

The Berlin Crisis 1961.



The city of Berlin was a problem area because it was partly controlled by the Americans although it was located inside the Eastern Bloc.

The USSR refused to recognise West Germany and America refused to recognise East Germany.

West Germany was attractive to many East Berliners, because its people enjoyed greater freedom and wealth. Between 1949-1961, 2.7 million East German refugees escaped to West Berlin.

As a result, in November 1958, Khrushchev declared that the whole city of Berlin officially belonged to East Germany. US troops had six months to withdraw.



America had 20 times more nuclear weapons than the USSR. Moreover, American weapons were able to reach the USSR, whereas Soviet weapons could not reach America.

Khrushchev's solution to the Berlin Crisis was to build a wall separating East and West Berlin, making it impossible for East Germans to escape to the West.

On the night of 12 August 1961, East German troops secretly erected a barbed wire fence around the whole of West Berlin.

In the coming months the fence was reinforced and replaced by a heavily guarded wall.

Soviet tanks were used to block Western access to the East, causing a day-long stand-off with US tanks on 27 October.

The wall stopped East Germans escaping to the West. It allowed Khrushchev to avoid war and thus appear strong. It became a symbol of the division between East and West.



Peter Fechter wanted to cross the wall into West Berlin. He jumped from a window into the 'death strip'. However, during the climb into West Berlin he was shot. He fell back into the 'death strip' where he was left screaming for help for almost an hour until he bled to death.