



EAST GERMANY

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Primer:

What do **you** know about the Berlin Wall?

What will we cover?

- A recap of the creation of East Germany and early conflict
- The effects of the Berlin Wall and Cold War tensions in the 1960s
- East Germany in the 1970s and détente
- Honecker and the 1980s
- Causes and effects of the collapse of the Berlin Wall in 1989



What conditions led to the consolidation of Germany and Berlin's division?

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*From Stettin in the Baltic to
Trieste in the Adriatic, an **iron**
curtain has descended across the
Continent.*



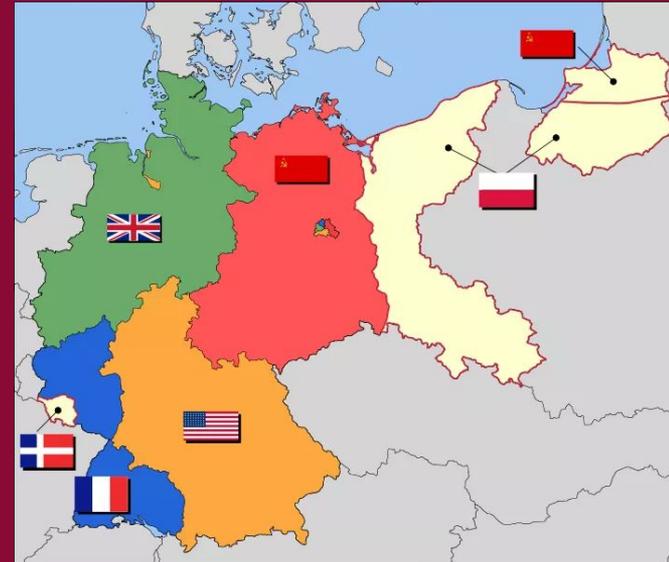
Thesis:

During the precarious conditions in post-war Eastern Europe, **Cold War superpower tensions** consolidated the division between West and East Germany and ultimately led to the construction of the **Berlin Wall**.

Formation of the GDR



- **1945 - Nazi Germany is defeated and divided into four zones: French, British, American, and Soviet**
 - Early conflict estranged the Western and Soviet zones
- **1947 - France, Britain, and the US combine their occupation zones (trizonia)**
 - The Soviets saw this as a violation of four-power occupation and withdrew from negotiations



Formation of the GDR



- **1948 - The western powers introduce the Deutsche Mark to their occupation zones**
 - This “Currency Crisis” resulted in the USSR’s Berlin Blockade from June 1948, to May 1949, effectively ending reconciliation
- **September 21, 1949 - the Federal German Republic (West Germany) is formed**
- **One month later, the German Democratic Republic (East Germany) is formed**



Problems between East and West



- **Mass Emigration from East to West Germany**
 - Population of working age in East Germany goes from 70.5% to 61% by 1960
 - 207,000 emigrated in the first seven months of 1961 alone
- **Many of those who defect are intellectuals and professionals - “*brain drain*”**
 - Damages the economy, causes East Germany to take serious measures against emigration





How did GDR domestic policy and the Berlin Wall contribute to Cold War tensions?

“

*A wall is a hell of a lot better
than a war.*

”

Thesis:

The Berlin Wall was erected primarily due to **economic difficulties** and **mass emigration** caused by hardline communist policy, which made it necessary to maintain the internal integrity of East Germany.

Construction of the Berlin Wall



- **1961 - East Germany seals off the border between East and West Berlin with wire, constructing the true Berlin Wall two days later**
 - Billed as an “antifascist bulwark”
 - US military command in Berlin made plans to demolish the wall, but were deterred by Soviet armor
- **Kennedy expresses solidarity, but takes no direct action against the wall**



Impacts on Immigration and Economy



- **The Berlin Wall is successful - from 1961-1989, only 5,000 people cross the border**
 - Net emigration from Central and Eastern Europe fell to 1.9 million from 1960-1969
 - Fell even further between 1970 and 1979, reaching only 1.1 million



Impacts on Immigration and Economy



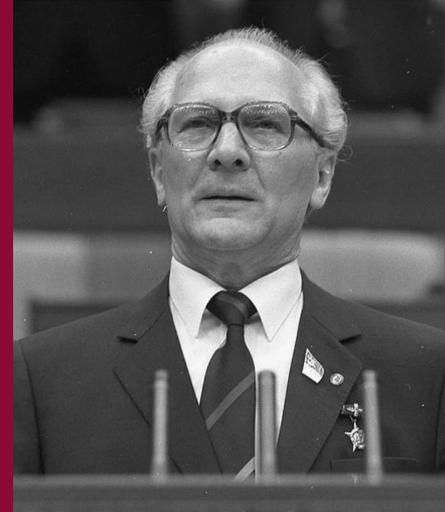
- **East Germany, as a manufacturing powerhouse, already had industrial infrastructure and a professional population**
 - Controls on the economy destroyed this promising start - workers received no incentive to perform better and invent
- **This led to the creation of a “grey market,” an unofficial economy of favors and under-the-table transactions**
 - The grey market grew exponentially due to contact with the West



Honecker's Ideology



- **Under Honecker, E. Germany adopted system of “consumer socialism” with a focus of increased standard of living**
 - Increased availability of consumer goods and increased housing construction
- **Promoted arts & culture, but suppressed and shut down “dissident artists”**
- **Wanted to normalize relations with W. Germany**
 - Signed a 1972 basic treaty between East & West, full member of UN



Gorbachev's Ideology



- **Wanted to improve relations with West Germany**
- **Supported reforms like glasnost and perestroika**
 - Prioritized stability; *not revolutionary*
 - Believed Soviet control over the Eastern Bloc was too expensive- refused to use force to put down demonstrations
 - **Economic decline encouraged Gorbachev to decentralize aspects of the economy**





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What factors led to the fall of the Berlin Wall and the ouster of Honecker?

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*The wall will still be standing in
50 and even 100 years- if the
reasons for it have not been
removed by then.*

”

Thesis:

Honecker's hardline communist regime kindled **internal dissent** that compounded with **economic hardship** and **mass emigration** to destabilize East Germany with the fall of the Berlin Wall.

Outright Conflict: Gorbachev vs. Honecker



- “We have done our perestroika. We have nothing to restructure.”
- “Gorby help us! Gorby save us!”
- “Life punishes those who come too late.”
- “We will solve our problems ourselves with socialist means.”



Liberalization around Europe



■ Hungary

- Economic pressure and declining support for the Warsaw Pact led to the end of Communist rule
 - Much domestic opposition to the USSR
- October 1989- Communist Party becomes Hungarian Socialist Party, with multi-party parliament and direct presidential elections



Liberalization around Europe



- **Poland**

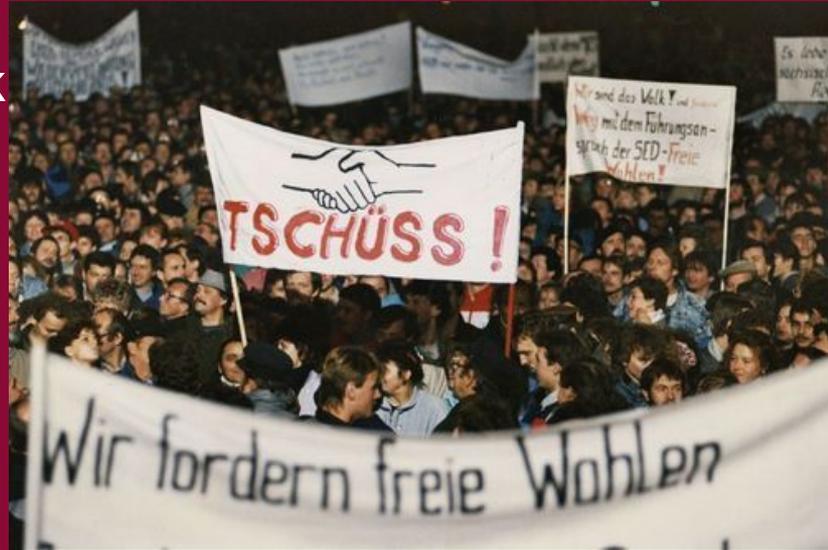
- Solidarity - workers' union founded in 1980s that used civil resistance to achieve social change
 - Despite temporarily imposing martial law, the Polish government cooperated with Solidarity and held semi-free elections in 1989
- Liberalized life in Poland and demonstrated the conflict between Honecker and Gorbachev



Internal Dissent



- **By October 1989, East Germans were constantly protesting Honecker's lack of reform in the GDR**
 - Demonstrations grew, some up to 100,000 people in a single city, which demanded action
- **Honecker was unmoved and remained against reform, despite the trend of liberalization**



Leipzig, Fall 1989

Immigration



- **May 1989 - Hungary removes its border fence with East Germany**
 - Legally, crossing the border was the same, but the opening made it much easier
- **By September, 60,000 East Germans had crossed into Hungary, moving towards the West German embassy in Budapest**
 - Budapest couldn't process all the immigrants, so they allowed them to leave to Austria



The Fall of Honecker and the Wall



- **Honecker opposed the rest of his party and refused to change his stance on the Berlin Wall**
 - The new government replaced the Communist Party and placed Honecker under house arrest
 - **In 1992, German authorities found evidence that Honecker had personally ordered guards at the Berlin Wall to shoot escapers on sight and took steps to prosecute him**

Effects



- **The fall of the Berlin Wall by popular outcry made clear how little support East Germany had from its own population**
 - The weekend of the wall's demolition, more than 2,000,000 East Berliners crossed into West Germany to celebrate
- **East Germany itself fell when the East and West were reunified on October 3, 1990**
 - The wall had demonstrated that the East German state, despite pursuit of increasingly strict policy, would be unable to keep its people under control against exponentially increasing Western influence

Pictures



Sources



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