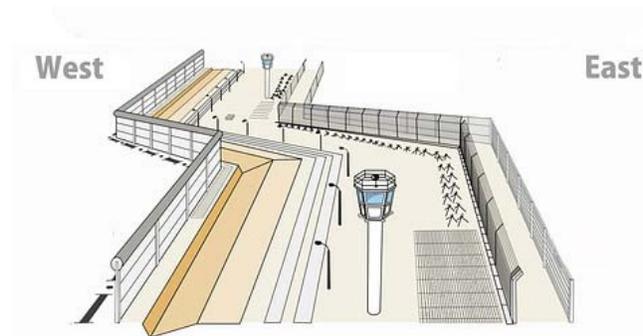


The Berlin Wall

Berlin is the capital of Germany. After World War II, it was controlled by all four major powers: the Soviet Union, the United States, Britain, and France. Germany was divided into two separate countries. East German, controlled by the Soviet Union, became communist. West Germany, allied with Britain, France, and the United States, remained democratic.

Over time, many people in East Germany moved to West Germany, because they did not want to live under the communist system. From 1949 to 1959, over two million people fled East Germany. 230,000 people defected in 1960. It was not difficult for these people to leave, as Berlin was under the control of the four major powers.



The Soviets and the East German leaders solved the problem by building the Berlin Wall in 1961 to separate East and West Berlin. The first "wall" was only a barbed wire fence. But that first fence would come to be replaced with a concrete wall that was 12 feet

high and 4 feet wide. There were also guard towers along the wall. The wall became a concrete representation of the figurative "Iron Curtain" that divided western democratic countries from the communist countries of Eastern Europe during the Cold War. The Berlin Wall stood for 28 years. During that time, about 5000 people escaped over or through the wall, and around 200 were killed trying.

By the late 1980s, the Soviet Union was starting to fall apart. They were losing their influence on East Germany. In 1987, U.S. President Ronald Reagan made a speech in Berlin, calling upon the Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev, to "Tear down this Wall!" and in 1989, the wall was dismantled. Germany officially became a single country again on October 3, 1990.