields and continuous patrols of armed guards. Berlin was a gaping hole in the Iron curtain. The exodus of refugees from the communist system left East Germany administration was determined to seal off this ‘escape hatch’ and block all subversive activity. On August 13th 1961, barbed wire fences were erected along the frontier between East and West. On August 17th these were replaced by impregnable stone wall. Families were forced to live apart as Berlin became a dissected city in a divided nation.

America protested to Russia about this action, but Kennedy was not willing to risk war over Berlin. It appeared that Khrushchev and his allies had won this particular round. The wall symbolized the great divide between East and West. Time magazine poignantly states,

‘The significant of the wall extended far off Europe the overarching symbol of cold war and one of the places where Western alliances and Warsaw Pact came gunsight to gunsight... but the barrier stood as a reminder of the limits of power in the nuclear age. Paradoxically, the wall, despised though it was acted as a bulwark for stability in Europe, ratifying two spheres of influence and thus maintaining the alternative of cold war to a hot water.’

In 1963 President Kennedy praised the West Berliners ‘All free men wherever they may be are citizens of Berlin and thus I take pride in saying “Ich bin ein Berliner”

Key terms

AFFLUENCES – having a lot of money and possessions or organization to join an opposing one.

DEFECTION – it is a fault or flaw in something / someone that leaves their country

BULWARK –

EPITOME – a person that is a perfect examples of something

KEY QUESTIONS:

1. What are the factors led to the increase of tension in Berlin?
2. How did the constitution of the wall affect the relations between East and West?

VIII. Explain how the Berlin Wall crisis further affected the relations of the Superpowers.

- West Berlin was a **thorn in the communist flesh** because;
 - i. It provided a route of escape from communist rule
 - ii. Its capitalist affluence and splendor stood in stark contrast to the life in the East
 - iii. It is a center for Western espionage activities

*** Berlin was the gaping hole in the Iron Curtain..

- The Berlin wall crisis symbolized **the great divide between East and West. This crisis deteriorated their relations** as America protested to Russia about this action but Kennedy (the US president) was not willing to risk a war over Berlin.

- The crisis also maintaining the alternative of cold war to hot war



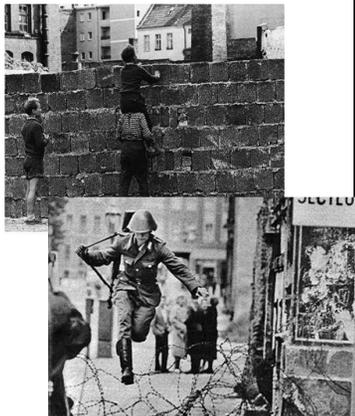
1. Describe why the Berlin wall was erected?
2. Identify why did not Kennedy stop the building of the Berlin wall?
3. Describe why did Khrushchev order to build the wall?
4. Explain how did the crisis affect the relations of the Superpower according to notes and resources provided?

THE BERLIN CRISIS

Kennedy increases military spending

Khrushchev builds a wall...

- Berlin Wall
- Visible symbol of two Germanys
- Kennedy sends 1,500 US troops to West Berlin



Berlin Wall