

The Berlin Crisis

Source: CVCE. European Navigator. Etienne Deschamps.

Copyright: (c) CVCE.EU by UNI.LU

All rights of reproduction, of public communication, of adaptation, of distribution or of dissemination via Internet, internal network or any other means are strictly reserved in all countries.

Consult the legal notice and the terms and conditions of use regarding this site.

URL: http://www.cvce.eu/obj/the_berlin_crisis-en-1c149e53-2bde-4387-8263-cb594ca78d75.html

Last updated: 07/07/2016



The Berlin Crisis

Since the Berlin Blockade of 1948–1949, the Western sectors of the city had been a central factor in East-West tensions. Even after Stalin died in 1953, West Berlin remained a capitalist thorn in the side of the Socialist camp. In 1958, Nikita Khrushchev threatened to conclude a separate peace agreement with the German Democratic Republic (GDR) if the Western powers refused to recognise the status quo in Germany and the effective division of the country after the war.

At the same time, increasing numbers of Germans from the East were moving through Berlin to the West to escape the Communist regime and its economic problems. Almost three million people left their homes between 1949 and 1961. The migration was stopped on the night of 12 to 13 August 1961, when East German workers, flanked by soldiers, built a wall between East and West Berlin that made passage impossible.

The Western powers, resigned, could only register their verbal protests. During a visit to Berlin on 26 June 1963, US President John F. Kennedy expressed his sympathy for West Berlin by declaring 'Ich bin ein Berliner'. In practice, it was virtually impossible to cross the 'wall of shame'. This closed border became the most tangible symbol of the Cold War and the division of Europe.