



The Committee for State Security

Berlin Crisis of 1961

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Policy Dilemma

The political, social, and economic implications of the United States and the Soviet Union's post-World War II expansionism culminated in the events that became the Berlin Crisis of 1961. The Allied Powers not only consolidated large amounts of political influence and land in Europe but also saw economic booms due to increased rates of employment and the lowering of trade tariffs among the Allies.¹ This era marks the rise of two of the world's superpowers: the United States and the USSR. As the Committee for State Security in 1960, ensuring the outcome that protects the Soviet Union and promotes its ideals and its role in global politics will be of the utmost importance. Dealing with issues from domestic and international sources will be necessary to further the interests of the Soviet Union appropriately, and actions taken by the committee will change the course of history. Depending on the committee's actions, the negotiations between the United States and the Soviet Union may have an ideal outcome for both sides or a worse outcome that negatively alters the course of the Cold War.

Following World War II, Berlin was divided into East and West, with East Berlin under Soviet control and West Berlin under the power of the United States, France, and the United Kingdom.² Under the control of the USSR, many East Berliners would flee to the western part of the city to seek improved socioeconomic conditions, leading to a declining population in East Berlin and a negative response from the Khrushchev office.³ This mass exodus led to the construction of the Berlin Wall in August 1961, a physical barrier designed to prevent East Germans from defecting to the West. The crisis underscored the broader struggle for global influence between the superpowers, with each side attempting to assert dominance and protect their respective spheres of influence during rising tensions and geopolitical competition.

At the forefront of the USSR's foreign policy in Germany was Nikita Khrushchev,

who eventually replaced Joseph Stalin as the Premier of the Soviet Union following Stalin's death in 1953. Championing himself as a more moderate leader than Stalin, Khrushchev sought to alleviate the concerns of the Russian people by easing many of the policies regarding the restriction of religion and the arts enforced during Stalin's rule.⁴

Under Khrushchev's guidance, the Committee for State Security, or the KGB, was funded and increased in its scope and purpose. The KGB was used for various purposes domestically and internationally but often took a much more domestic approach than its counterpart in the United States, the CIA. Whether it was for general surveillance, espionage, law enforcement, or more secretive missions, the KGB was the arm of the Soviet Union that Khrushchev used to maintain control of the country in a tumultuous time.⁵

To Khrushchev, it was essential to maintain domestic stability, as the Cold War against the United States required significant amounts of funding and resources. The nuclear arms race, the space race, and the increased influence of the United States and the USSR in developing countries were also of the utmost importance in maintaining the USSR's strong image as a superpower, which persisted despite the many economic issues that faced the average citizen in the Soviet Union at the time.⁶

East Germany as a Soviet project was a primary example of the USSR's effort to increase its cultural and political influence in Western Europe— in this case, by exerting direct control over another state. Although the Soviet Union could heavily influence the politics, economy, and laws of East Germany and East Berlin for over a decade after World War II, that time of control marked a struggling economy that starkly contrasted with West Berlin's success. Food shortages, low wages, and strict law enforcement encouraged many to leave East Berlin and make their way west, which was internationally seen as a mark of failure on the USSR's part and would lead to their eventual proposal to build a wall, forcibly preventing East Berliners from leaving.⁷

The construction of the Berlin Wall had consequences far beyond the immediate

rise in tension it caused between the United States and the USSR.⁸ In many ways, the wall represented the inability of either side to agree to substantial negotiations, leading to an escalation of conflict in the form of proxy wars in places like Vietnam and increased pressure to invest in military technology and weaponry. Had negotiations gone differently, the tensions caused by the splitting of Berlin could have been alleviated, and significant historical events that defined the Cold War, such as the Cuban Missile Crisis and the Vietnam War, may have played out differently. The many issues that were present in East Germany and East Berlin, such as the economic and agricultural troubles of the country, as well the financial strain of Cold War militarization and the mass migration from East to West, could have been addressed in a way that may have resulted in a desirable outcome, one that would bolster the status of the Soviet Union and East Germany and one that would have far-reaching implications for the world as a whole.

Chronology

22 June 1941: The USSR Join World War II

Before joining one of the largest wars in world history, the Soviet Union largely remained neutral for the first few years of the war. In 1939, the Soviet Union signed a non aggression pact with Nazi Germany, known as the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact, to avoid involvement in the war and the burden it would place on the Soviet economy.⁹ This pact also secretly divided Eastern Europe into spheres of influence between the two countries, allowing both countries to vicariously rule over sovereign governments without interference. For the Soviet Union, the pact was necessary to ensure the country's protection against a Nazi invasion, as the Soviet Union was having difficulty forming collective security agreements with Britain and France before the pact.¹⁰

It was only two years after the pact was signed that Adolf Hitler violated the pact and invaded the USSR. On June 22, 1941, Nazi Germany initiated Operation Barbarossa, a surprise, large-scale invasion of German troops on Russian soil. The result was the

Eastern Front, the three-year war between the Soviet Union and Nazi Germany.¹¹ The Eastern Front was the most extensive and brutal front of the war and the most extensive front in history regarding the number of soldiers and resources used in battle. In terms of overall German casualties during the war, the vast majority were at the Eastern Front against the Soviet Union, a testament to the scale of battles and manpower in Eastern Europe during the war. However, it was not just the Soviet Union's military success that illustrates the scope of the Eastern Front, but their losses as well, with Russian troops making up ninety-five *percent* of Allied Powers' casualties during the war.¹² Besides human lives, the Soviet Union lost two-thirds of its industrial capacity through weapons development, supplies, and infrastructure costs during the war, slowing down the country's initiative to modernize many of the more rural, poorer areas with unstable economies.¹³

Despite the sudden nature of Operation Barbarossa and the heavy casualties taken on the Russian side, the Soviet Union could pull through the most brutal parts of the war in 1941 and 1942 and turn the tides of war by 1943. This was mainly due to the crucial Soviet victory at the Battle of Stalingrad, one of the most significant battles of the war that took place between August 1942 and February 1943.¹⁴ Before the crucial battle, Nazi Germany had a noticeable advantage over the Soviets, advancing and laying siege to many of the country's most vital cities. However, after the USSR destroyed the German Sixth Army and many German tanks, the losses Germany suffered outweighed the tactical and political advantages of taking Stalingrad, which itself would require resources to maintain and occupy against further Soviet forces.¹⁵ Many historians and soldiers during the war, including the Germans, attributed the Soviet Union's success against unlikely odds to their tenacity and willingness to fight in losing positions, which drained resources from the Nazi Army in places that should have been handed victories. During World War II, not only the USSR's enemies but also its allies became increasingly wary of the aggressive strength of the Soviet Union, which would become increasingly relevant after the war's

end during the partitioning of Germany and beyond.

1 August 1945: The Potsdam Agreement

Following the Allied Powers' victory in World War II, many affairs needed to be put in order before efforts towards the reconstruction of Europe could begin. One of these affairs was the status of Germany and what was to be done with the country after its major defeat. The Allied Powers did not trust the German people to independently run the country, so soon after, a fascist regime took hold with the widespread support of the people. Thus, the most influential among the Allied Powers agreed to partition Germany into several sections, with each country having oversight over its section to support a new system of government and rebuild the German economy. The agreement that partitioned the areas of Germany and allocated them among the Allies was known as the Potsdam Agreement and was signed on August 1, 1945, by the Allied Powers after some negotiation.¹⁶

The Potsdam Agreement had several aspects to it. One was deconstructing Germany's military infrastructure, including its technology, weapons factories, and arms. Reforms were made to repeal Nazi-era legislation and to remove Nazi ideology from German society. This effort included changing school curriculums, vehement persecution of Germans accused of war crimes, and expulsion of Nazis from governmental agencies and courts.¹⁷ Of course, the most crucial aspect of the agreement was how Germany was partitioned. The United States, Great Britain, and the Soviet Union, the three most powerful nations of the Allied Forces, agreed to split Germany into four zones. Great Britain would control northwest Germany, France in the southwest, the United States in the south, and the Soviet Union in the east. Despite being divided among four countries, the partition of Germany was ideologically split into just two regions: the West and the East.¹⁸ The capitalistic, neoliberal nations of Western Europe and the United States stood ideologically opposed to the communist Soviet Union, a fact that would become increasingly unavoidable as time went on.

In the years following World War II, the differences between the West and East that were already ever-present during the war would be exemplified by the nature in which East Germany and the rest of Germany were governed and revitalized. President Truman feared that a repeat of harsh sanctions against the German people seen after World War I would lead to another Adolf Hitler and emphasized a less punitive approach that focused on putting liberal democracy and capitalism on a pedestal. This led to the portions of Germany controlled by the Western powers being under less economic instability than the East and quickly adopting the United States and Western Europe's governmental systems that strongly emphasize democracy, international trade, and an emphasis on private industry. The state of Germany's economies would be a constant point of comparison and contention, as many politicians and economists saw them as reflections of the West and the East's successes and failures.

12 March 1947: The Truman Doctrine and the Cold War

The Potsdam Agreement marked the last time the three nations of the Allied Powers met as allies after World War II. The era following the war would see a rise in the Allied Powers' economies and infrastructure development and a continuous rise in tension between the two countries as Joseph Stalin increased his sphere of influence in Eastern Europe after acquiring East Germany. The United States's development and use of the atomic bomb, the most destructive weapon in human history at the time, did not alleviate this tension. Fear of nuclear war between the two countries was always present, and the stalemate of mutual destruction that the bombs fomented served only to increase anti-Communist sentiment in the West and anti-Capitalist sentiment in the Soviet Union. This Cold War between the two superpowers instigated a rapid investment into technologies. Space exploration, agricultural advancements, weapons development, and more were the backbone of the cultural and political war between the two nations as each vied to be the de facto leader of the post-World War II world.

Some scholars marked the beginning of the Cold War when President Truman affirmed the United States' role as a world leader, to spread democracy and liberal capitalist economies in developing countries, militarizing the United States to defend itself against foreign enemies, and, as a deterrent of Soviet aggression, continues and spreading United States' occupation in places of interests.¹⁹ This affirmation, known as the Truman Doctrine, would be implemented in the United States's European foreign policy mission when Greece and Turkey both had a solid communist presence. Backing the Greek government against a significant communist rebellion and doing similar acts in Turkey set the stage for the rest of the Cold War as one of continuous proxy wars, wars that the United States and the USSR waged against each other by backing smaller countries and promoting their respective ideologies within those countries.²⁰

Perhaps the most immediate and significant outcome of the Truman Doctrine shortly after World War II was the formation of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization or NATO. Formally established on April 4, 1949, NATO was originally an official alliance declared between the United States, Canada, Denmark, France, Iceland, the United Kingdom, Norway, Portugal, Italy, the Netherlands, Belgium, and Luxembourg.²¹ The countries represented the Western values of liberalism and capitalism and promoted themselves as the promoters and safeguards of global democracy. However, the primary reason for this alliance was an agreement of mutual protection against the growing Soviet Union and the rise of Communism in Eastern Europe, Southern and Southeast Asia, and even South America.²² Only six years later, the Soviet Union would respond to the West's NATO with its alliance in the Warsaw Pact.

March 5, 1953 - 1956: The Death of Stalin and Rise of Khrushchev

The first part of the Cold War was defined by Stalin's foreign policy initiatives, which were described in large part by the leader's desire to both spread communism

throughout Eastern Europe and abroad and to protect itself and its territories from the United States and other Western powers. To do this, Stalin enacted many domestic policies that even those within his party saw as extreme, such as Stalin's crackdown on the arts, religion, and universities.²³ Despite this, Stalin acted as a strong, uniting figure in the Communist Party and was able to govern the country with relatively low amounts of internal opposition. By the time of his death on March 5, 1953, Stalin had left the USSR as a burgeoning world superpower but also a country that many knew was underfed and unequally developed in terms of infrastructure, and many things needed to be done to keep the Soviet Union in the cultural and technological race against the United States.

It was up to the person who would replace Joseph Stalin as the leader of the Soviet Union to enact these policies. Stalin's death created a power vacuum that was quickly to be filled up by high-ranking members of the Communist Party. There would be three strong contenders that would arise after Stalin's death, each with their degree of influence and varying ideologies.²⁴ Lavrentiy Beria, one of Stalin's most influential advisors, was among the most likely candidates to succeed the late leader. He became one of the four deputy prime ministers of the Soviet Union after Stalin's death and the head of the Ministry of Internal Affairs, an agency consisting of both the secret and public police forces. Beria had been involved in intelligence gathering and police activities for decades in the Communist Party before his ministerial appointment. Despite his level of influence, Beria was feared by other high-ranking officials, including Nikita Khrushchev and Georgiy Malenkov, who would band together to arrest Beria on the grounds of misusing the police forces to take over the Soviet Union as its sole leader.²⁵ Beria would be executed soon after, and Khrushchev and Malenkov would be the last two contenders to fill the empty leadership position.

Malenkov would initially be allied with Khrushchev, who was part of the faction that ousted Beria from his position. Malenkov pushed for many reforms that sought to tone down many of the Stalin-era policies, including the emphasis on investing in heavy

industry, such as militarization and manufacturing, and turning towards light industry in the form of consumer products. He also wanted to push for more incentives in the Soviet Union's collective agriculture program, which centralized the country's farms and food production.²⁶ These policies were opposed by the other leaders of the Communist Party, including Khrushchev. After some years, Malenkov became discontent with the other party members. In a failed attempt to oust Khrushchev and his men from power, Malenkov was removed from the Communist Party and any official capacity for leadership in the Soviet Union. He lived out the rest of his years at a hydroelectric plant in Kazakhstan.²⁷ With the two other contenders out of the way, Khrushchev could rule the Soviet Union on his terms. By 1957, Khrushchev had begun implementing significant policy changes to reverse some of the issues caused by Stalin-era policies. This includes the release of prisoners taken under Stalin for speaking out against the dictator, as well as implementing many of Malenkov's plans regarding industrialization and agriculture.²⁸ Khrushchev would also take on a less hostile position towards the West, hoping to peacefully coexist with the United States and Western Europe while maintaining a solid communist agenda.

13 March 1954: The Founding of the Committee for State Security

During the short period after Stalin's death but before Khrushchev's rise to Premier of the Soviet Union, many government agencies within the USSR underwent organizational, leadership, and mission shifts. The Committee for State Security, better known as the KGB, was created for domestic security and foreign intelligence gathering, much like the United States's Central Intelligence Agency (CIA). When it was initially created, the KGB was often used by high-ranking members of the Communist Party to remove Beria's supporters in the established security forces that he controlled.²⁹

The KGB was made to act as the sword and shield of the Soviet Union, but many of the agency's actions were taken domestically rather than abroad. Often used to monitor

politicians and activists, the KGB garnered a reputation for being very powerful and, to some, very dangerous. Over the years, the KGB collected information on technology, weapons advancement, and foreign initiatives in the West. It used this information to help the Soviet Union keep up with the West during the Cold War. Eventually, the KGB grew to be the most significant foreign intelligence agency in the world, making the Soviet Union a powerhouse in information collection, planning, and espionage.³⁰

In its domestic capacity, the KGB acted as the primary source of security for members of the Communist Party. This job included monitoring potential threats to party members, arresting political dissidents and activists, at times enforcing curfews, and generally patrolling around party member's homes and towns.³¹ Because of this, the KGB was often seen as the watchdog of the Communist Party, and fear of the Communist Party and Khrushchev became synonymous with the fear of the KGB. The KGB would also be important in Soviet satellite states, including East Germany and East Berlin. The Communist Party based its police force, the Stasi, off the KGB's internal structure and jurisdiction and worked closely with the KGB to maintain order in East Germany during the tumultuous 1950s and 1960s.³²

1950s-1961: East Germany Food Shortages and Workers' Uprisings

When East Germany was partitioned under the control of the Soviet Union, massive changes to the country's economy, political structure, and agriculture were implemented. At first, the Soviet Union and the communist government it established in East Germany were focused on seizing former members of the Nazi Party, including officials who fled East Germany and those in hiding within the country. The Soviet Union reversed most Nazi-era policies and promoted socialism in the country's agricultural sector, using the Soviet Union's own collective agrarian policies as a model when implementing them into East Germany. The Soviet Union also increased the use of heavy industry in the East German Economy, emphasizing militaristic production over consumer

goods, though to a lesser extent than the country was doing within its own border.³³

With the massive changes in the East German economy, many workers felt that demands were too high and opportunities too low. Many felt that the economy under the Nazi Party was preferable to the current state, and food shortages caused by the lack of infrastructure for a collective agricultural system only exacerbated this sentiment. In 1953, East Berlin saw a massive worker's uprising, which halted production at a time when the Soviet Union desperately needed it. The rebellion led to many working age men to flee to the West via West Berlin, which not only hurt East Berlin's economy, but was a mark against the Soviet Union's record against the West. While East Berlin had a struggling economy, mass migration to the West, and open and private dissidents, West Berlin saw great successes, mainly due to the United States' and Western Europe's large investment in the city and its people.³⁴

Though the Stasi of East Germany and East Berlin did try to stop strong voices of opposition against the newly established East German government, the country's state was still known to many, and people only grew more dissatisfied as years went on. Year after year, more East Berliners fled west, even though many did share the same sentiments about communism as those in the Soviet Union. After Stalin, the Soviet Union sought to reign in the East German Government's enforcement of collectivization, suggesting a more relaxed approach as East Germans settled into the drastic economic and social changes being made at the time. Despite this effort, protests continued, and the Soviet Union had to eventually declare martial law about the workers uprising in 1953.³⁵ Overall, though there were some positive social and institutional changes made during the rise of the East German government, its popularity among the working class remained low, and the 1950s saw thousands of East Germans leave to the west.

Actors and Interests

The United States

After World War II, the United States and its Western Allies were already skeptical of the USSR's position on the global stage. Refusing to be a part of the Marshall Plan, the Soviet Union was already positioning itself to be separate from the West, with Stalin viewing the capitalistic United States as too ideologically opposed to the Soviet Union to be more than just tolerable allies. It would not be extended after the two countries entered the Cold War. They would constantly seek to one-up another in technological advancement, global influence, and information collection and protection.

The partitioning of Germany, and how each country was to run its respective reach in a way personified the Cold War. The degree of success the West had in running West Germany and the Soviet Union had in running East Germany would reflect the competence of each country and the legitimacy of their economic and social ideology. Would liberalism and capitalism thrive in West Germany, or would communism and collectivism thrive in East Germany? This notion made Germany, and especially Berlin, a top priority for each country, as Eastern Europe also held significant political and military value. Because of this, the United States decided that West Germany would be one of its most important allies and primarily put West Germany at the forefront of its foreign policy agenda in the late 1940s and early 1950s. The US began by revitalizing the German economy via reconstruction, creation of employment opportunities, and by using a more lenient approach against the German people compared to their Soviet counterparts in East Germany.³⁶

The West German economy was described as having been transformed almost overnight. The dire situation of the German people directly after World War II to a couple years later was described as night and day, and many changed their view on the United States from being an enemy to an ally very quickly. More so than anything, the Germans

saw the United States as their only protection against the communist policies of the Soviet Union, which Germany had long been ideologically opposed to.³⁷

Over the 1940s and 1950s, West Germany would continue to develop with a growing economy and as a firmly ardent Western Ally. One of the country's important functions for the United States was its ability to take in migrants from East Germany fleeing into the West. The United States saw the migrants as a powerful political tool in boosting its image over the Soviet Union's. President Eisenhower gave care packages to West Germany to give to East Berliners as they made their way into the country, giving food and supplies to the Germans who now had no homes.³⁸ Regarding East Germany, the United States specifically wanted to prevent the Soviet Union's plans to eventually reunify Germany, which would significantly increase the Soviet Union's foothold in Europe. To do this, Eisenhower continuously supported West Germany by advocating for the rearmament of the Germans and undermining the status of the East German government.³⁹ In the end, these actions did not have much of an effect but did highlight the United States' stance towards East Germany when President Eisenhower was in office.

Walter Ulbricht and the German Democratic Republic

Seeing the large amounts of success in the west, it became increasingly apparent that success in East Germany was crucial for the Soviet Union to be seen as a strong contender against the United States during the Cold War. Though it is true that many of the East Germans fled west, it was also the case that many supported the triumph of socialism in the east, and sought to strengthen the standing of the East German government by working closely with the Soviet Union.⁴⁰ Khrushchev embraced this fact, and was heavily involved in monitoring and working with the East German government to solve crises as they developed. During the workers uprising in 1953, it was the Soviets who sent troops to quell the protests and declare martial law, and it was Khrushchev who often ensured funding for the Stasi and other agencies of East Germany was secured.⁴¹

Khrushchev needed East Germany stabilized, as the success of East Germany under the communist Soviet Union was also set to be an example to the other Soviet satellite states in East Germany that socialism was a viable economic system.⁴² The workers' uprising and food shortages did not help in this endeavor, and Khrushchev began using more direct means, such as increased use of police forces in East Berlin, to ensure this outcome.⁴³

Although the East German government was open to working very closely with the Soviet Union, each entity had somewhat different goals for the direction of the country. The Soviet Union was forced to look at the situation in a broader perspective, hoping to have East Germany peacefully coexist with the west so that the Soviet Union could focus on expansion and dealing with its other allies, such as China. However, it was the East German government, specifically under the leadership of Walter Ulbricht, that pushed for more socialist policies to be enforced and wanted more aid from the Soviet Union in stabilizing the county, especially with regard to the mass exodus of workers fleeing west.⁴⁴ It would be Ulbricht's position to create the Berlin Wall first, and he and his government would be the prominent advocates for its construction before 1961, eventually prompting Khrushchev to comply. Khrushchev would actually offer solutions before agreeing to the border regime, such as sending East Germany more engineers from the Soviet Union to compensate for those who fled, or suggesting that the border wall be introduced in a measured approach so as to not alarm those who may flee.⁴⁵ The relationship between the GDR and the Soviet Union was clearly a cordial one between close allies, even if each party were looking for slightly different outcomes, and it would be this cooperation that would eventually lead to the construction of the Berlin Wall beginning in 1961.

The German Citizenry

It is important to note that, before the Potsdam Agreement and the partitioning of Germany among the Allied powers, the German people, in general, shared the same ideology and culture, with no significant differences between people who lived in the western part of the country and people who lived in the east. Only after the country was

split into East and West Germany ideological differences began to grow. However, even under the socialist government of the German Democratic Republic, many felt that they would live better lives under the capitalist system in West Germany, while the west never saw a mass exodus of citizens leaving to the east. For the average East German citizen, it was simply the lack of economic opportunities and food shortages that led to western migration and the workers uprising in 1953. This would lead to the West Germany population increasing during the 1950s while the East Germany population decreased. Another aspect of West Germany that allured East Germans was the level of autonomy West Germany enjoyed. While the Soviet Union heavily involved itself in the East German government and economy, the West German government acted more as an ally to the western powers rather than a satellite state like East Germany, which many perceived as having a positive influence on economic mobility.⁴⁶

Another aspect of the split between West and East Germany that was present in discourse at the time was their status as friends or enemies. With the United States and the Soviet Union seen as clearly competing with one another, it was thought that the two Germany would closely reflect this sentiment. However, many Germans could still remember when the country was whole, and most Germans shared a similar ideology. The Korean War had many apparent comparisons to Germany's situation, in which a once whole country was split along Soviet and American alliances and split by region.⁴⁷ Some Germans feared war, especially in the West, where the Soviet Union and Poland were at the forefront of people's minds as thoughts of German reunification were taking more of a hold in the east. In the end, the Berlin Wall would put an end to this kind of discourse being taken into actual consideration, but it was a concerning thought throughout most of the 1950s.⁴⁸

The Stasi and the KGB

Though the Stasi, also known as the Ministry for State Security, and the KGB were agencies that directly communicated with and took orders from the GDR and USSR, they two agencies had such complex internal structures and wide ranges of authority that they

sometimes acted close to autonomous entities that served their countries, rather than being intertwined with the governments themselves. In the case of the KGB, Khrushchev had created the organization to be made up of many different parts, with many people in leadership positions to make the organization larger in scope and easier to manage. The Committee for State Security was split into twenty parts, each with Directorates that were responsible for some aspect of the agency.⁴⁹ Many of the directorates were of great importance to the KGB, such as the ones handling State Communications or Foreign Surveillance. The operations of the KGB under these directorates were extensive and encompassed many tasks, some of which are still unknown today. It is known that the KGB did play a role in foreign interference throughout the latter half of the twentieth century, though it primarily focused on domestic issues or issues regarding Eastern Europe.⁵⁰ One documented task the KGB had was assisting the Stasi in East Germany. Soviet officials were actively a part of the internal Stasi (Ministry for State Security) since the era of the Cheka, the previous Soviet secret police operation before the formation of the KGB.⁵¹ These officials played active roles in the formation of policy, enforcement of laws, and controlled many of the Stasi personnel.

During the 1950s, as the East German government sought to be slightly more autonomous as a country, the Stasi and the KGB began to be less strictly intertwined and began to act more as close allies than the Stasi as an extension of the Soviet police force.⁵² This involved changing the status of the Soviet officials in the Stasi to liaison officers, and operations between the Stasi and the KGB became less of a subordinate to a leader and more of a communication between different agencies. Still, the Stasi and the KGB shared discoveries of technological, political, and economic importance and still ran many joint operations with one another in East Germany. Specifically, the KGB was highly present in East Germany when the matter regarded the protection of Soviet military bases in the country. There was some tension between the Stasi and the KGB regarding recruitment, but this was alleviated when the East German government conceded the right for the KGB

to recruit Soviet citizens with German citizenship.⁵³ Despite minor differences, the goals of the KGB and the Stasi were the same in East Germany, to maintain stability, protect the status of socialism and communism in the country, and to undermine the status of West Germany and its ability to take in migrants from East Germany.

Possible Causes

Heavy Industry and Collectivized Agriculture

A core tenant of the Soviet Union and, by extension, its satellite states was an emphasis on collective property and joint ownership of industry. This practice was highly present in the Soviet Union, especially during World War II when heavy industry was necessary to fight against the invading German forces. Steel production, infrastructure development across the large country, and fuel extraction were at the core of the Soviet economy from the 1930s to the 1950s, which simultaneously allowed for a rising economy but also made the Soviet Union reliant on construction and exports to create jobs and generate income.⁵⁴ Stalin promoted the importance of modernity and technological superiority, believing it to be crucial in the Soviet Union's role as an international player. The construction of dams along the USSR's many rivers resulted in high amounts of energy production, and the sheer amount of construction being done under Stalin's supervision created hundreds of thousands of jobs, though some of the projects did use the forced labor of prisoners.⁵⁵

Another aspect of the collectivist ideals of the Soviet Union was collectivized agriculture. In conjunction with rapid industrialization and heavy industry use, Stalin sought to wrest control of the USSR's many farms from private citizens to the state. He did this by having citizens give up rights to their farms and instead join their farms to large scale collective farms under the supervision of the government.⁵⁶ Some argued that the transition from individual farms to collective farms should be gradual to prevent a drop in agricultural production during rapid development. By the end of the 1930s, almost

all private landowning farmers had joined collective farms, allowing the government to extract large amounts of grain and wheat to fuel its rapid industrialization, though many rural areas of the Soviet Union faced famines by the early 1940s.⁵⁷

These practices of rapid industrialization and collective agriculture would be supplanted in East Germany towards the end of the 1940s, and the country's primary economic system would become a collectivized socialist economy by 1950. The specific transformation pushed by Ulbricht and Khrushchev in East Germany was dubbed "Constructing Socialism" and involved minimizing private industry and bolstering heavy industry, just as Stalin had done in the Soviet Union.⁵⁸ Although industrial production did slow in 1950, it began to grow again during the rest of the decade as the Soviet Union became involved in the country's exports and imports. Collectivized agriculture was also emphasized but was implemented somewhat differently than in the Soviet Union. East Germany created specialized regions of agricultural development and had specialty crops grown in different areas. These crops were sold almost entirely within East Germany or other Soviet states. This allowed for a self-sufficient economy but also made the farms more vulnerable to the effects of bad harvests and underproduction. This eventually led to food shortages in the 1950s, which in turn increased the number of migrants leaving East Germany.⁵⁹

Cold War Era Satellite Statehood

One of the significant distinctions between East and West Germany, besides their respective economic and social systems, was their status and relationship with their significant allies. West Germany had been treated as a satellite state of the United States and Western Europe only briefly after World War II, while East Germany still largely retained this status until arguably the early 1960s, after the construction of the Berlin Wall. Though East Germany would incrementally become more independent of the USSR overtime, such as with the Stasi becoming more equal to the KGB, Ulbricht would rely on Khrushchev to make many of the essential decisions for East Germany for a long time.⁶⁰

However, while East Germany's status as a satellite state of the Soviet Union had some perks, such as an agreement of security and a guaranteed source of trade, the unbalanced relationship between the two countries also negatively affected the economy and citizenry.

By 1960, it was clear that East Germany was what some would consider a reluctant satellite state, especially by the people themselves. Even those who had more sympathy for the communist ideals espoused by Stalin and Khrushchev that had stayed in the country became discontent with the Soviet Union's role in the country's affairs.⁶¹ The workers' uprising in June of 1953 did not help matters, but the response of Soviet troops coming into the fray to declare martial law did not sit well with many Germans who felt it was the GDR's responsibility to send troops. On top of the discontented Germans, there were also those plainly against the communist regime of the Soviet Union and East German government, though many protests and dissidents were silenced by the Stasi.⁶²

Many people in the United States and Western Europe argued that the GDR was not even a genuinely communist state, or even a legitimate state, as most of the people (eighty to ninety *per cent*) living in it opposed the communist regime. While there is not hard proof of these numbers, it was confirmed that over two million people had fled to West Germany by the end of the 1950s, and protests were frequent despite the intervention of the Stasi.⁶³

Ulbricht may have been another example of the disconnect between the East German people and their government regarding their relationship with the Soviet Union. Ulbricht was an ardent ally of Khrushchev, but many in East Germany, even prominent communist figures in and out of the East German government, did not feel enthusiastic towards their leader.⁶⁴ Many believed that Ulbricht's poor decisions and mishandling of the East German economy led to the mass exodus of workers to the West. He did a suboptimal job of properly introducing a collectivist economy to East Germany. In the end, though the Western powers did not universally acclaim it, many speculated that East Germany's satellite status played a prominent role in stunting the country's growth during

the early 1950s. This issue would only change after the construction of the Berlin Wall in the early 1960s.

Western Interference in East Germany

It was no secret at the time that the United States and Western Europe were invested in seeing East Germany flounder as West Germany flourished. The economic and social implications of the capitalist West succeeding over the collectivist East were not lost on either side of the Cold War. The United States made every effort to highlight the failures of the Soviet Union's handling of East Germany and the accomplishments made in the West. The first of these miniature conflicts between the Soviet Union and the United States regarding East Germany was the Berlin Blockade of 1948-1949. The Western Powers pooled their resources to revitalize the West German economy, which stood in stark contrast to the East as Stalin implemented collectivist policies across East Germany. When the United States and the United Kingdom introduced a new currency weighted against their own into the West German economy, Stalin viewed the action as a direct threat to the communist system in place in East Berlin. Thus, Stalin created a blockade around Berlin, stopping all forms of land and water transportation in and out of the city, leaving it only accessible by air.⁶⁵ Though the United States would be able to resupply West Berlin en masse via planes, the blockade still restricted the Berlin economy for its duration.⁶⁶ The blockade would also mark Berlin as a central point of contention for the rest of the Cold War after Stalin's death. The Berlin Blockade would also be one of the first significant actions taken under the Truman Doctrine. President Truman had taken a strong stance on protecting Western allies from the Soviet Union and its satellite states. The Berlin Blockade only served to escalate tensions between the two superpowers. The USSR would successfully explode an atomic bomb only a few months after lifting the blockade in May of 1949, exacerbating the feeling of fear each country's population had for one another.

Similar small-scale conflicts would happen under President Truman and President

Eisenhower. Under Eisenhower, the care packages sent to West Berlin to give to East Berliners before and during the massive exodus in the early 1950s played out well for the United States in the international theater. The Western powers and their influence in West Germany, in many ways, were successful in undermining the Soviet Union's progress in East Germany. The CIA had successfully wiretapped the homes of several prominent figures in the GDR, and many speculate that the CIA may have had a minor role to play in the 1953 workers uprising.⁶⁷ While the latter fact may or may not be true, it was a concern among the GDR officials at the time and would feed into the notion that the conflict between the East and West was a battle of information collection. The United States was able to respond expeditiously to the uprising with the Eisenhower care packages, which had a noticeable negative impact on East Germany's relationship with their government.⁶⁸ Of course, the Berlin Wall would be constructed less than a year after John F. Kennedy was elected, illustrating the inability of tensions between the United States to recede during the 1950s, but in fact, escalate.

Other Cold War Conflicts

While the German conflict was of the utmost importance to the United States and the Soviet Union, there were often other conflicts of the Cold War that took attention and resources away from the East and West German governments. In particular, the Korean War has become increasingly crucial for the superpowers to supervise. The Soviet Union was sending a constant stream of supplies, arms, and ships to the North Korean People's Army but also investing in the reconstruction of cities destroyed during the conflict.⁶⁹ The United States was actively participating in the war, sending over three-hundred-thousand troops to Korea and investing millions of dollars in supplies, arms, vehicles, and intelligence.⁷⁰ Both sides funneled much of their resources and attention towards the Korean War when East and West Germany were still new countries with developing economies and inexperienced leadership.

Another player complicated the power dynamics between the East and West, the

People's Republic of China. The United States was ardent on not recognizing the newly formed communist nation. At the same time, the Soviet Union saw the potential for a powerful new ally that could turn the tides of the cultural battle between capitalism and communism. In the first half of the 1950s, directly after the Chinese Communist Revolution and the rise of Mao Zedong, the Soviet Union acted as the new country's most prominent supporter.⁷¹ This would be a significant threat to the United States, especially since it was communist China that was the primary investor in the North Korean People's Army during the Korean War. However, after Stalin's death and the rise of Khrushchev, relations between the Soviet Union and China would falter as Khrushchev advocated for a less stringent regime and criticized Stalin.⁷² Still, China's rise to be an essential player on the international stage shook up both the Soviet Union's and the United States' foreign policy plans. It was another issue for each country to contend with as they also dealt with East Germany and Eastern Europe.

Comparison of Causes

Each of these issues has a common theme: they are all intrinsically tied to the conflict between the United States and the Soviet Union. Many of the problems East Germans faced during the 1940s and 1950s resulted from the Soviet Union's quick implementation of collective ideals and a command economy to continuously compete with the United States. Even at the time, many in the GDR were skeptical of the new prioritization of heavy industrial production, as it was clear that workers would not adapt to the increased production demands so quickly without increased pay.⁷³ If collectivist policies had been introduced incrementally and in line with pre-established economic sectors within East Germany, events such as the 1953 workers' uprising or the massive food shortages of the early 1950s may have been avoided.

Another aspect of each of these issues is the oversight on the Soviet Union's part in looking at the overall economy of the GDR rather than the individual state of living of the

East German people. The Soviet Union was focused on producing revenue from the country's agricultural and industrial sectors, a strategy which had increased the economy of the Soviet Union itself but did little to raise the standards of living for many people, especially in rural areas, primarily due to a lack of a strong consumer market based on light industry.⁷⁴ With the East German workers being overworked, underpaid, and without a consistent food supply, it was only a matter of time before an uprising or a mass exodus of workers occurred.

The Soviet Union and the United States also heavily emphasized information collection, which was often mainly relevant to foreign policy rather than domestic. While the Soviet Union faced many economic and social issues in East Germany, it was focused on gathering intelligence from West Berlin on future military plans, much of which had limited practical use for the Soviet Union. The Stasi and the KGB were often used to silence dissidents and keep order, mainly to keep the GDR and Communist Party in the Soviet Union in power.

Projections and Implications

The Soviet Union needed to enter negotiations with the United States and other Western powers to have the ideal outcome for the Soviet Union and the German Democratic Republic that being conditions that keep citizens in East Germany, bolster the East German economy, and maintain socialist ideals in Eastern Germany without conceding too many things to the West. A large part of making negotiations ideal is taking action to improve the state of East Germany and change its international image from a struggling police state to a powerful Eastern European communist nation. Accomplishing this would have far-reaching effects not only for East Germany but also for the Soviet Union and the Eastern world. The results of the negotiations regarding East Germany will shape the course of the Cold War. Whether tensions will rise or fall, or change will depend

on how the United States and the Soviet Union view each other after negotiations, be it enemies, allies, or peaceful coexistence.

The people of East Germany and the Soviet Union who sincerely believe in communism and its positive effects on society will look to the negotiations as a way for Khrushchev to bolster the Soviet Union's international reputation, both in the eyes of allies, who need to see the Soviet Union as formidable and influential, and enemies, who need to see the Soviet Union as a force to be reckoned but also reasoned with. This will have positive effects on the Soviet economy, with more countries willing to engage in trade, which will create more job opportunities and economic mobility at a time when the Soviet Union sorely needs it.

In history, the negotiations between the United States and the Soviet Union broke down, and the construction of the Berlin Wall that would separate East and West Berlin would begin. This would mark a time of extreme escalation in Cold War tensions and would be quickly followed by the Bay of Pigs Invasion, the Cuban Missile Crisis, and the devastating Vietnam War. Suppose these events can be avoided by a less contentious outcome of the negotiations at the War. In that case, it is in the best interest of all parties to go about the negotiations differently than they played out in real life. The Committee for State Security will be instrumental in orchestrating the ideal outcome for the Soviet Union and its hold on East Germany through information collection, sabotage, espionage, or any other tactic that can give the Soviet Union an advantage. However, skills in negotiation and leveraging the Soviet Union's advantages will be the most critical task while discussing the future of Berlin and Germany.

Committee Jurisdiction

The Directorates of the Committee for State Security will have a wide range of powers granted to them by the Soviet Union. These include but are not limited to, investigations, actions to acquire information through other means, arrests, deals,

negotiation power, and many actions that the Committee for State Security took in real life. For each delegation, the individual powers will differ slightly but will be more limited than the actions the committee can take. Individual powers will largely be limited to consulting one's department for information or investigation updates.

The committee was set in early 1960, slightly over a year before the negotiations regarding the Berlin Wall began but well after the Berlin Ultimatum had been posed in 1958. The committee will be centered around the events leading up to the negotiations regarding the Berlin Wall and the negotiations themselves. Remember that events in history before the beginning of 1960 happened in the committee as well, but events after have not yet occurred, and actions taken in the committee can change the course of events. Things that have happened in real life may not happen at all in the committee or may happen differently depending on the actions taken.

As the Committee for State Security, delegates were subordinate to Nikita Khrushchev, who would convene the committee from time to time to evaluate the goals of the Soviet Union, as well as direct the committee toward his desired outcome. The Committee for State Security will prioritize these plans but will also have significant input on what those plans are and how they should be implemented. Ask questions for clarification when Nikita Khrushchev or other figures come into the committee, as it will allow delegates to develop more comprehensive solutions and ideas. This committee will test delegates on their knowledge and creativity, and the overall goal is to see, if possible, whether the Berlin Crisis of 1961 could have occurred differently if different actions had been taken.

Conclusion

The Soviet Union needs a proactive and creative Committee for State Security to ensure that the safety and security of the Soviet Union is capitalized during the Berlin negotiations. The Soviet Union faces many challenges domestically and abroad, and the

status of East Germany and the Soviet Union's influence on the country will have far reaching implications if the outcome of the negotiations is considered unfavorable to the Soviet Union. Communism in Europe has been a contentious issue for fifty years leading up to the Berlin Crisis of 1961, and the negotiations will affect how other countries view the Soviet Union and the success or failure of command economies. It will also indicate to allies and enemies whether the Soviet Union is still a superpower meant to be taken seriously or a large country with an unstable economy and a flimsy grasp on its satellite states.

Nikita Khrushchev was East Germany's status as a powerful communist country bordering Western Europe as a strategic and political necessity. If Germany reunited and the Soviet Union lost its degree of influence on the country, its ideology, and its economy, then the Soviet Union itself would lose the legitimacy it needed to remain a world superpower. Issues will arise that must be dealt with in kind, and the Committee for State Security is tasked with ensuring that any foreseeable or unforeseeable problems are solved quickly and effectively, whether foreign or domestic. The Committee for State Security will play a crucial role in shaping the rest of the twentieth century with their contributions to the negotiations regarding the German city of Berlin.

Discussion Questions

- What was the Potsdam Agreement, and what were the implications of how Germany and Berlin were partitioned?
- What actions did the Soviet Union and the United States take to raise tensions between the two countries during the late 1940s?
- What changes did the Soviet Union make to the East German economy, and what were the consequences resulting from these changes?
- What were the Soviet Union's goals with East Germany, and why were they ideologically opposed to the United States and Western Europe?
- What issues did East Germany face during the 1950s, and how did the Soviet Union assist in solving these problems?
- What was Nikita Khrushchev's overall goal in Eastern Europe, and how was East Germany important in achieving this goal?

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