

GRADE 12 HISTORY

COLD WAR: EUROPE

IF. THE DIVISION OF EUROPE AND GERMANY

In 1946, in his Sinews of Peace Speech to Fulton University, Sir Winston Churchill coined the term “the Iron Curtain” to describe the division of Europe into Eastern Communist spheres of influence and Western Democratic spheres of influence. He blamed Stalin’s expansion policy, in an attempt to spread communism, for this division.



Germany

At Yalta it was agreed that Germany and its capital, Berlin, would be divided into four sectors. Each sector would be 'looked after' by one of the Allied powers – until such time as Germany could recuperate and govern herself. This idea of unification was further expanded on at the London Conference in 1947.

That unification happened by 1949, after the Blockade, when the Western sectors joined together to form the Federal Republic of Germany, with Bonn as its capital. They allowed for a German government and introduced a new currency. This was an example of the Marshall Plan in action.

Stalin was not impressed, to say the least. In response he declared that the Soviet sector would be called the German Democratic Republic, with East Berlin as its capital.



Berlin

In the same way that Germany was divided into four sectors, so was Berlin. Even though it fell in the Soviet sector of East Germany, it was occupied by the Allied forces in an attempt to stop the capital from falling into Soviet hands.

Initially there was a relative degree of freedom of movement between the sectors, with people living in East Berlin being able to move freely to their jobs in West Berlin, or visa versa. One could also visit relatives or enjoy public facilities between the sectors.



However that ended when Stalin built a wall in 1961 to stop the exodus of people moving permanently from East Berlin to West Berlin in search of a better life. Then it became almost impossible to leave the Soviet sector of Berlin. Checkpoint Charlie was the name of the military border post on the American / Soviet border between the two sectors.