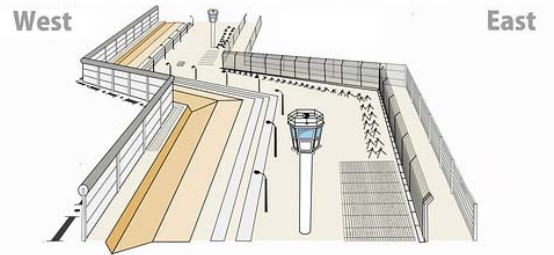# The Berlin Wall

After World War II, Germany was split into two separate countries. The Soviet Union controlled East Germany under a communist regime. West Germany, allied with Britain, France, and the United States, remained democratic. Many East German people did not want to live under communism, so they moved to West Germany. From 1949 to 1959, over two million people left East Germany. Another 230,000 people fled in 1960 alone.

In 1961, To stop people from defecting from East Germany, the Soviets and the East German leaders built the Berlin Wall between East and West Berlin. At first, the "wall" was only a barbed wire fence. But the fence was replaced by a 12-foot-high concrete wall. There were also guards in towers to prevent people from trying to get over the wall. The Berlin Wall became a symbol of the Cold War, a physical manifestation of the "Iron Curtain" that divided the democratic West from the communist countries of Eastern Europe during that time.

Over a period of 28 years, around 5000 people escaped over or through the wall. Several hundred others died trying to escape. In the late 1980s, the Soviet Union began to collapse. The Berlin Wall was dismantled in 1989, and Germany became a single country again on October 3, 1990.

1. Why did so many people leave East Germany from 1949 to 1960?

2. Why did the Soviets and the East German leaders build the wall?