

Part Two:

Cold War crises 1958–70

NAIL IT!



Learn the key details of the East Germany refugee crisis. It was the major cause of increased tensions over Berlin.

Tensions over Berlin and the Berlin Wall

Khrushchev likened West Berlin to a fish bone stuck in his throat. He wanted to get the Western powers out of the city for good. Khrushchev failed in this aim, however, and this led to the construction of the Berlin Wall.

Increased tensions over Berlin

As a consequence of the Berlin Blockade, Germany was formally split into two countries in 1949. Berlin, now surrounded by East Germany, was itself divided between East and West. By the late 1950s this city was becoming a major source of Cold War tension for the following reasons.

1 Refugees. East German soldiers patrolled the border between East and West Germany and prevented anyone trying to flee the communist regime. However, huge numbers were still managing to escape through Berlin.

- Berlin was the one ‘gap’ in the Iron Curtain. East Germans just needed to travel into West Berlin, which was relatively easy. Once there, they could freely go to West Germany.
- The number of refugees leaving East Germany was enormous. By 1961 East Germany had lost one-sixth of its population. In 1961 20,000 people were leaving every month.
- This was highly embarrassing for the Soviets, who always claimed that communism was better than capitalism.
- The people leaving were mainly skilled workers and professionals, including engineers, doctors and teachers. Their loss was creating an economic crisis in East Germany.

DO IT!

Write a paragraph explaining why Khrushchev wanted the West out of Berlin.

STRETCH IT!



The Americans and British exploited the position of Berlin in order to spy on the Soviets. Investigate this further. You could look into the Teufelsberg spy station, as well as Operation Gold, a top secret mission to tap into Soviet Army communications. Try and find out how successful they were.

Push factors in East Germany

No political freedom
A repressive secret police called the **Stasi**
Low living standards
A shortage of basic goods

Pull factors in the West

Political freedom
Higher living standards
Plentiful consumer goods
Higher wages