

**How significant was the building of the Berlin Wall?**

Due to the failures of the summits, the tension over Berlin INTENSIFIED. As a result, even more Berliners crossed to the West just in case Khrushchev closed the border.

On one day in August 1961, **40,000** East Germans crossed to the West.



### 12 August 1961

- At night, East German troops built a barbed wire fence around Berlin and between East and West Berlin. Streets and buildings were torn up to assist this fence.



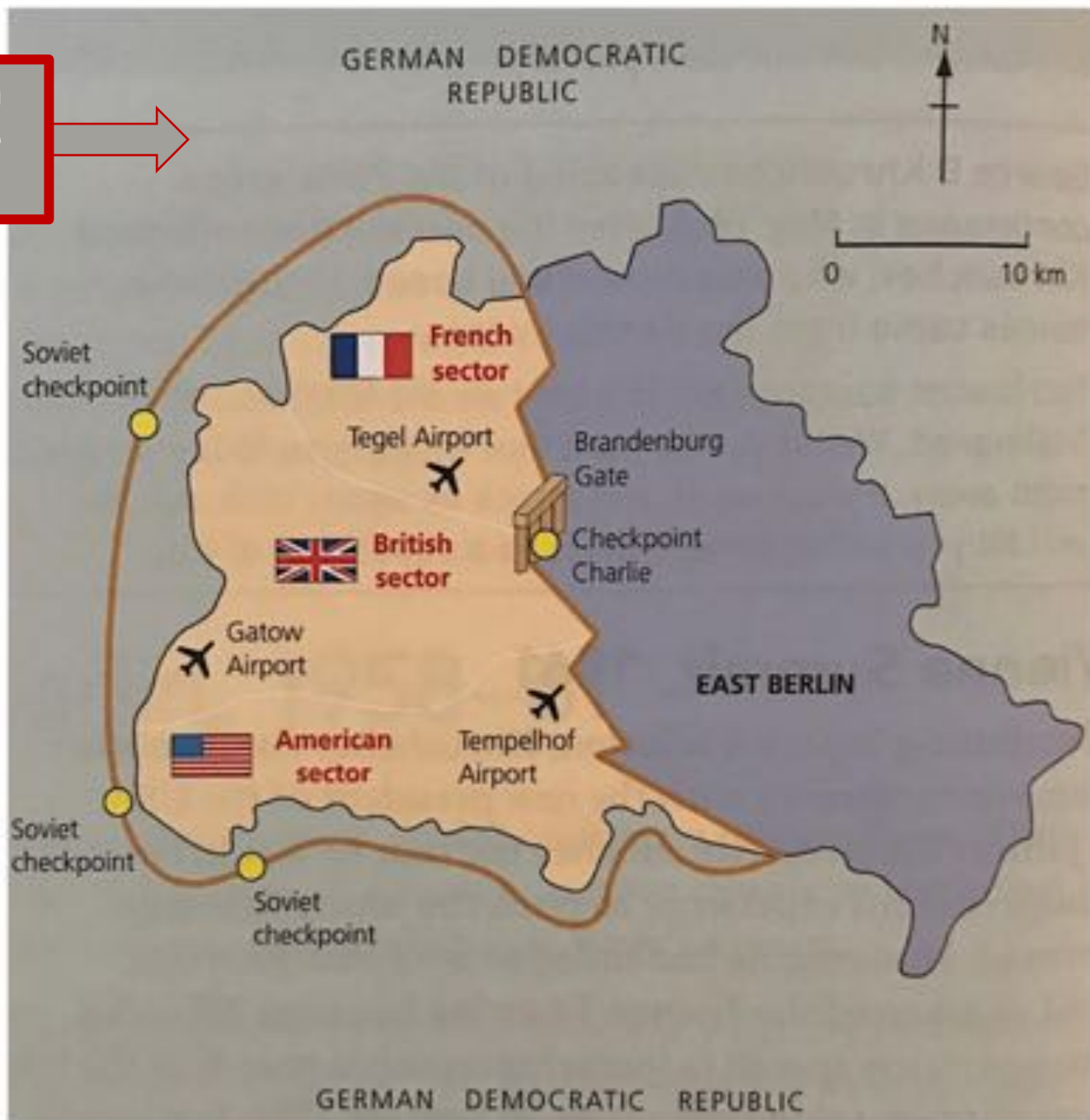
Draw a rough diagram as if you were planning this, how might it look?

CLUE: Look back at your maps of Germany and Berlin...



Remember Berlin is in  
the Soviet zone of the  
split Germany

It has all been  
done, perfectly  
legally and the  
West wouldn't have  
even known  
because it was  
done in the Soviet  
zones



Soon after, work on a concrete wall stretching 165km began. It was clear that all discussions were over, Berlin and Germany were to remain split in two.

For East Germany and Khrushchev, the refugee crisis was over.

The 27 mile way was built by the end of summer.

What can you see in this picture?

You can see from one of our pictures that there were technically 2 walls, one facing East, one facing West.

In between was 'no mans land' packed with booby traps, mine fields, car-barriers.

You can also see the look out towers that were guarded with trip wire machine gun nests and powerful search lights, as well as dogs.

'No mans land' was often sanded so footprints could be seen of people trying to escape.





# Impact of the wall on Berliners:

- Berlin was split and people were stuck
- One woman threw a mattress out of the window into West Berlin and jumped onto it, she died of her injuries
- West Berlin fire services tried to catch other jumpers in blankets
- Families, friends and neighbours were parted, for some, never to see each other again
- East Berliners were shot if they tried to escape in anyway



# Impact of the wall:

An unarmed Berlin teenager  
was shot and killed by East  
German guards  
**August 1962**



An estimated 130  
people were killed



# Impact of the wall on international relations:



- US tanks facing Soviet tanks at Checkpoint Charlie. This was a symbol of the stand off between Kennedy and Khrushchev
- One wrong move and there was a very real chance of military conflict.
- Kennedy promised to remove his troops if Khrushchev removed his, which brought a small relief to the growing tension.

	Negative outcomes	Positive outcomes
<b>Soviet Union</b> 	<p>Khrushchev abandoned plans for a Soviet ruled united Germany.</p> <p>It was clear given the choice the East Germans preferred capitalism</p>	<p>Stopped refugees from leaving for the West through East Berlin</p> <p>Sent a strong message that communism would survive in Berlin and any attempt to reunite Germany under Western control would fail</p>
<b>USA</b> 	<p>Soviet Union closed the border without consulting the USA</p> <p>People who wanted to escape from communism were no longer able.</p>	<p>Khrushchev had been forced to accept Western control in West Berlin</p> <p>Was clear that Khrushchev could no longer bully Kennedy</p> <p>West Berlin became an emblem of freedom and defiance against the now “unfree” communist East.</p>



Who do you think won this crisis?



Kennedy visited West Berlin in 1963, greeted by thousands of West Berliners. He was treated like a rock star.

West Berliners were celebrating their freedom. Kennedy made a speech contrasting this with the alternative of communism in the East.

## “Ich bin ein Berliner”

Whole speech:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=56V6r2dpYH8>

JFK visits Berlin (in colour):

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zdXXkppRLEc>



## Negatives

- Increased tensions
- Both sides had been arguing about Germany since WW2
- Many failures to sort it out had now led to the building of the wall
- Reminded people of Churchill's 'Iron Curtain' speech – proving USSR had in fact all along been planning this conquest.
- Berlin Wall became a powerful symbol of the differences between East and West

## Positives

- Now Berlin was divided and the borders were all closed it seemed likely that there would be no war over Berlin
- Kennedy said, despite much complaint about the wall, that “a wall is better than a war”
- In some ways, the wall might actually have reduced tensions between USA and USSR

What do you think?



## Exam-style question, Section A

Write a narrative account analysing the key events of the 'Berlin Crisis' in the years 1958–61. You may use the following in your answer:

- the Berlin Ultimatum, 1958
- the construction of the Berlin Wall.

You **must** also use information of your own. **8 marks**

## Exam tip

Remember that the key to scoring well on this type of question is to create a coherent narrative that links together events and explains how one leads to the next in a logical and structured way.

Remember your Linking & Process words

## Summary

- Khrushchev was worried about East German citizens crossing into West Germany.
- Talks between the USA and the Soviet Union about Berlin broke down.
- Khrushchev decided to build the Berlin Wall.
- Kennedy visited West Berlin to show his support.
- The Berlin Wall now acted as a symbol of the division of Europe.

## Checkpoint

### Strengthen

- S1** What was Khrushchev's Berlin Ultimatum?
- S2** Why did he issue this ultimatum?
- S3** Why did the Paris Summit in 1960 fail?

### Challenge

- C1** After the summit meetings of 1959–61, do you think Khrushchev would have thought Kennedy was a stronger or weaker leader than he had previously thought?
  - C2** Berlin is thousands of kilometres from the USA, so why did Kennedy care what happened to it?
  - C3** In what way could the building of the Berlin Wall have helped relations between the USA and the Soviet Union?
- How confident do you feel about your answers to these questions? Form a small group and discuss any questions you are not sure about. Look for the answers in this section. Now rewrite your answers together in your group.