

## The Fall of the Wall

November 9, 2019 marks the 30-year anniversary of the fall of the Berlin Wall. This historic moment is a tribute to the power of the people. Their rising voices were heard, their call for freedom of movement given. The government of East Germany gave way to their demands and the wall came tumbling down.

### 10 Why build a wall

When World War Two ended, the country of Germany was split in two: an Allied and a Soviet side. The division was meant to control Germany from ever growing so powerful again. Yet, it divided the country into two extremes: a politically western and eastern side. Because the capital city Berlin was situated in the Soviet part of Germany, it too was divided in half: East and West Berlin. To keep the two halves clearly separated, the Soviet side built a fence along the whole border between West and East Germany, as well as a dividing 4m high wall within Berlin itself. The Berlin Wall became a symbol of the Cold War between the Allies and the Soviets.

### Life with the Wall

Life in West Germany was similar to other western countries, such as Britain and America. People were free to move around, listen to whatever music they liked and express their opinion. Goods, for example electronics, food, clothing, were something people could easily buy. The contrast to East Germany was so striking. There was no freedom of movement. The authorities decided on how people should behave and the police enforced the rules. In other words, the people were controlled, resulting in fear



and mistrust. Western things, such as music and literature, were forbidden. Goods were scarce and people often queued for hours just to buy basic items. "East Berlin was 'black and white', cold, deserted and sad. West Berlin was vibrantly coloured, exciting and full of people from all over the world."

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After many years of hardship, the people of East Germany demanded more freedom. On November 9, 1989, the leader of East Germany announced on television that the border between East and West would be opened. That same evening thousands of people crossed over to West Germany. The celebrations were heart warming: families and friends joined after years of separation. In the following weeks, people from both sides started smashing down the wall. It was finally destroyed in 1990. On October 3<sup>rd</sup>, eleven months after the fall of the Berlin Wall, East and West Germany were united as the country it is today.

### Life without the Wall

As Germans think back to this period in their history, they are clear: "the years of the Wall from 1961 to 1989 were a terrible time." The Wall coming down has meant to many freedom: "You now have all the possibilities in the world and everyone should cherish this."

Sources: [www.bbc.co.uk/newsround](http://www.bbc.co.uk/newsround)