The Berlin Wall

1961-1989
Berlin Wall—What was it?

- A wall separating East & West Berlin in Germany after WWII
- U.S. & Soviets both refused to give up control of Berlin
- https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=A9fQPzZ1-hg (Ted-Ed)
- https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IXzODWIrTWgk (Simple History)
- https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rPWQUOOpBcBU (Simple History—Berlin Wall border troops)
What happened to Germany after WWII?

- Divided into 4 sectors—US, USSR, France, & Britain
- Each would be responsible for their sector
  - USSR—weaker Germany
  - Others—rebuild & strengthen them
- Berlin located deep in Soviet sector (arrow pointing)
Why was Berlin important?

❖ Heart of Nazi power—symbolic capital of Germany & Nazism
❖ Geography—USA/USSR keen for central European military bases
❖ Both USA/USSR wanted influence there & wanted to stop the other from getting it
❖ Race between US/USSR to get to Berlin first to end WWII
Problems with Berlin

- Berlin was deep inside the Soviet sector of Germany—divided into 4 parts as well
- West Berlin was a “window to the West” for those in Soviet sector
- Possible embarrassment to Stalin & the Russians—why?
Berlin Crisis Begins

- Stalin wanted to force the Allies out of West Berlin
- June 1948—Stalin blocks all surface transport links in and out of Berlin (roads, canal routes, railroads, etc…)
- What should the Allies do?
What should the Allies do?

- Choice 1—Give into Stalin’s demands & hand over control of West Berlin (prevent 2 million people from starving)
- Choice 2—invoke Soviet zone by blasting through the blockade & start an armed conflict
- Choice 3—Fly food, fuel, and other supplies into West Berlin; would be a huge undertaking and require tons of organization; would also be very expensive

Discuss with your neighbors and choose a solution
And the winner is...

- The BERLIN AIRLIFT
- Allies will fly in supplies to East Berliners
- Allies are not giving into Stalin, and are also avoiding war
- Stalin won’t shoot down planes, right?
The Berlin Airlift

- The U.S. and other allies flew in supplies
- Western Allies weren’t giving in to Stalin & avoiding war
- Pressure now back on Stalin—couldn’t shoot down planes
- Flew in supplies for 11 months
Berlin Airlift

- Inhabitants of East Berlin relied upon these flights for everything
- Winter 1948—lived on dried potatoes, powdered eggs, and canned meat with just 4 hours of electricity per day
- 275,000 carried 1.5 million tons of supplies (peak—one plane landing every 3 minutes)
- Airlift cost—$100 million; 79 servicemen died in accidents
- Stalin calls off blockade in May 1949
Was the Airlift successful?

- Stalin calls off the blockade in May 1949
- Highlights divisions between East & West and makes them more permanent (lasted until 1990s!)
Cold War got worse – war had almost broken out.

Germany would now be split up into West and East Germany.

NATO and the Warsaw Pact – defensive alliances would be set up.

Arms Race – both sides focused on building conventional and nuclear weapons.
After the Blockade…

- Allies set up NATO in 1949 (North Atlantic Treaty Organization); see the blockade as proof Stalin will take over Europe
  - Military alliance offering mutual support in case of an attack
- Warsaw Pact (Soviet response to NATO) set up in 1955
- May 1949—Allies set up a new nation (West Germany a.k.a. Federal Republic of Germany)
- October 1949—USSR responds by setting up German Democratic Republic (East Germany)
Problems after the Airlift

- Berlin becomes the escape route for people to go from east to west
  - 1945-1961—1/6 of German population fled to the west
- August 1961—Berliners woke up to see their city divided in half (new leader—Nikita Khruschev)
- East German soldiers guarded the construction zones and shot anyone trying to escape over the wall
- Why build the wall?
Number of Defectors to the West (pictured below)
Final Facts of the Wall

❖ 136 people died trying to cross
❖ 5,000 people escaped successfully
❖ Had 302 observation towers, 259 dog runs, and 20 bunkers
❖ 96 miles of wall was eventually built
❖ Wall officially falls November 1989, all border controls end July 1990, Germany reunited as one country October 1990
Newscast of the Wall Collapse