

Key Events – Activity 2

The Berlin Wall 1961

Aims

- To explore how President Kennedy reacted in 1961
- To ask if building the Berlin Wall solved the problem of Berlin
- To weigh up the evidence and reach a conclusion for yourself

Resources

coldwarKEA2.lgfl.net is your one-stop link to curriculum resources for this activity; you will find videos, photographs and links to the relevant main Cold War sections.

Introduction

On the night of 13 August 1961, Communist East German troops put up a barbed wire barrier cutting off East and West Berlin. Families and friends were separated overnight. Soon afterwards, a concrete wall was built and a killing zone with watchtowers prevented anyone leaving East Berlin. Berlin had been a source of tension between East and West since 1945. You can find out more about why the wall was built and how it affected people in the resource section 'The Significance of Berlin' (coldwarberlin.lgfl.net). Here we are looking at how it affected relations between the USA and the Soviets.

Key Events – Activity 2

Step 2 – Did the Berlin Wall make the Cold War safer in the long run?

Discuss this question in pairs or small groups. Your task is to decide whether the world was a safer place after the Berlin Wall was built in August 1961. Consider the following issues:

- Was Berlin safer for those running the GDR?
- Was it safer for those living in the GDR?
- Was it safer for the Russians?
- Was it safer for those living in West Berlin or West Germany?
- Did the building of the wall remove the tense issue of refugees fleeing East Germany?

Produce a two minute podcast or write the script for a radio programme set in 1961 entitled 'Are we safer in the West now the Berlin Wall has been built?'

Upload your podcast onto podcasts.lgfl.net or videocentral.lgfl.net (also accepts audio-only).

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