

The U-2 incident, 1960, and the building of the Berlin Wall, 1961

By the end of this spread you should be able to describe:

- a the reasons for b the results of
- 1 the U-2 incident
- 2 the building of the Berlin Wall

The U-2 incident, 1960

Background

The U-2 spy-plane

- 1 A Lockheed aircraft developed for the USA's Central Intelligence Agency (CIA). First used in 1956.
- 2 Able to fly
 - a at very high altitudes (over 20 kilometres) out of range of Soviet fighters
 - b for very long distances (over 6000 kms).
- 3 Equipped with powerful cameras and radio receivers it could detect Soviet long-range bomber bases and missile sites.
- 4 Flights over the USSR were made between US air-bases in Pakistan and Norway.

The Paris Summit

- 1 To be held in May 1960 between the leaders of the USSR, USA, France, and Britain.
- 2 Planned to be a major step forward in East-West relations following Khrushchev's successful visit to the USA in 1959.
- 3 The main items for discussion were
 - a the future of Germany
 - b nuclear arms reduction.
- 4 Despite a desire for better East-West relations, the Summit faced problems:
 - a the Western powers and the USSR were unlikely to agree about a possible reunification of Germany
 - b Khrushchev was under severe criticism from i the Chinese and ii some of his own generals for holding discussions with the West.

Consequences of U-2 incident

- 1 Paris Summit abandoned.
- 2 East-West tensions increased.

1960 Events

- May 1**
 - 1 A U-2 plane flown by Gary Powers is brought down over the Ural Mountains by a Soviet missile.
 - 2 Powers is captured. Films and tapes are recovered from the plane.
- May 5**
 - 1 The USSR announces the shooting down of the U-2.
 - 2 President Eisenhower denies it was spying.
- May 7**
 - Khrushchev announces Powers will be put on trial for spying.
- May 11**
 - Eisenhower forced to admit U-2 was spying.
- May 14**
 - 1 The delegations arrive in Paris for the Summit.
 - 2 Khrushchev refuses to attend Summit unless
 - a all U-2 flights are cancelled
 - b Eisenhower apologises.
- May 16**
 - 1 Eisenhower cancels the U-2 flights but refuses to apologise.
 - 2 Khrushchev walks out of the Summit.

3 Khrushchev showed Communist world, especially China, that he could be tough with the West. It is possible that he played up the U-2 incident in order to do this.

- 1 What does the U-2 incident tell you about the nature of superpower relations in 1960? Make a list of points and write a sentence or two about each one.
- 2 a What were Khrushchev's aims in Berlin in the late 1950s?
- b Describe his attempts to achieve these aims.
- c Why did he consent to the building of the Berlin Wall in 1961?

The Berlin Wall, 1961

Background

Berlin

- 1 East Berlin
 - a not prosperous
 - b under strict Communist rule.
- 2 West Berlin
 - a prosperous with the help of US aid
 - b its cinemas, shops, etc attract visitors from East Berlin. The USSR saw it as a Capitalist infection in the heart of East Germany.
 - c provides an easy escape route from East to West Germany for some 250,000 refugees each year.

Western aims

- 1 Prevent the USSR from gaining permanent control of East Germany.
- 2 The wartime Allies to sign a peace treaty with a united democratic Germany.

Soviet aims

- 1 Maintain control over East Germany.
- 2 Make the Western powers recognize it as an independent state.
- 3 Stem the flood of refugees from East to West Germany by gaining control of the access routes from West Berlin to West Germany. This was becoming urgent. The refugees were mainly skilled and professional who were badly needed in East Germany.

Soviet demands, 1958

- 1 Khrushchev
 - a demanded that the three Western occupying powers should i recognize the German Democratic Republic (GDR) ii withdraw their troops from West Berlin iii hand their access routes over to the GDR.
 - b said that unless they did this within six months he would i sign a separate peace treaty with the GDR ii hand East Berlin over to it.
- 2 The Western powers refused. Khrushchev backed down.

The Berlin Crisis, 1961

June Vienna Summit.

- 1 Khrushchev attempts to put pressure on the young and inexperienced new US President, John Kennedy. Again demands withdrawal of Western powers' occupying forces from West Berlin within six months.
- 2 Kennedy replies that the USA will protect the freedom of West Berlin.

July 17 The Western powers reject Khrushchev's Vienna demands.

July 23 The flow of refugees from East Germany to the West has reached 1000 a day. The East German government attempts to stem it by introducing travel restrictions.

July 25 Kennedy

- 1 repeats the USA's support for West Berlin
- 2 announces an increase in arms spending.

August 13-22 On the orders of Khrushchev and the East German government, a barbed wire barrier is put up across Berlin, followed by a wall of concrete blocks.

Consequences

- 1 Berlin
 - a is physically divided.
 - b Free access from East to West is ended.
 - c Many families are split.
- 2 Refugees
 - The flow almost ceased.
- 3 Kennedy
 - a accepted the Soviet action, although it broke the four-power agreement on Berlin
 - b refused proposals for US troops to tear down the Wall, fearing this was likely to provoke armed conflict
 - c had to accept that this made him look weak.
- 4 Khrushchev
 - a lost face by failing to remove the Western powers from Berlin
 - b believed that Kennedy's response showed that he was weak.
- 5 East-West relations
 - Tensions increased. Both sides started to test more powerful nuclear weapons.