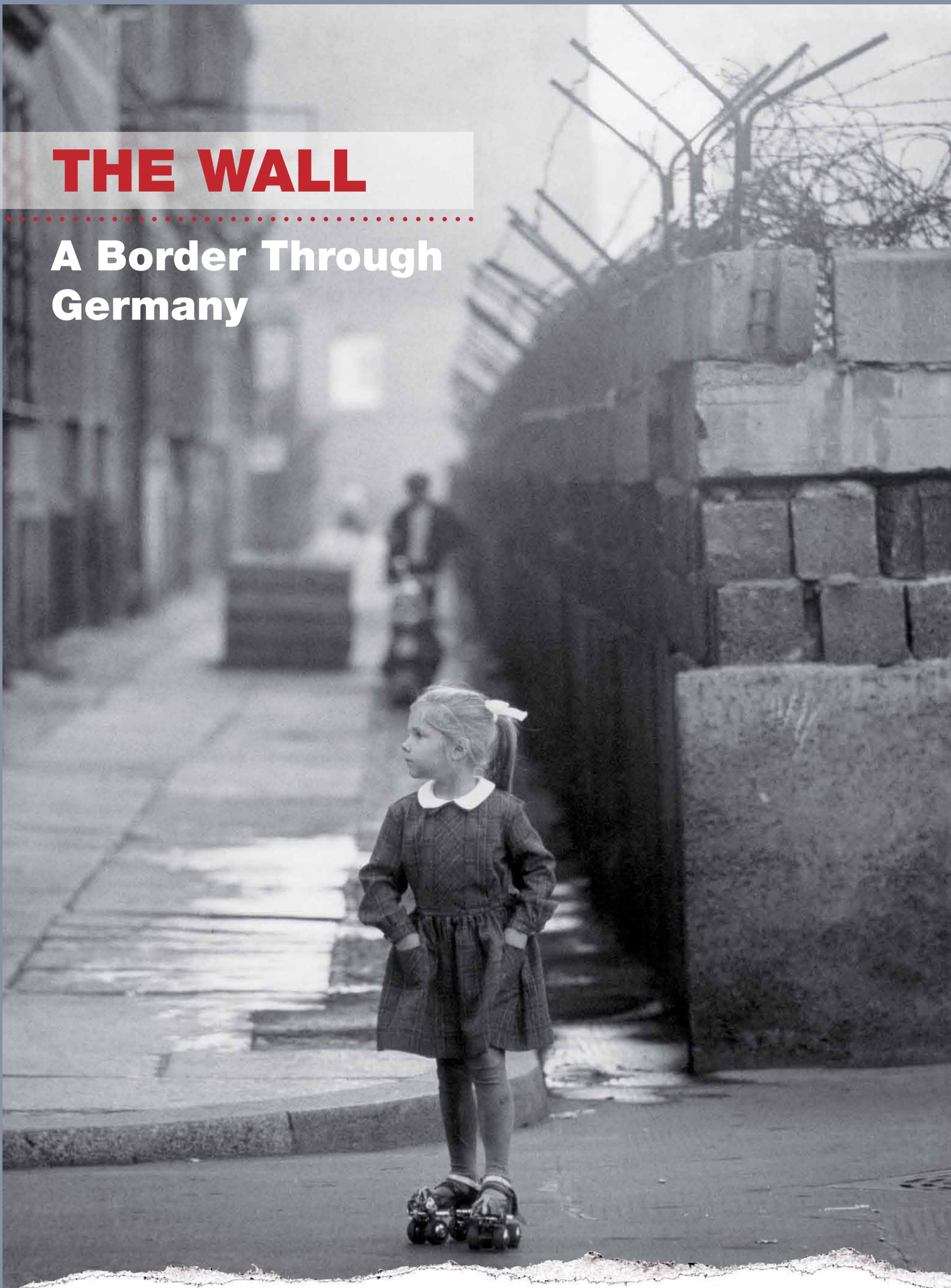


# THE WALL

## A Border Through Germany



**An exhibition on contemporary history presented by**

BUNDESSTIFTUNG  
AUFARBEITUNG 

**Bild**

DIE  WELT

**NEW CONFLICTS**  
The boundaries of the zones of occupation are already established by the time the "Big Three" meet in Potsdam in July 1945. However, British Prime Minister Winston Churchill and US President Harry Truman are unable to wrest a peaceful world order out of Soviet dictator Joseph Stalin

# ZONES OF OCCUPATION



## The Iron Curtain

**A**t the Potsdam Conference in July 1945, the Big Three, British Prime Minister Winston Churchill, US President Harry Truman and Soviet dictator Joseph Stalin, affirm that they will jointly govern the defeated German Reich. Germany is divided into zones of occupation and its capital, Berlin, is split into sectors. The victorious powers are each to administer their respective territories single-handedly; they agree to decide on questions concerning Germany as a whole in an Allied Control Council in Berlin. As relations between the Soviets and the Western Allies rapidly deteriorate, however, so does cooperation within the Council. The boundary between the British and American zones on one side and the Soviet zone on the other becomes the line of demarcation between two opposed worldviews. Churchill

has been expecting this from early on. He first described an "iron curtain" falling across the middle of Europe to divide the continent in a telegram to Truman only four days after the German surrender. The situation particularly comes to a head in Berlin. The former capital of the German Reich is divided into four sectors, forcing the three victors and additionally France to work together especially closely in Berlin. But serious conflicts emerge in Berlin even within the first months of the four-power occupation. Beginning in spring 1946 the disputes escalate – both publicly in the form of propaganda battles and behind the scenes in numerous covert operations. Hopes for cooperation among the victorious powers are quickly dashed. Rather than peace reigning in Europe and the world, the Cold War now breaks out between East and West.



**FAILED EFFORTS** The USA, Great Britain, France and the USSR intended to govern Germany jointly. But East-West conflicts escalate within the Allied Control Council as early as 1946



**THE FIRST BORDER** A stream running through the village of Mödlareuth marks the boundary between the American and Soviet zones. At this point only signs demarcate what will later become the intra-German border



**THE APPEARANCE OF UNITY** Military policemen from the four victorious powers in front of the Allied Kommandatura in Berlin. The Soviets and the three Western Allies share responsibility for the four-sectored city

**CANDY BOMBER**  
West Berlin children watch a US transport plane arriving at Tempelhof Airport. The three Western sectors of the city are supplied by airlift for eleven months



# BLOCKADE



**DIVIDED CITY** West Berlin is cut off from overland supply routes. To prevent smuggling, East German police intensely monitor the border to the Western sectors, including at the Brandenburg Gate



**FORAGING HELPS** Hunger drives the people of West Berlin to forage for food outside the city. They trade their last possessions for something to eat. But whoever is caught doing so can expect severe punishment

## Rescue from on high

The confrontation between Western democracy and Soviet dictatorship is starkest in Berlin. In October 1946 Berlin holds city-wide free elections – the first since 1932 and the last until 1990. The voters express their clear support for the well-established tradition of social democracy and for the newly founded Christian Democratic Party. The Socialist Unity Party (SED), composed of the Communist Party of Germany (KPD) and those parts of the Social Democratic Party which have been forced to merge with it, receives only a fifth of the votes. However, the Soviets refuse to confirm the June 1947 election of Mayor Ernst Reuter. When West Germany introduces the German Mark (DM) as its new currency a year later, the commander of the Soviet garrison in Berlin opposes resolving the currency issue in Berlin. When the three Western sectors then begin using the DM, Stalin reacts with a total blockade of

all overland and water routes from the Western zones of Germany to the Western sectors of Berlin. Millions are affected as the electricity supply and food deliveries from the surrounding region are also cut off. The East German transitional authority has checkpoints built around Berlin and at the boundaries between East and West within the city. The three Western sectors of the city are not entirely cut off from the surrounding area during the blockade; visits are allowed. However, anyone caught by the East German police smuggling supplies into West Berlin faces harsh penalties. US Military Governor Lucius D. Clay defies Soviet threats. Taking up the daring suggestion of a British officer, Clay arranges for the three Western sectors of Berlin to be supplied by air, effective immediately. The airlift begins. Airplanes loaded with supplies are soon landing every few minutes. In May 1949, the Soviets sheepishly give in, once again allowing access to roads to and from West Berlin.



**LOGISTICAL FEAT** Without any advance preparation the British and US militaries organize an efficient airlift in summer 1948, the likes of which the world has never seen. The occupiers of West Berlin become its protectors



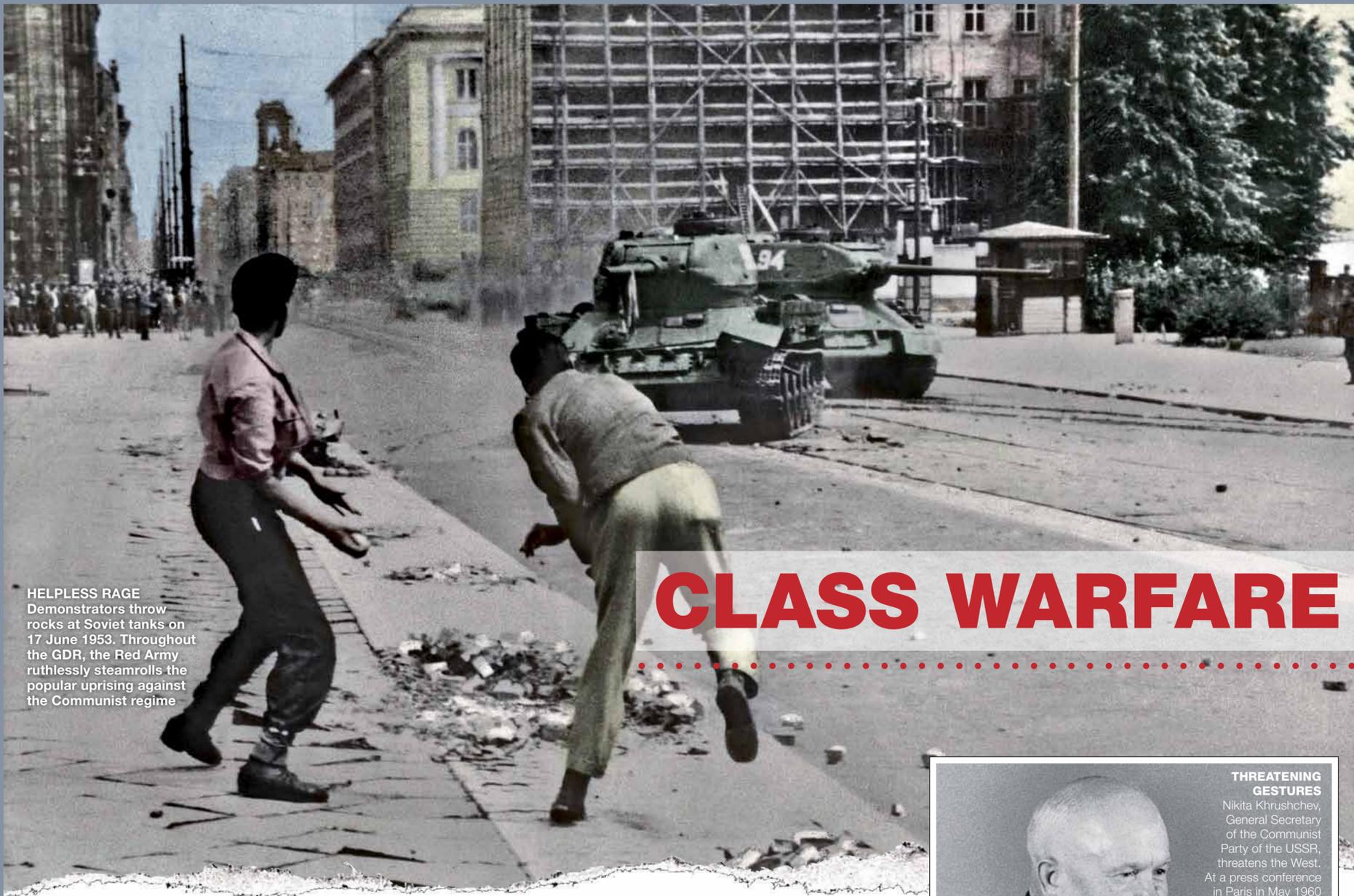
**CLEAR SIGNAL** On 9 September 1948, hundreds of thousands of West Berliners assemble before the ruins of the Reichstag to protest against the blockade



**STRONG WILL** US Governor Lucius D. Clay does not back down a single inch in the face of Soviet pressure

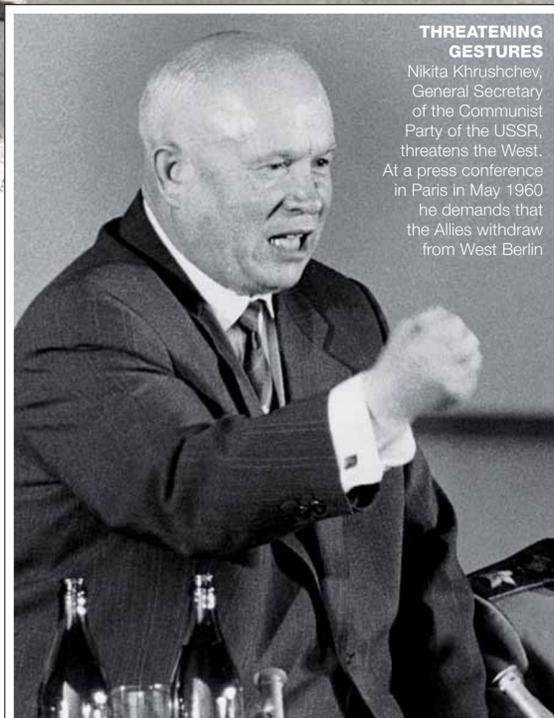


**PEACEFUL VICTORY** In May 1949, the Soviet Union releases the two million people of West Berlin from the captivity in which it has held them. The Western powers have won the first battle of the Cold War



**HELPLESS RAGE**  
Demonstrators throw rocks at Soviet tanks on 17 June 1953. Throughout the GDR, the Red Army ruthlessly steamrolls the popular uprising against the Communist regime

# CLASS WARFARE



**THREATENING GESTURES**  
Nikita Khrushchev, General Secretary of the Communist Party of the USSR, threatens the West. At a press conference in Paris in May 1960, he demands that the Allies withdraw from West Berlin



**COLLECTIVIZATION** Propaganda sign in Marxwalde (Neuhardenberg). Slogans proclaiming a free decision in the name of Socialism belie the reality of brutal coercion

## Party policies against the people

**T**he Socialist Unity Party, the ruling party of East Germany, decides in 1952 to implement socialism. In the years prior it has established its dictatorship in East Germany with Soviet backing. Germany has been divided into two states since 1949. As living conditions steadily improve in the West German Federal Republic, the ruling party in the East wages class warfare against its own population. Farmers are pressed into agricultural collectives, private businesses are brought to their knees through ever-rising taxes and Christians are persecuted. When a ten percent increase in worker productivity is decreed in June 1953, construction workers take to the streets of East Berlin in protest. On 17 June the protest spreads throughout the GDR. Some one million people protest on the streets of more than 700 cities and towns, calling for free elections and an end to the dictatorship. Communist party rule is on the brink of collapse. Soviet

tanks roll in and crush the protests; at least 55 people are killed. The popular uprising comes as a shock to the ruling party. The party leadership initially reacts with concessions, which are meant to defuse the situation and improve the supply system. At the same time, however, State Security (better known as the Stasi) is being built up. By 1958 the party feels reinvigorated. At the Fifth Party Congress it announces that it will continue implementing socialism in all sectors of society. The party does not limit itself to ideological campaigns. Agriculture is forced to collectivize. Private businesspeople as well as trades people, bakers, butchers and many of the remaining private merchants are dispossessed or forced into production cooperatives. Christians are once again harassed in the GDR. Agricultural production falls sharply and the supply situation comes to a head. By the early 1960s, the party has led the GDR into another crisis.



**FACE OF DICTATORSHIP** A Soviet tank rolls over Potsdamer Platz in Berlin. The Soviet army comes out of its barracks to crush the uprising



**EMPTY SLOGANS** With empty promises, the ruling party attempts to win over the people of the GDR to its goals. But daily experience contradicts the party's grandiloquent proclamations



**OUTRAGEOUS DEMANDS** When East German workers demand free elections, the party realizes that its power is in grave danger. The politburo flees to the Soviet High Command outside Berlin



**MARTIAL** The GDR National People's Army marches in East Berlin on 1 May 1960



**FALSE IDYLL** The border within Germany is sealed off in 1952. Armed GDR guards square off with the West German border police (left) across the barbed wire

# WESTWARD

## Exodus from the GDR

**W**ith the ruling party governing against the interests of its own population and living conditions decaying once more, the number of people who defect to the West rises sharply in the late 1950s. Their destination is West Germany, where freedom, democracy and the West German "economic miracle" await them. The decision to defect is especially common among the young and the well educated. But reaching the West has been difficult for quite a while. The intra-German border has been sealed with barbed wire since 1952; checkpoints are strictly monitored. East German border police have also closed off the border surrounding Berlin. The border within the city, by contrast, though monitored, is not fully sealed thanks to the shared responsibility of all four Allied powers for Berlin. Several underground and city train lines cross the boundaries between East and West Berlin. Anyone who approaches the border clearly carrying luggage, however, risks being arrested. Nonetheless, the Marienfelde Refugee Centre in West Berlin is soon filled beyond capacity. Some 12000 refugees arrive in West Berlin per month in 1959, a number that rises by half in 1960. By the summer of 1961, up to 2400 men, women and children per day are venturing a new start in the West with no more than a few suitcases. Anyone who is recognized as a political refugee either receives a flat in West Berlin or is flown to West Germany. Because the Western Allies handle civilian air transport, the flight to West Germany is a safe one for defectors from the GDR. The demand by Soviet party head Nikita Khrushchev and GDR party General Secretary Walter Ulbricht to control air traffic to and from West Berlin is a transparent attempt to close this loophole.



**INTO THE UNKNOWN** This girl is to grow up in freedom. Her parents are giving up their home and most of their possessions in order to give their child a better chance in life. It's a wager that pays off in most cases



**A FINAL FAREWELL?** The stream of defectors is endless. Here, a family arrives at the Berlin-Marienfelde Refugee Centre



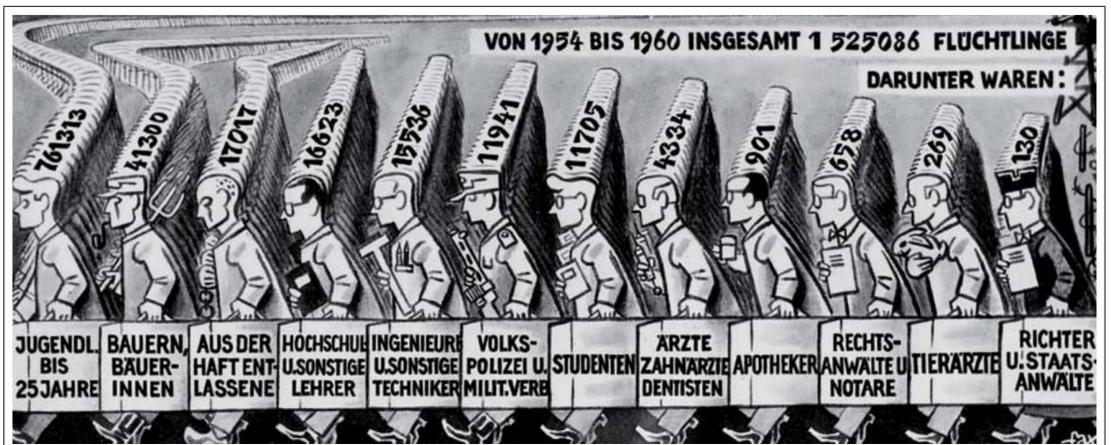
**DISINGENUOUS** At a press conference on 15 June 1961, GDR party leader Walter Ulbricht claims that "Nobody has any intention of building a wall." Nonetheless, the number of defectors continues to mount



**WEARY** A woman rests on a bench from the strain of the journey westward



**THE LAST GAP** As the border between West and East Germany is now closed, West Berlin is the only remaining option for those hoping to flee East Germany. From there they can fly onward to West Germany



**HAEMORRHAGING TALENT** The young and the well-educated are especially inclined to leave the GDR in the 1950s. Farmers too flee en masse in the face of forced collectivization. The ruling party needs to stop the citizens of the GDR from "voting with their feet". But instead of undertaking reforms, Ulbricht, Honecker and their comrades look to shut off West Berlin

# CONSTRUCTION OF THE WALL



**DEPLOYMENT** Members of the paramilitary "Combat Groups of the Working Class in East Germany" barricade the Brandenburg Gate on 13 August 1961 – allegedly to preserve peace. For decades to come, the GDR will use this propaganda photo to justify what it calls the "anti-fascist protective barrier"

## 13 August 1961

**T**he time comes in the middle of the night between 12 and 13 August 1961: the lights go out around 1.05 am. The brightly illuminated Brandenburg Gate, a symbol of the unresolved question of Germany, suddenly plunges into the darkness of a balmy summer night. Visible only as silhouettes, armoured vehicles roll through the Classicist gate as uniformed soldiers form a cordon along the border between the central districts of Mitte and Tiergarten. In these moments armed GDR forces are deployed not only here but all around the three Western sectors of Berlin. Dragging barbed wire across streets, ruins and parks, they seal off the roughly 80 then-existing official checkpoints. Germans in East Berlin and the GDR are now permitted to cross the border to the Western sectors only with a special pass – for all intents and purposes, they are not allowed to cross it at all. By around 1.45 am all of West

Berlin has been closed off and surrounded by armed guard posts. From spring 1961 onward, the flood of refugees had posed an existential threat to the GDR. This is the argument GDR party leader Walter Ulbricht has used to convince Nikita Khrushchev that West Berlin should be fully sealed off. Party security head Erich Honecker perfectly disguises what is dubbed "Operation Rose". Although the operation requires extensive preparation, involving thousands of soldiers, police officers and members of the "workers' militias", not a single detail of the imminent action reaches the public ahead of time. Scattered rumours draw the attention of the West German Intelligence Service. But political leaders in Bonn and West Berlin cannot imagine that the GDR would actually dare to violate the city's four-power rule by closing off the border between the Eastern and Western sectors of Berlin.



**UTTERLY APPALLED** The building of the Wall comes as a total surprise. The "Berliner Morgenpost" newspaper publishes a special edition documenting the appalling turn of events. "East Berlin sealed off", the headline proclaims



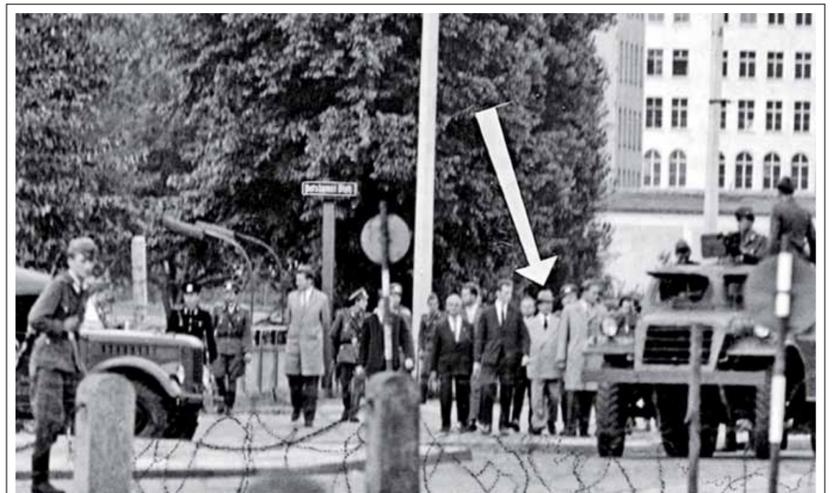
**HEAVY EQUIPMENT** Workers' militias in armoured vehicles block off routes of passage through the Brandenburg Gate. Out of sight, GDR battle tanks stand guard



**ONGOING REINFORCEMENT** A single layer of barbed wire is not enough: Only a few hours after the first barricades have gone up, GDR border police begin enhancing the border fence



**OPEN VIOLENCE** With raised bayonets, GDR border guards force protesters from West Berlin back over the border to the West



**PARTY HEAD WALTER ULBRICHT** (arrow) sees the barricades for himself – and in doing so is photographed by Western journalists

# REALPOLITIK



**SHOW OF DETERMINATION**  
At Checkpoint Charlie, a crossing point for foreigners, tanks demonstrate US military strength in the autumn of 1961. Massive battle tanks also line the Eastern side of the border. By luring the Soviets into a show of force, Kennedy's astute special envoy in Berlin, Lucius D. Clay, is making them admit that they are behind the building of the Wall

## The Allies' reaction

The West is caught un-awares by the building of the Wall. But West Berlin's three protecting powers see no reason for severe retaliation. Western leaders react coolly: US President John F. Kennedy goes sailing off Massachusetts, British Prime Minister Harold MacMillan goes hunting in Scotland and French President Charles de Gaulle relaxes in the Champagne region. All three view the closed border as no more than the embodiment of an existing political reality. As Kennedy succinctly puts it, "We're going to do nothing now because there is no alternative except war." The Americans pay scrupulous attention to making sure their rights are not infringed upon. In a televised speech on the Berlin crisis on 25 July 1961, before the Wall is built, Kennedy signals to Khrushchev what the West would and would not accept. Indispensable for the US President are the presence of the Western Allies in West Berlin, unobstructed paths of access to and from West Ber-

lin and the right of self-determination for the people of West Berlin. Kennedy's speech does not mention East Berlin. The Germans, however, are not prepared to accept the border closing. West Berlin Mayor Willy Brandt writes to Washington: "Inactivity and pure defensiveness could elicit a crisis of confidence with regard to the Western powers." In response to Brandt's warning, Kennedy sends his vice-president Lyndon B. Johnson to Berlin, names Lucius D. Clay Special Presidential Envoy to Berlin and adds 1500 GIs to the US garrison in West Berlin. The UK and France also send military reinforcements. Tanks demonstrate the Allies' protective presence. The Allies begin to regain the trust of West Berliners, especially when Kennedy visits the city in June 1963 and makes his famous proclamation "Ich bin ein Berliner." But the radical alteration in the legal status of Berlin due to the building of the Wall is not officially laid down until the 1972 signing of the Four Power Agreement on Berlin.



**HIGH-LEVEL VISIT** The joint appearance of US Vice-President Lyndon B. Johnson and Mayor Willy Brandt on 20 August 1961 offers hope to the people of West Berlin



**DISAPPOINTED** The 16 August 1961 edition of the BILD-Zeitung gets to the heart of West Berliners' feelings: a sense of abandonment by their protectors



**SNIDE GESTURE** GDR party head Walter Ulbricht (second from right) shows Nikita Khrushchev (centre) the barriers in Berlin on 7 January 1963. The Soviet strongman waves cynically to the West



**ICH BIN EIN BERLINER** John F. Kennedy's visit to West Berlin on 26 June 1963 is only a few hours long. He rides through the city with West Berlin Mayor Willy Brandt and Chancellor Konrad Adenauer. The trip makes Kennedy a legend to the people of West Berlin



**THE AGREEMENT** (from left) French Foreign Minister Maurice Schumann, British Foreign Secretary Alec Douglas-Home, Soviet Foreign Minister Andrei Gromyko and US Secretary of State William Rogers sign the Four Power Agreement on Berlin on 3 June 1972



**SAYING GOOD-BYE**  
Two mothers and their children bid each other farewell across the barbed wire on Heidelberg Straße on 13 August 1961. The photo, which is not posed, is seen around the world

# DESPAIR

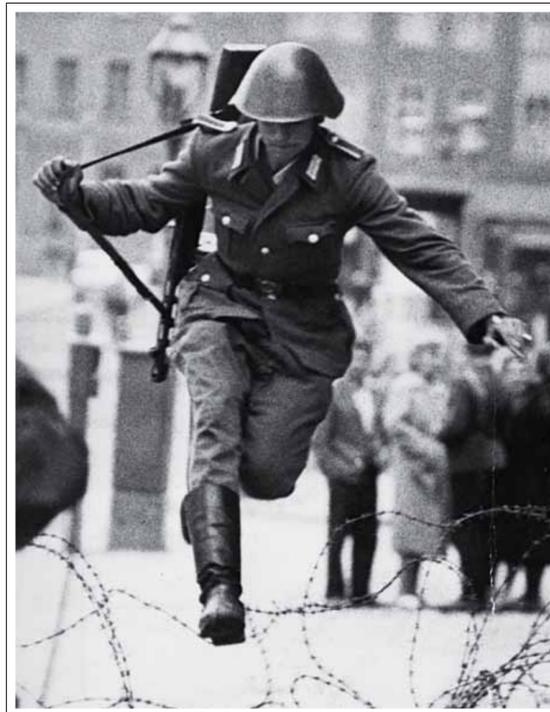
## Suffering and yearning



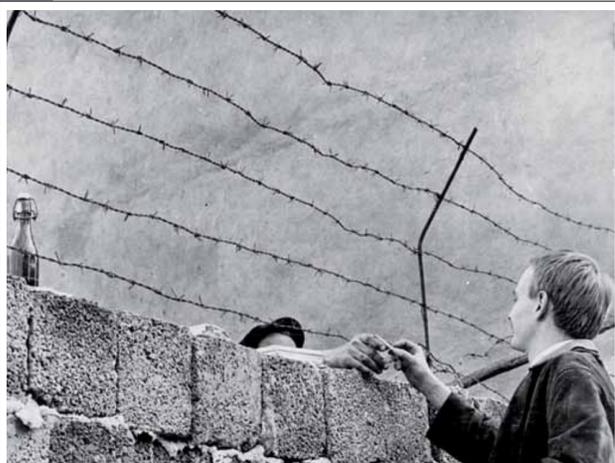
**SUCCESSFUL ESCAPE** This young man fought his way through the barbed wire in the north of Berlin. He has escaped with only superficial injuries to his head. Helpers from West Berlin bring him to safety

The building of the Wall does not only split Berlin – it also divides families and friends. In the first days after 13 August there are still gaps in the barrier. Thousands of East Berliners seize this opportunity. In the first twelve hours alone, three dozen young people reach freedom in the West by swimming across the Landwehrkanal, the Heidekampgraben and the Britzer Zweigkanal. In these early days, cemetery and factory walls along the border also offer relatively easy access to West Berlin. Escape becomes much more difficult beginning on 15 August 1961, when a concrete-and-brick barricade replaces the tangle of barbed wire in the city centre. Several dozen bricklayers conscripted into building the Wall manage to escape to freedom; numerous border guards also desert. Until 23 August 1961, West Berliners are able to drive into East Berlin if they show iden-

tification. But the GDR politburo soon cuts off this privilege because many East Germans are escaping the GDR with smuggled West German IDs. For the next two and a half years the people of East and West Berlin live in almost total separation. Only letters and telegrams still make it across the border, always strictly monitored and often days late. Until the autumn of 1961 people crawl through sewer tunnels to the West, bravely trudging through faeces. As late as September 1961, well-coordinated groups make it across the border in broad daylight in some spots by squeezing through barbed wire that has been cut. Harrowing scenes play out at the border: Young newlyweds in the West bid farewell to their parents in the East; fathers who've escaped see their wives and children for the last time for many years; fiancés and siblings must say their good-byes.



**HISTORIC LEAP** On 15 August 1961, GDR soldier Conrad Schumann takes advantage of an unobserved moment. Several still photographers and a cameraman capture his escape; the image becomes a symbol of the divided city



**LAST MESSAGE** A bricklayer passes a note across the Wall to a young West Berliner. Whoever is caught in such an act faces harsh interrogation and lengthy imprisonment



**VIEW OF THE OTHER SIDE** Two older women in West Berlin try to catch a glimpse of their relatives on the other side of the Wall



**THROUGH THE FENCE** Wherever possible, East Germans take advantage of gaps in the barricades to escape. Young and old alike, for the sake of freedom they sacrifice everything they cannot carry with them

# ESCAPES



**RIDDLED WITH BULLETS** Manfred Massenthe and several friends armour a bus and attempt to break through the barricades at the Invalidenstraße border checkpoint on 12 May 1963. But just short of their destination the driver is hit by a bullet and loses control of the vehicle. Long prison sentences ensue

## Bravery in desperation

In violation of principles of human rights, the GDR regime does not permit its citizens to leave the country for the West. Applications for exit visas to relocate to the West are often denied, and the filing of such an application has negative career repercussions and leads to Stasi harassment. For many the only remaining option is to try to escape.

The motivations are multifarious: They include political repression, lack of economic prospects, and the desire to reunite with family. Just as varied are the methods of escape. Aspiring defectors drive heavy vehicles straight through border barricades, crawl through laboriously dug tunnels, take to the air in hot-air balloons or airplanes, and cross the Baltic Sea in rubber dinghies on surf boards or even by swimming. Many defect via neighbouring Eastern Bloc countries with falsified passports or are smuggled across the border in car boots. But the largest group of those who escape to the West are what the Stasi call



**DINGHY TO FREEDOM** Using a wooden slat as a paddle, Detlef Lenk makes his way across the Baltic Sea on 20 August 1971. He is rescued after 36 hours

the "remainers" – those who receive permission to visit the West but never return from their visits. Trying to escape is highly risky. Far more attempts fail than succeed. Those who are killed include Chris Gueffroy, shot dead in February 1989, and Winfried Freudenberg, whose improvised gas balloon crashes in March 1989. They are the last to die attempting to cross from Germany to Germany.



**BURROWING UNDER THE WALL** Bruno Becker is one of the first Berliners to hit upon the idea of digging a tunnel under the Wall. Twenty-eight people, many of them his family members, escape to freedom through the tunnel on 30 January 1962



**RE-PURPOSED** A bulldozer is the perfect vehicle for breaking through the border. Neither fences nor trenches can stop it, as a GDR soldier demonstrates on 18 October 1963



**CROSS-COUNTRY** Three privates in the GDR National People's Army break through the border barricades in this armoured reconnaissance vehicle on 28 June 1963 to reach the West German region of Hesse



**ESCAPE PLANE** Despite strict surveillance, a technician manages to steal an airplane belonging to the "Society for Sport and Technology", flies it over the death strip and lands near the West German town of Köditz on 12 May 1962



**WESTWARD WITH THE WIND** Two families of four successfully escape to West Germany in a homemade hot air balloon in September 1979

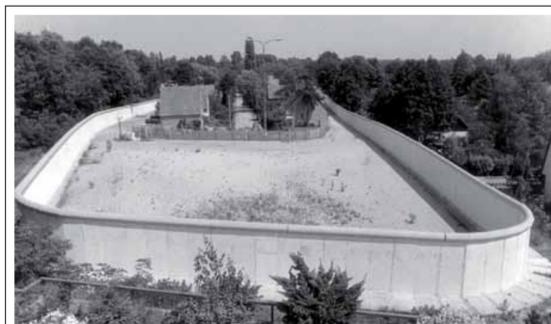


**SEEMINGLY NORMAL**  
In this posed scene, three tourists view the Brandenburg Gate from the East. The entire square in front of the Gate, Pariser Platz, is a no-access zone – there is no chance of East Germans reaching the West here.

# LIVING WITH THE WALL



**NARROW PASSAGE** On Bethaniendamm in the Kreuzberg district of Berlin, a mere four metres lie between the Wall and the facades of West Berlin buildings



**WALLED IN** The area known as the "duck's beak" is an enclave of the East German town of Oranienburg in West Berlin. GDR border guards are continually perfecting the border barricades here

## Living in the shadow of the border

In the East, border guards block off residents' view of the Wall as much as possible with screens and no-access zones. Things are different in West Berlin, where the Wall is integrated into daily life. Graffiti artists use it as a massive canvas, camping enthusiasts treat it as a weekend refuge and Kreuzberg bars run improvised beer gardens beside it – all as if there were no Wall. The perilous Wall running through the heart of this major city is soon of more interest to tourists than to those who live with it. The popular imagination of West Berlin focuses on the death strip only when news of another shooting comes. Because the actual barricades are set a few metres back into the Eastern zone, there are lawless zones in the middle of the city which West Berlin police are not permitted to enter. Numerous illegal buildings go up in these

areas – they will remain standing until 1990, and some of them still exist today in a legalized form. Growing up in the shadow of the Wall, West Berlin children play "border police and defector" rather than cops and robbers. Their games mimic reality so closely that the "defector" is often "shot dead". Children process the inhumanity unconsciously, adults often not at all. But people only appear to have adjusted to the new reality. In truth many of them suffer from what psychiatrists and neurologists call "Wall sickness". This is a condition marked by psychosomatic disorders, often accompanied by depression and the feeling of being "walled in". After the building of the Wall, West Berlin is known for one of the highest suicide rates of any city in the world. The rate of suicide and attempted suicide is, however, even higher in East Berlin.

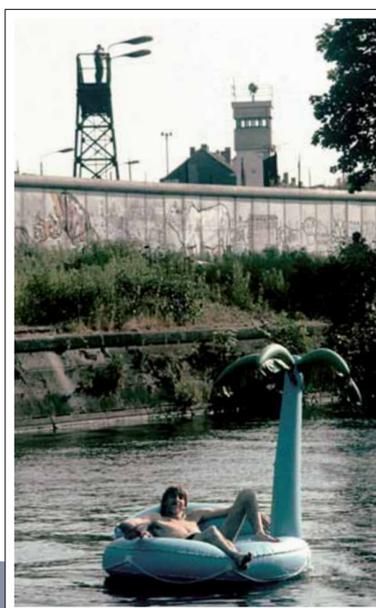


**FALSE IDYLL** Five West Berliners enjoy the sunshine beside the Wall in the Kreuzberg district. Most residents of the walled city adjust their lives to the omnipresence of the border



**OASIS OF LEISURE** Many West Berliners soon realize that they can enjoy nature and tranquillity right next to the Wall. A section of the first border fence is visible in this picture

**PROVOCATIVE JOKE** A West Berliner floats along the Teltow canal on an inflatable plastic island, under the critical eye of a GDR border guard observing from a watchtower

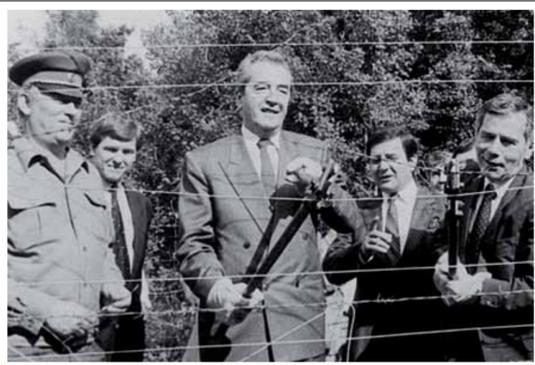


**HUMAN NEEDS** Even border guards need to heed the call of nature sometimes. A GDR soldier snaps a photo of his superior urinating on an anti-tank blockade in the death strip

# REVOLUTION



**NO MORE HOLDING BACK**  
70,000 demonstrators protest against the ruling party in the East German city of Leipzig on 9 October 1989. Seeing the size of the crowd, the police and the Stasi do not intervene. From this point forward, the freedom movement, not the regime, is the one leading the way



**NEW HOPE** Austrian Foreign Minister Alois Mock and his Hungarian counterpart Gyula Horn cut through the barbed wire on the border between their countries on 27 June 1989. Ever more holes open in the Iron Curtain



**SEIZING THE MOMENT** At a "pan-European breakfast" on the Austrian border near Sopron, Hungary, on 19 August 1989, 400 East Germans flee across the border in front of rolling television cameras



**WORDS OF DELIVERANCE** On the balcony of the West German Embassy in Prague on 30 September 1989, West German Foreign Minister Hans-Dietrich Genscher announces to a crowd of thousands of fleeing East Germans that they are permitted to travel onwards to West Germany

## "We are the people!"

**S**oviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev's reforms change the world. In the West they awaken hope for an end to the arms race, in the East for democratization. But the GDR regime has a low opinion of Gorbachev's glasnost and perestroika campaigns. A dispirited mood prevails in the economically depressed GDR. In May 1989 opposition forces prove that results of the recently held local elections have been tampered with. Government leaders respond with wilful ignorance and repression. The number of applications for exit visas climbs. In the summer thousands decide to take a one-way holiday. Some travel to Hungary, where the Iron Curtain has become permeable along the border with Austria, while others occupy the West German embassies in Prague and Warsaw. When they are

allowed to travel onwards to the West as the East German Party leadership obviously celebrates the 40th anniversary of the GDR, protests blossom into a mass movement. The words of visiting Head of State Mikhail Gorbachev, "Life punishes those who come too late," now become a beacon of hope. Hundreds of thousands take to the streets in Leipzig, Berlin and other cities. The slogan of this peaceful revolution is "we are the people." New political configurations form. Other political parties break away from the ruling SED, which in turn removes Honecker from power. But his successor Egon Krenz has little to offer in response to the momentum of the unfolding events. To temper the growing pressure on them, the new state and party leadership decide to issue new regulations permitting travel to the West.



**A CHANCE IN PRAGUE** Thousands of East Germans flee into the West German Embassy. Even the Czech police cannot hold them back



**PUBLIC PROTEST** With candlelight vigils in churches, civil rights advocates undermine the GDR leadership's attempt to hush up their protests. Reporting in the Western media also plays a part



**INDIRECT PROTECTION** By 1989 the GDR regime no longer dares to have members of the opposition "disappeared". Western photographers and cameras are present at many protests



**SYMBOLIC PHOTO** Mikhail Gorbachev and Erich Honecker set an appointment during celebrations of the 40th anniversary of the GDR. The Gorbachev quote "Life punishes those who come too late" becomes the slogan of the moment

**WATERSHED MOMENT**  
The hated Wall has fallen. Thousands scale the Wall and celebrate the event of the century at the Brandenburg Gate. Ordinary daily life grinds to a halt across Berlin

# THE FALL OF THE WALL



## 9 November 1989

**A**t exactly 6.53 pm, at the international press centre in East Berlin, politburo member Günter Schabowski announces the decision of the GDR leadership "to implement a regulation today that allows every citizen of the German Democratic Republic to leave through border crossings of the GDR". In response to a journalist's question about when the new travel regulation will go into effect, Schabowski leaps through his papers and answers erroneously, "immediately, without delay". With these words, party functionary Schabowski opens the floodgates. As soon as Western news agencies have broadcast the surprising announcement, countless East Berliners begin streaming towards the border checkpoints. By 9 pm, Trabants and Wartburgs are backed up along Bornholmer Straße. Having received no orders, the responsible border officer does not know how to reply to

the chorus of calls for the checkpoint to be opened. At the Bundestag in Bonn, MPs rise from their seats and strike up the German national anthem. The strains of "unity and justice and freedom" have barely faded away when the first East Berliners receive permission to cross the Bornholmer Straße border. One by one, the other border checkpoints open, including the famed Checkpoint Charlie. Honecker's successor Egon Krenz will later say that the pressure was simply too great to withstand. Normal life grinds to a halt in Berlin. Hundreds of thousands of people from both sides of the city celebrate at the checkpoints, on the Kurfürstendamm and in front of the Brandenburg Gate, the symbol of the division of Germany. After 28 years, the Wall has fallen. Only a year later, the GDR will no longer exist: Germany is reunited in peace and freedom.



**PRESS CONFERENCE** Responding to a question about when the new travel regulation will take effect, politburo member Günter Schabowski mistakenly says "immediately, without delay"



**UTTER MADNESS** At the Bornholmer Straße border checkpoint, Trabants and Wartburgs make their way across the Bösebrücke to West Berlin. Here, too, the crowd is ecstatic



**BARRIERS LIFTED** It cannot happen fast enough: Joyful East Berliners run across the Bornholmer Straße border checkpoint into the Western part of the city



**EXUBERANT** Two young women give themselves over to their excitement



**WORDS OF WELCOME** Thousands of West Berliners have also come to welcome the East Germans and to join them in celebrating



**HACKING AWAY AT THE WALL** On this night nobody has any problem with this act of force