

# A PEACEFUL REVOLUTION

30 YEARS FALL OF THE BERLIN WALL



# PREFACES



Dear Readers,

When I was your age, I lived in the German Democratic Republic. We knew neither democracy nor the rule of law in East Germany, and limitations on freedom of expression, freedom of the press and religion, as well as insurmountable borders to the West and restrictions on our choice of profession were part of our daily lives. For more than 28 years, the Berlin Wall was the symbol of the division of Germany and the world. On November 9, 1989, something happened that no one could have imagined or foreseen: The Berlin Wall fell.

Even 30 years later, dealing with this epochal era that changed Germany, Europe, and the world is extremely rewarding. The Peaceful Revolution and the fall of the Wall show what civil courage and fighting for one's rights and freedoms can do.

It is said that history is the teacher of life. So, immerse yourself in life in the GDR and the events of 1989.

David Gill  
*Consul General  
of the Federal Republic of Germany  
New York*



Dear Readers,

On the eve of the 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the fall of the Berlin Wall, we invite German learners to explore the multitude of events, people, and narratives that marked the end of the Cold War and ushered in a new era in German and European history.

As a student of German, you have probably already been acquainted with the facts and striking imagery surrounding the fall of the Berlin Wall in your history classes. This multimedia booklet is designed to give you a firsthand account of the events that led to the collapse of the Iron Curtain in 1989.

David Gill, the incumbent Consul General of the Federal Republic of Germany in New York, and Diana Erinna, who teaches German in Boston, MA, will help you discover this fascinating chapter of post-war German history. Their eyewitness accounts will give you a better understanding of what everyday life felt like behind the Iron Curtain, what it meant to be involved in politics, and how that experience shaped their future life trajectories. Their oral histories are supplemented with facts to help you frame and articulate major events in post-war Germany (1945-1990).

While the booklet and accompanying videos are mostly in English, there are plenty of opportunities to test your German. We hope you enjoy discovering the fascinating events from our recent history!

Sincerely,

*German Consulate General New York  
Goethe-Institut New York  
Goethe-Institut Boston*

To watch the videos,  
scan the code with  
the camera on your  
mobile device.



1945



Nazi Germany unconditionally surrendered to the Allies on May 8, 1945, thus marking the end of World War II in Europe.

The four major victorious powers—the United States, the Soviet Union, Great Britain, and France – divided Germany’s territory as well as Berlin, the capital, into four occupation zones. Troops from other countries, including Belgium, Canada, Poland, Luxembourg, and a contingent of Danish and Norwegian forces were also stationed in these zones.



1  
Brandenburg Gate  
1945



2  
Berlin Alexanderplatz  
1945



US President Harry S. Truman, May 8<sup>th</sup>, 1945:

“The flags of freedom fly all over Europe!”



Übung macht den Meister.

## WORTSALAT

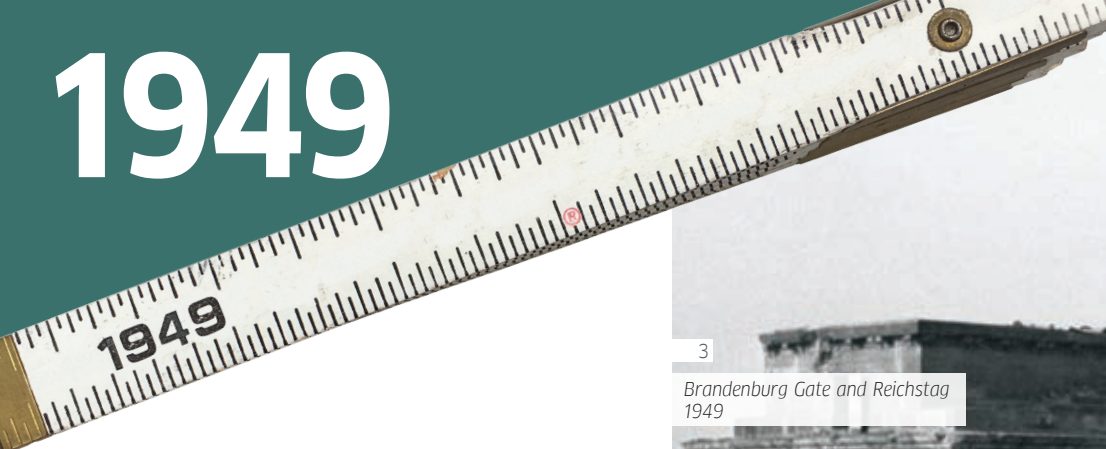
Finden Sie die deutschen Namen der vier Alliierten!

- UNGARN MALTA VENEZUELA
- VIETNAM JAPAN VEREINIGTE STAATEN VON AMERIKA KUBA
- BRASILien FINNLAND UNION DER SOZIALISTISCHEN SOWJETREPUBLIKEN ÄGYPTEN
- ISRAEL GEORGIEN THAILAND FRANKREICH MAURITIUS GHANA
- TOGO IRLAND PORTUGAL USBEKISTAN GROBBRITANNIEN
- ZYPERN MALI AUSTRALIEN SÜDAFRIKA CHILE NEUSEELAND
- SINGAPUR UKRAINE LITAUEN SLOWENIEN TSCHAD BELGIEN



### Glossary

- allies  
die Alliierten
- capital  
die Hauptstadt
- occupation zone  
die Besatzungszone
- unconditional surrender  
die bedingungslose Kapitulation
- Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR)  
die Union der Sozialistischen Sowjetrepubliken (UdSSR)
- victorious power  
die Siegermacht
- World War II  
der Zweite Weltkrieg



In 1949, two states were formed on German territory: In the Soviet zone, socialism was introduced with the founding of the German Democratic Republic (GDR), an undemocratic satellite state of the Soviet Union. The three other zones were merged into the Federal Republic of Germany (FRG), a parliamentary democracy based on a social market economy.

Berlin was divided in two. Berlin's Soviet occupation zone was declared the capital of the GDR, and Bonn became the capital of the Federal Republic of Germany.



3  
Brandenburg Gate and Reichstag  
1949



Do you want to know more about Germany after WWII, 1945-49?



Use your phone  
to scan the  
QR code.



**BRD oder DDR?**  
Kreuzen Sie an!

Baden-Württemberg	<input type="checkbox"/> BRD	<input type="checkbox"/> DDR
Bayern	<input type="checkbox"/> BRD	<input type="checkbox"/> DDR
Berlin	<input type="checkbox"/> BRD	<input type="checkbox"/> DDR
Brandenburg	<input type="checkbox"/> BRD	<input type="checkbox"/> DDR
Bremen	<input type="checkbox"/> BRD	<input type="checkbox"/> DDR
Hamburg	<input type="checkbox"/> BRD	<input type="checkbox"/> DDR
Hessen	<input type="checkbox"/> BRD	<input type="checkbox"/> DDR
Mecklenburg-Vorpommern	<input type="checkbox"/> BRD	<input type="checkbox"/> DDR
Niedersachsen	<input type="checkbox"/> BRD	<input type="checkbox"/> DDR
Nordrhein-Westfalen	<input type="checkbox"/> BRD	<input type="checkbox"/> DDR
Rheinland-Pfalz	<input type="checkbox"/> BRD	<input type="checkbox"/> DDR
Saarland	<input type="checkbox"/> BRD	<input type="checkbox"/> DDR
Sachsen	<input type="checkbox"/> BRD	<input type="checkbox"/> DDR
Sachsen-Anhalt	<input type="checkbox"/> BRD	<input type="checkbox"/> DDR
Schleswig-Holstein	<input type="checkbox"/> BRD	<input type="checkbox"/> DDR
Thüringen	<input type="checkbox"/> BRD	<input type="checkbox"/> DDR

**Wo war die Grenze zwischen BRD und DDR?**  
Markieren Sie die Grenze auf der Karte!

**Answer:**

The states of Mecklenburg-Vorpommern, Brandenburg, Saxony-Anhalt, Saxony, and Thuringia were in the GDR. Berlin had a special status: West Berlin (administered by the Western Allies) and East Berlin (administered by the Soviet Union) did not formally belong to the FRG or the GDR. Yet in everyday life, West Berlin was treated like part of the FRG, and East Berlin was treated like part of the GDR and its capital.

The borders between the GDR and the FRG ran along the present-day states of Mecklenburg-Vorpommern, Saxony-Anhalt, Thuringia, and Saxony as well as between West Berlin and the GDR, including East Berlin.



**Glossary**

- parliamentary democracy  
*die parlamentarische Demokratie*
- German Democratic Republic (GDR)  
*die Deutsche Demokratische Republik (DDR)*
- Eastern Bloc  
*der Ostblock*
- Federal Republic of Germany (FRG)  
*die Bundesrepublik Deutschland (BRD)*
- socialism  
*der Sozialismus*
- social market economy  
*die soziale Marktwirtschaft*



People from the Soviet Zone had been fleeing to the West since 1945. There were various reasons for this, including the forced collectivization of agriculture as well as dissatisfaction with the political situation and career prospects.

This exodus of often well-educated young people posed an existential threat to the economy of the GDR.

# 1945-1961

4



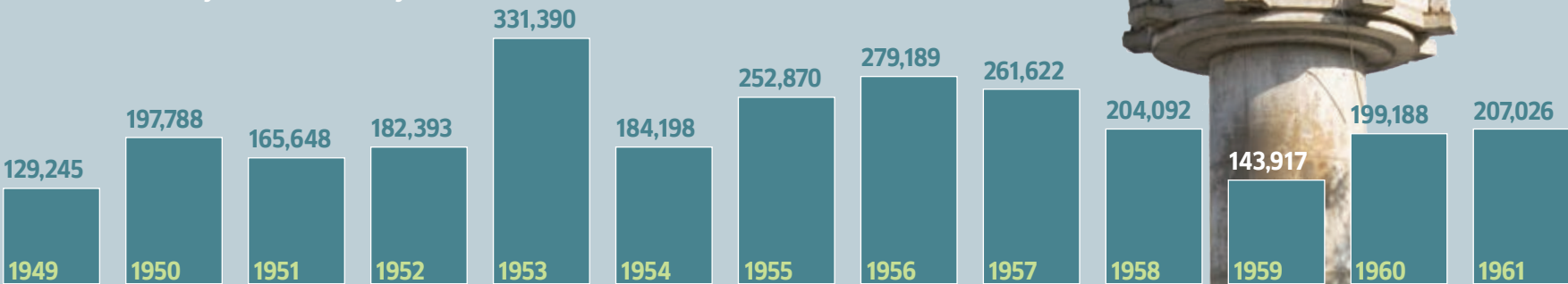
Sign Translation:

"STOP  
National Border!  
Trespassing prohibited!"



2,738,566 people

Emigration 1949-1961  
from East Germany to West Germany



Source: [www.chronik-der-mauer.de/material/?mType=8](http://www.chronik-der-mauer.de/material/?mType=8)



What is a communist regime?



4a



Wie heißen diese Wörter in Ihrer Sprache?

DIE  
FLUCHT

der/die Geflüchtete

flüchten

flüchtig

der Flüchtlings

die Fluchthilfe

der Fluchtweg

die Zuflucht

die Fahnenflucht

die Massenflucht

die Fluchtgefahr

fluchtartig

der Fluchtplan

der Fluchtversuch



Glossary

collectivization  
die Kollektivierung

migrant  
der/die Übersiedler\*in

planned economy  
die Planwirtschaft

refugee  
der Flüchtling

# 1961

5

Brandenburg Gate on August 14, 1961, seen from the West. On August 13, 1961, the East German government closed down all checkpoints to West Berlin.



6

West Berliners looking into the East with binoculars at Invalidenstraße. In the foreground, the Berlin Wall. September 1961



7

US President John F. Kennedy during his Berlin speech on June 26, 1963



Watch JFK's speech:



In August 1961, the leaders of the GDR decided to take radical measures to stop people from fleeing to West Germany. They closed the entire border with the Federal Republic of Germany and built a wall through Berlin. This had fatal consequences for the people in the East and West, especially in Berlin: Many families were torn apart and visiting was only possible under extremely difficult circumstances!

On June 26, 1963, US President John F. Kennedy, then on a visit to West Berlin, gave a speech that ended with the famous sentence: "Ich bin ein Berliner."

8

National People's Army (GDR) officer Conrad Schumann fleeing to West Berlin with a jump over a barbed wire. August 15, 1961



Wo auf der Berlin-Karte sind diese Sehenswürdigkeiten? Ordnen Sie zu!

A Reichstag

E Berliner Dom

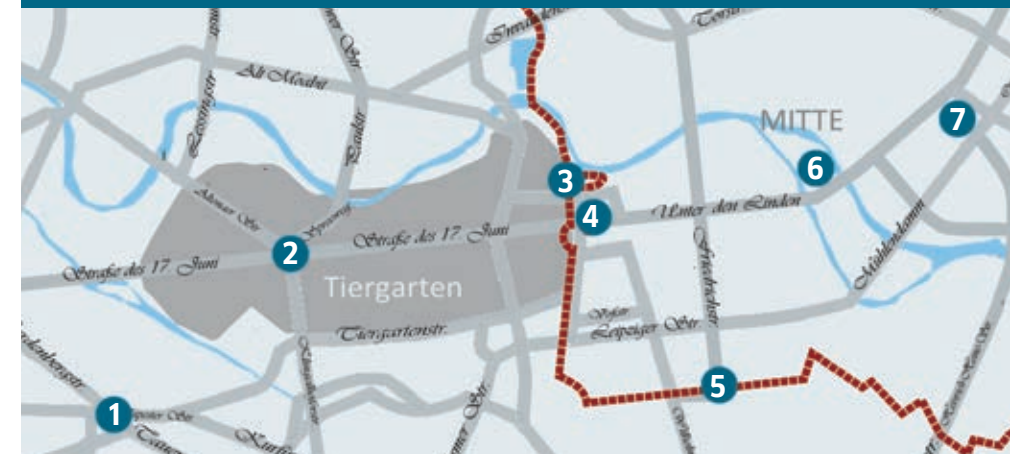
B Alexanderplatz

F Checkpoint Charlie

C Brandenburger Tor

G Kaiser-Wilhelm-Gedächtniskirche

D Siegessäule



Answer:  
A3, B7, C4, D2, E6, F5, G1



Glossary

border  
die Grenze

Brandenburg Gate  
das Brandenburger Tor

refugee movement  
die Fluchtbewegung

building of the Berlin Wall  
der Mauerbau

# 1966 David Gill

TESTIMONIAL

David Gill was born in 1966 and grew up in Herrnhut (Saxony). He was one of seven children, and his father was a bishop in the Moravian Church, a small Protestant denomination with congregations around the world. Growing up as a member of a church congregation in the GDR meant having a place of refuge and experiencing a kind of openness and freedom within the church community that the majority of the population in the GDR did not have. But it also meant accepting that you would have to make major sacrifices.



**The FDJ**

The *Freie Deutsche Jugend* (FDJ, Free German Youth) was the only state-recognized and sponsored youth organization. As a mass organization, it was part of a parallel education system outside of school.

The role of the FDJ was to introduce young people to Marxist-Leninist ideology and to bring them up as “class-conscious socialists” so they could help shape socialist society in the GDR.



David Gill:

“Children all over the world like to play, so of course we played, even in East Germany.”



## The education system in the GDR

The education system in the GDR was centrally organized. The national educational objectives focused on teaching students to be good members of socialist society. All students initially attended the *Polytechnische Oberschule* (POS) for 10 years. This was a comprehensive general education school divided into lower, middle, and upper class levels. In addition to the natural sciences and technology, the POS mainly focused on making sure there was a close relationship between theory and practical training in the working world. After graduating from the POS, it was generally possible for students to take the *Abitur* (final graduation exam) at the *Erweiterte Oberstufe* (EOS, extended secondary school) or combine taking the *Abitur* with a three-year vocational apprenticeship.

However, in addition to academic performance, these higher education options also depended on the students’ civic engagement, membership in mass organizations (see the FDJ), and even their family background. This meant that often it was not possible for the best students to take the *Abitur* exam because they were not members of the FDJ. At the same time, admission to institutions of higher education came with certain responsibilities such as serving in the *Nationale Volksarmee* (NVA), the military of the GDR (1956–1990).



Ask David Gill:

What was a typical school day like?



## Jugendweihe – Youth Dedication Ceremony

The *Jugendweihe* is a coming of age ceremony. In the GDR, this celebration was introduced as a socialist alternative to Protestant/Catholic confirmation ceremonies.

At the same time, *Jugendweihe* celebrations were really meant to be used for political exploitation. Young people were supposed to be brought up in accordance with Marxist-Leninist ideology. To prepare for the *Jugendweihe*, young people were required to participate in *Jugendstunden* (“youth meetings”) once a month for one year. At these meetings they heard speeches on political and other topics and went on factory tours. Young people who did not participate in the *Jugendweihe* faced far-reaching consequences such as being denied admission to institutions of higher education (see EOS) or universities.



## Glossary

- National People’s Army  
*die Nationale Volksarmee (NVA)*
- youth dedication ceremony  
*die Jugendweihe*
- confirmation (Catholic)  
*die Firmung*
- confirmation (Protestant)  
*die Konfirmation*
- congregation  
*die Kirchengemeinde*
- final graduation exam for secondary school / high school  
*das Abitur*
- education system  
*das Bildungssystem*
- institute of higher education  
*die weiterführende Bildungseinrichtung*
- national educational objective  
*das staatliche Bildungsziel*
- civic engagement  
*das gesellschaftliche Engagement*
- extended secondary school  
*die Erweiterte Oberschule (EOS)*
- political exploitation  
*die politische Instrumentalisierung*
- factory tour  
*die Betriebsbesichtigung*

- Leninism  
*der Leninismus*
- Marxism  
*der Marxismus*
- Marxist-Leninist ideology  
*die marxistisch-leninistische Weltanschauung*



Ask David Gill:

How did school influence your personal life?





### Tourism in the GDR

GDR citizens enjoyed traveling to the Baltic Sea islands of Rügen and Usedom, Saxon Switzerland, and the Thuringian Forest. It was only possible to travel abroad to countries within the former Eastern Bloc. Poland, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Romania, and Bulgaria were popular travel destinations, although it was sometimes necessary to apply for a travel permit to travel outside the GDR.

Within the GDR, citizens could generally take advantage of a number of recreational facilities offered through their workplaces and unions as well as state campgrounds.

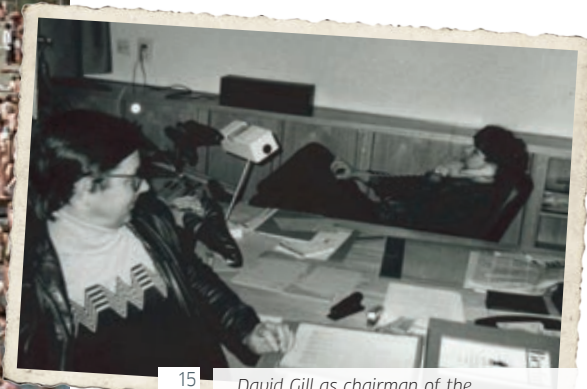
15

Public pool in Berlin Pankow in 1970



Ask David Gill:

What made you different from your peers?



15

David Gill as chairman of the Citizen's Committee at the former Stasi (State Security Service) headquarters East Berlin, 1990



Ask David Gill:

What was known about West Germany, what was unknown?



### Faktencheck DDR

Es gibt über die DDR viele Mythen. Was ist korrekt, was ist falsch?

Mythos 1:  
In der DDR gab es keine Bananen.



Mythos 2:  
In der DDR gab es keine Arbeitslosen.

Mythos 3:  
In der DDR gab es ein bezahltes Baby-Jahr für die Mutter.

Mythos 4:  
In der DDR gab es keine Telefone.



Mythos 5:  
In der DDR wartete man 10-15 Jahre auf ein Auto.



Answer:  
Myth 1: wrong  
Myth 2: correct; full employment was a major political goal in the GDR.  
Myth 3: correct  
Myth 4: wrong; but there were only few.  
Myth 5: correct



David Gill:

"To me, it seemed as though three-quarters of East Germans watched West German TV."



### Glossary

mass organization  
*die Massenorganisation*

refuge  
*der Zufluchtsort*

socialist society  
*die sozialistische Gesellschaft*

vocational training  
*die Berufsausbildung*

youth organization  
*die Jugendorganisation*

Free German Youth  
*die Freie Deutsche Jugend (FDJ)*

island in the Baltic Sea  
*die Ostseeinsel*

Bulgaria  
*Bulgarien*

national campground  
*der staatliche Campingplatz*

a recreational facility offered by a company or union  
*die betriebliche Erholungseinrichtung*

travel destination  
*das Reiseziel*

foreign trip  
*die Auslandsreise*

myth  
*der Mythos*

travel permit  
*die Reisegenehmigung*

Poland  
*Polen*

Rügen (Island in the Baltic Sea)  
*Rügen*

Romania  
*Rumänien*

Saxon Switzerland  
*die Sächsische Schweiz*

Thuringian Forest  
*der Thüringer Wald*

Czechoslovakia  
*Tschechoslowakei*

Hungary  
*Ungarn*

Usedom (an island in the Baltic Sea)  
*Usedom*

16



David Gill as press speaker of the Gauck-Agency (the agency responsible for administering the archives of the former GDR State Security Service, the Stasi)

17



Ask David Gill:

What freedoms did citizens of the GDR have?



# 1970 Diana Erinna

TESTIMONIAL

**Diana Erinna** was born in Glauchau (Saxony) in 1970 and grew up there as an only child. Her father was the technical director of the local hospital.

Like David Gill, Diana Erinna learned as a child that she lived in a country where freedom was limited and where the government dictated which career you were allowed (or not allowed) to have.



18

The very first day of school in 1977



Ask Diana Erinna:

What was a typical school day like?



In the GDR, the majority of the population watched **West German television**. However, there were two areas where it was very difficult to pick up a West German TV signal – in the utmost northeastern part of the GDR, around Dresden and in the eastern part of Saxony. For this reason, these areas came to be known colloquially as the “Tal der Ahnungslosen” (“Valley of the Clueless”).



## Do you speak GDR?

In der DDR wurden Wörter aus dem Westen (englische Wörter) “eingedeutscht”. Wie hießen diese Wörter in der DDR?

Verbinden Sie die Wörter!

A Hamburger	1 Wurfspiel
B Hot Dog	2 Kaskadeur
C Stuntman	3 akrobatischer Volkstänzer
D Breakdancer	4 Grilletta
E Plastiktüte	5 Broiler
F Frisbee	6 Ketwurst
G Darts	7 Plastebeutel
H Brathähnchen	8 Wurfscheibe

Answer:  
A4, B6, C2, D3, E7, F8, G1, H5

19

Trip to the Havel, 1978



Diana Erinna:

“We weren’t allowed to trade chewing gum pictures.”



## Military instruction in the GDR

In 1978, *Wehrunterricht* (military instruction) became a mandatory subject at all polytechnical and extended secondary schools in the GDR. Boys and girls were taught basic knowledge about the military, including practical training.

For the boys, this involved mandatory participation in a two-week military camp. This training was usually conducted by NVA reserve officers and included endurance training, shooting air rifles, and training on how to throw hand grenades.

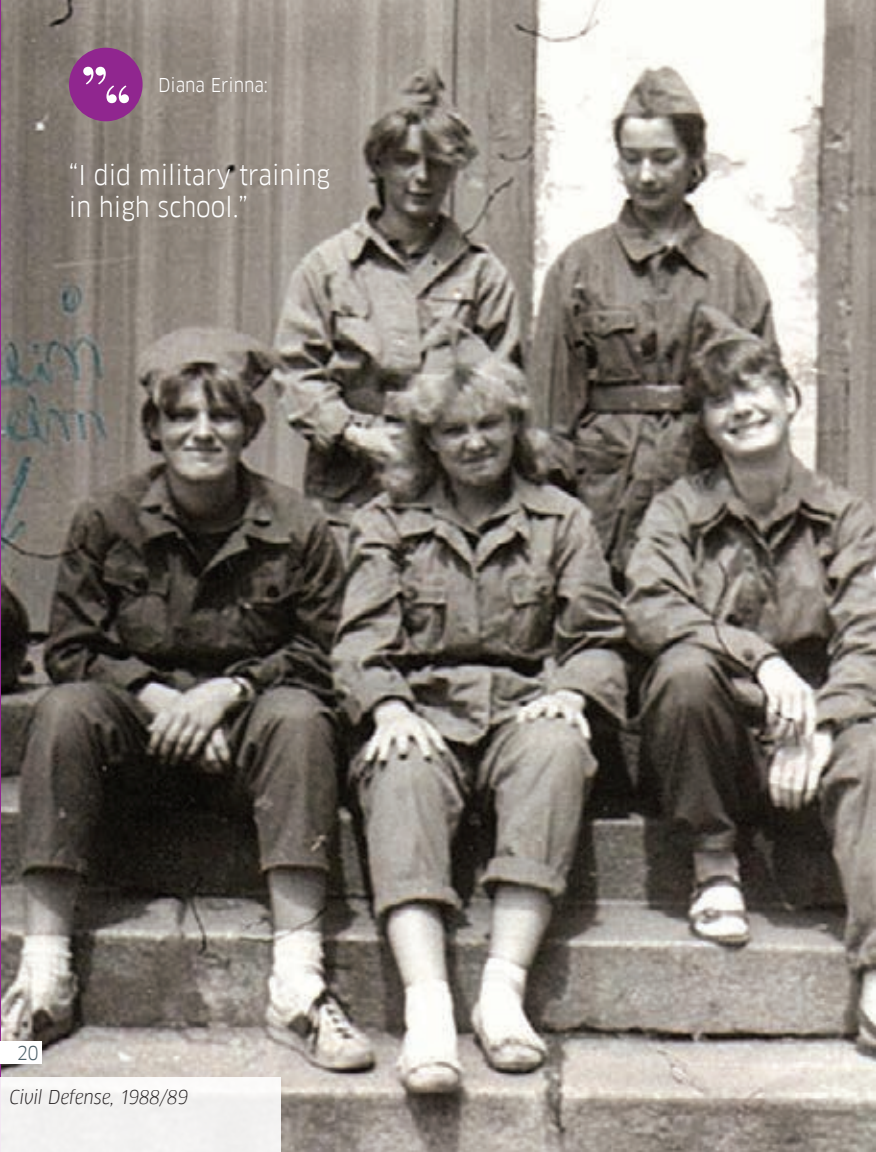
The girls had to take a course in civil defense, which trained them in first aid and evacuation procedures.

The overall goal of military instruction was to prepare students for possible basic military service and encourage them to consider a career in the military.



Diana Erinna:

“I did military training in high school.”



20

Civil Defense, 1988/89



# 1970-1985



The lack of freedoms led to dissatisfaction among the GDR's population. Yet, there was no open opposition to the regime.

The Protestant church played a significant role in the opposition. To some extent, it offered a safe haven for individuals and small groups that criticized the political system. But this meant having to take great risks and accepting the consequences.

However, fleeing the GDR was extremely dangerous, and those who attempted it faced harsh sentences if they were caught.



Ask David Gill:

Did you ever think about fleeing the GDR?



26  
Service at Samariterkirche, East Berlin 1989



David Gill:

“The church was the only organization in East Germany which was not ruled by the Communist Party.”



Ask David Gill:

What role did the church play in the GDR?



David Gill:

“There was no opposition in a way you would describe opposition in a democratic society.”



Ask David Gill:

Was there any opposition to the regime?



WIEDER (again) oder WIDER (against)?

.....holen	to repeat
Auf .....sehen!	Goodbye!
.....sprechen	to disagree, to object
.....setzen	to oppose
.....stand	resistance
.....aufbau	reconstruction
.....spiegeln	to reflect



Diana Erinna:

“I wanted to take my life in my own hands.”



27

1988 Protestant Church Convention in Görlitz



Ask Diana Erinna:

Why did you flee the GDR?



Ask Diana Erinna:

Were you afraid to flee?



The GDR's repressive border security was mainly intended to keep people inside the country. The border troops were supposed to prevent GDR citizens from escaping the GDR at all costs. There were automatic firing systems and soldiers had orders to shoot.

Yet, this did not stop people from fleeing the GDR by crossing the Berlin Wall or the inner German border. There were countless escape attempts – some successful, others ended in death. Along the Berlin Wall alone, at least 140 people were killed between 1961 and 1989.



This was the obstacle that had to be overcome: *Walled in!* – *The inner German border*



## Glossary

- reason for fleeing  
*der Fluchtgrund*
- open opposition  
*die offene Opposition*
- Protestant church  
*die Evangelische Kirche*
- regime  
*das Regime*
- criticism of the political system  
*die Systemkritik*
- border installation  
*die Grenzanlage*
- separation barrier  
*die Sperranlage*
- death strip  
*der Todesstreifen*
- escape attempt  
*der Fluchtversuch*
- the Berlin Wall  
*die Berliner Mauer*



# 1985-SUMMER-1989

29

Mikhail Gorbachev in 1986



In the early 1980s, the Eastern Bloc experienced a period of economic stagnation. Under the leadership of Mikhail Gorbachev, the General Secretary of the Central Committee of the Communist Party, the USSR responded by introducing a reform program in 1985. Other countries in the Eastern Bloc (Poland, Hungary, Czechoslovakia) also began to show initial signs of collapse.

Nevertheless, the leadership of the GDR continued its relentless political course, which fueled the opposition against the regime and drove people to the streets. The churches played a significant role in the opposition's peaceful protests.



In June 1987, US President Ronald Reagan visited West Berlin, where he gave a speech on June 12<sup>th</sup>.



*"General Secretary Gorbachev, if you seek peace, if you seek prosperity for the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe, if you seek liberalization, come here to this gate. Mr. Gorbachev, open this gate. Mr. Gorbachev, tear down this wall!"*



Watch US President Ronald Reagan's speech at the Brandenburg Gate



Know your rights!  
Verbinden Sie die Wörter!

A Meinungsfreiheit	1 Freedom to travel
B Pressefreiheit	2 Legal equality
C Religionsfreiheit	3 Freedom of expression
D Versammlungsfreiheit	4 Privacy of correspondence
E Kunstfreiheit	5 Freedom of assembly
F Vereinigungsfreiheit	6 Right to property
G Reisefreiheit	7 Freedom of press
H Rechtsgleichheit	8 Freedom of religion
I Briefgeheimnis	9 Artistic freedom
J Recht auf Eigentum	10 Freedom of association

Answer:  
A3, B7, C8, D5, E9, F10, G1, H2, I4, J6



David Gill:

"People were fed up, after all... they were encouraged by what happened."



Ask David Gill:

Why did people participate in these protests?



## Glossary

Czechoslovakia  
die Tschechoslowakei

glasnost and perestroika  
(transparency and restructuring)  
Glasnost und Perestroika  
(die Transparenz und der Umbau)

reform program  
das Reformprogramm

economic stagnation  
die wirtschaftliche Stagnation

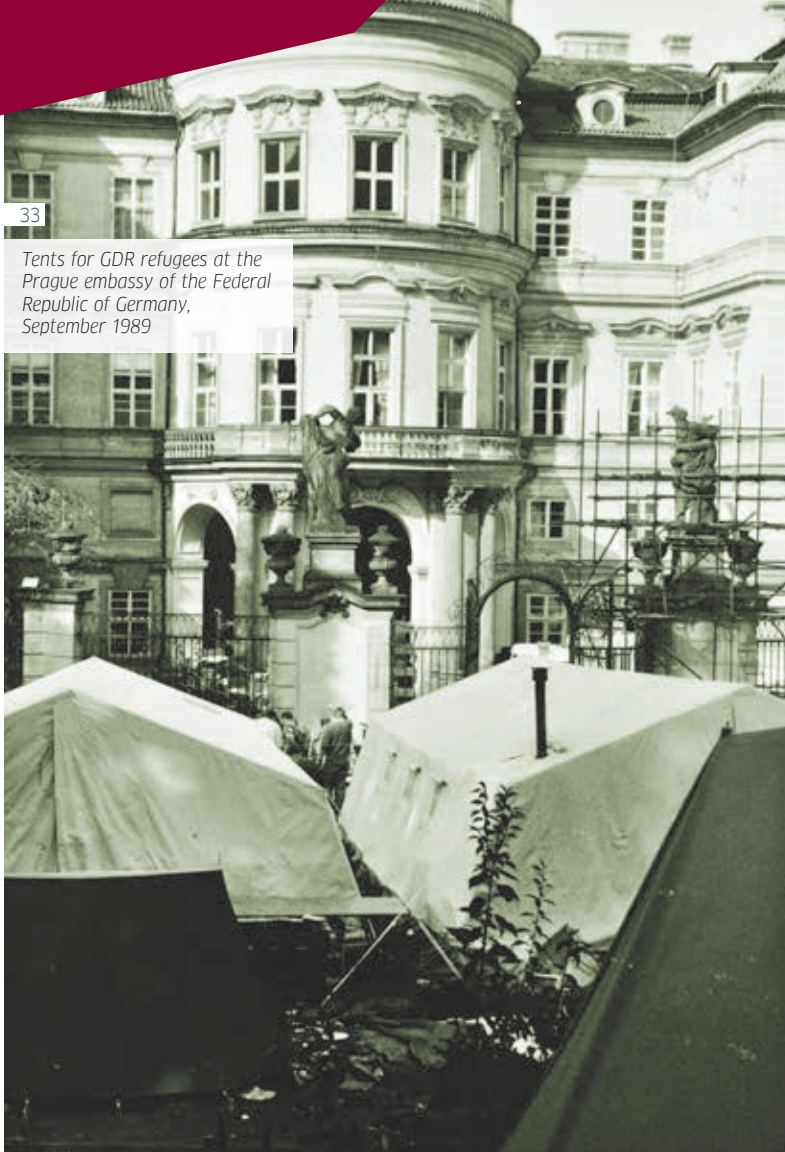


In the late 1980s, the situation in the GDR got even worse. The country was politically isolated, the economy was in ruins, and the state was nearly insolvent. When Hungary removed its border fence with Austria in the summer of 1989, thousands of GDR citizens fled to the Federal Republic of Germany through Czechoslovakia, Hungary, and Austria. One of these refugees was Diana Erinna.

In response to the mass exodus of GDR citizens via the Hungarian-Austrian border, GDR authorities no longer authorized travel to Hungary. Thousands of GDR citizens responded by storming the Federal Republic of Germany's embassies in Prague and Warsaw. There was such a great onslaught that the GDR government finally relented and allowed them to emigrate.

33

Tents for GDR refugees at the Prague embassy of the Federal Republic of Germany, September 1989



Diana Erinna:

“And I said to myself: ‘Diana, what makes you a second-class citizen?’ And I said: ‘Nothing!’”



Ask Diana Erinna:

Can you describe your second attempt to flee the GDR?



Diana Erinna:

“I remember my dad coming up to my room and he was crying.”



Ask Diana Erinna:

What did your parents think about your plan to flee the GDR?



Markieren Sie auf der Karte den Fluchtweg von Diana Erinna aus der DDR in die BRD!



Diana Erinna:

“...I could see Austria.”



Ask Diana Erinna:

Was it dangerous to escape?



35

Abandoned, looted East German cars near the Hungarian border. The GDR owners left Hungary crossing the open “green border” to Austria in the summer of 1989



## Glossary

Austria  
Österreich

Austrian border  
die österreichische Grenze

embassy  
die Botschaft

foreign policy  
die Außenpolitik

GDR government  
die DDR-Regierung

insolvency  
die Zahlungsunfähigkeit

international isolation  
die außenpolitische Isolation

mass exodus  
die Massenflucht

border security  
die Grenzsicherung

34

A GDR refugee family after leaving the Prague embassy, on their way to the train that would take them to the Federal Republic of Germany.



36

"Montagsdemo"  
(Monday demonstration) in Leipzig,  
October 1989



Watch the video:  
"We are the people!"



In September 1989, peaceful demonstrations started to be held every Monday in various cities across the GDR. They came to be known as the *Montagsdemonstrationen* (Monday demonstrations).

A growing number of people joined the protests despite the fear that the government would take action against the demonstrators. Yet, this did not happen. This led to more demonstrations with even more people participating. When 10,000 people peacefully demonstrated in Leipzig on October 9<sup>th</sup> without any government interference, it became clear that the Peaceful Revolution would succeed.

The Monday demonstrations were the largest protests in the GDR since 1953. The popular uprising on June 17, 1953, had been suppressed with the massive deployment of the military, the *Volkspolizei*, and the *Stasi* (State Security Service). To commemorate this event, the Federal Republic of Germany observed June 17<sup>th</sup> as a public holiday from 1954 to 1990.



Ask David Gill:

Were you involved  
in the Monday  
demonstrations  
in the fall of 1989?



38

Banner translation:

"Never again SED  
(Socialist Unity Party)  
Germany united fatherland!"



37

"Montagsdemo" in Leipzig,  
70,000 demonstrators,  
October 1989



39

Demonstration for freedom  
of press in East Berlin,  
November 4, 1989

Banner translation:

"No power to the liars  
of yesterday!"



## Glossary

Monday demonstrations  
*die Montagsdemonstrationen*

public holiday  
*der gesetzliche Feiertag*

Church of St. Nicholas Leipzig  
*die Nikolaikirche Leipzig*

prayers for peace  
*die Friedensgebete*

People's Police  
*die Volkspolizei*

protest  
*der Protest*

the Peaceful Revolution  
*die Friedliche Revolution*

State Security Service  
*die "Stasi" (der Staatssicherheitsdienst)*

national uprising  
*der Volksaufstand*

# NOVEMBER 9, 1989



Günter Schabowski at the press conference on November 9, 1989



Watch the video:  
Sky News:  
The Fall of the Berlin Wall



Watch the video:  
ABC News:  
The Berlin Wall Falls



People celebrating the opening of the border between East and West on November 10, 1989.



Watch the video:  
A stroke of fate that changed history – Germany: Berlin Wall anniversary



When the Wall between East and West Berlin was opened on November 9, 1989, neither David Gill nor Diana Erinna were in Berlin. They heard about the fall of the Berlin Wall in West German media and reacted to the historic news very differently.



Dismantling the *Stasi*, the GDR's intelligence apparatus, was one of the most important priorities for the population.

The *Ministerium für Staatssicherheit* (*Stasi*, Ministry of State Security) had collected information on GDR residents, West Germans, and foreigners for surveillance purposes. In addition to official *Stasi* employees, there were also many informants who spied on their neighbors, friends, and even family members.



Diana Erinna:

“...when the Wall came down (...) I was crying. But those weren't really tears of joy...”



Ask Diana Erinna:

How did you feel after the Wall had fallen?



David Gill:

“Nobody expected the fall of the Wall overnight.”



Ask David Gill:

How did you hear about the fall of the Berlin Wall on November 9, 1989?



David Gill:

“...it was a big party, happiness, people were overwhelmed...”



Ask David Gill:

What made the Peaceful Revolution possible?



David Gill:

“...for this reason alone the *Stasi* focused on him very much (...) they wanted to know how we thought.”



Ask David Gill:

Did the *Stasi* generate documents about you and your family?



## Glossary

border checkpoint  
*der Grenzübergang*

Secretary of Information  
*der Sekretär für Informationswesen*

informant  
*der/die Informant\*in*

Ministry of State Security  
*das Ministerium für Staatssicherheit (Stasi)*

surveillance  
*die Überwachung*

# LATE FALL 1989



45  
Round Table Talks in Berlin



The fall of the Berlin Wall posed new challenges for the governments of the GDR and the Federal Republic of Germany.

Just a few days after the fall of the Wall, a new interim government in the GDR was brought in and a Central Round Table was formed with the goal of initiating reforms.

The central question was:  
**What would happen next in the GDR?**

This was something the people in the GDR were asking. The fall of the Wall gave them greater hope for more freedom. Would this actually happen? And what would the fall of the Wall mean for the people who had fled the GDR?



46  
Border checkpoint Berlin  
Heinrich-Heine-Straße,  
November 1989



Diana Erinna:

“...in the events of this poor economy, they got unemployed....”



Ask Diana Erinna:

What happened to your family and friends in the GDR?



47  
Opening of the Berlin Wall  
at Bernauer Straße,  
November 1989



48  
Mikhail Gorbachev and  
Helmut Kohl in Bonn,  
June 12, 1989



David Gill:

“Initially, the people of East Germany felt freed. The unexpected and unthinkable had happened.”



Wie heißen diese Wörter in Ihrer Sprache?

hoffen	
erhoffen	
hoffentlich	
Hoffnung	
Hoffnungslosigkeit	
Hoffnungsschimmer	
Hoffnungsträger/-in	
hoffnungsvoll	
hoffnungslos	
unverhofft	



## Glossary

interim government  
*die Übergangsregierung*  
Central Round Table  
*der Zentrale Runde Tisch*  
reform  
*die Reform*

Banner translation:  
“Legal security instead of  
state security “Stasi” State  
Security Service”



Ask David Gill:

What happened after the fall of the Berlin Wall?



49  
Demonstration in Cottbus,  
November 1989

# 1990

50

Fireworks celebrating the German Unity,  
night from October 2 to 3, 1990



In March 1990, the first free elections were held in the GDR. This was followed by numerous other reforms and negotiations on reunifying Germany between the two German states and the Four Powers that occupied Germany at the end of World War II (2+4 Talks).

And on October 3, 1990, something happened that would have been absolutely unimaginable just a year before:

**Germany became a reunified country.**

In the last 30 years since the Wall practically fell overnight, the people in East Germany have done an incredible job rebuilding the country and can be very proud of all that has been accomplished. While there are still some structural differences between former East and West Germany, one thing is certain: As a result of the fall of the Wall, millions of Germans – including Diana Erinna and David Gill – gained new freedoms that opened up doors and opportunities beyond their wildest dreams!



51

Pro German Unity demonstrators,  
Leipzig 1990



52

Anti-German-unity demonstrators,  
Leipzig 1990



David Gill:

“...in East Germany, I was excluded from the university track, that's why I became a plumber...”



David Gill:

“...what I was very grateful for was my family and my congregation, my church. (...) On the other side, it meant you paid a price...”



David Gill:

“...and this experience of exclusion was probably the part of life which was the most difficult...”



Ask David Gill:

How did the Peaceful Revolution affect your life?



Ask David Gill:

What did the fall of the Wall mean to you?



Ask David Gill:

Is Germany a united country today?



53

Graffiti at  
East Side Gallery, Berlin



## Glossary

free election  
*die freie Wahl*

German reunification  
*die Deutsche Wiedervereinigung*



For Diana Erinna, fleeing the GDR was a decisive event in her life, leaving behind scars that have impacted her to this day!



Sign Translation  
"German History Memorial  
Border installations (of the former GDR)  
Protected as a historic monument  
Please do not destroy!"

54  
"Point Alpha" memorial site  
at Geisa

Ask Diana Erinna:

What brought you to the US?

” Diana Erinna:

“...for many years, I also couldn't talk about all these events...”

” Diana Erinna:

“...I didn't feel the desire to go there, but once I was there it was very nice (...) it's wonderful to smell the environment”

” Diana Erinna:

“...I always wanted to teach German abroad...”

Ask Diana Erinna:

Is it hard for you to talk about the events?

Ask Diana Erinna:

Did you ever return to the GDR after the fall of the Wall?

Ask Diana Erinna:

Is Germany a united country today?



Quiz zum Abschluss

**Frage 1: Was ist die Jugendweihe?**  
**A** eine religiöse Feier  
**B** eine Party in der Schule  
**C** eine sozialistische Jugendfeier

**Frage 2: Was war die Freie Deutsche Jugend (FDJ)?**  
**A** eine private Jugendgruppe  
**B** ein sozialistischer Sportclub  
**C** eine staatliche Jugendorganisation

**Frage 3: Was waren die „Montagsdemonstrationen“?**  
**A** Proteste in der BRD  
**B** Friedliche Massendemonstrationen in der DDR  
**C** Proteste am Montag in Ost-Berlin

**Frage 4: Wann fiel die Grenze zwischen der DDR und der BRD?**  
**A** 8. November 1990  
**B** 3. Oktober 1989  
**C** 9. November 1989

**Frage 5: Was war am 3. Oktober 1990?**  
**A** der Fall der Berliner Mauer  
**B** die Deutsche Wiedervereinigung  
**C** Proteste gegen die DDR-Regierung

Answer:  
1C, 2C, 3B, 4C, 5B



Glossary

national holiday  
der Nationalfeiertag  
Day of German Unity  
der Tag der Deutschen Einheit



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Check out these websites

Chronik der Mauer  
[www.chronik-der-mauer.de/](http://www.chronik-der-mauer.de/)



Deutsche Welle  
<https://www.dw.com/de/ddr/t-17964807>



Bundeszentrale für politische Bildung  
[www.bpb.de/geschichte/deutsche-einheit/deutsche-teilung-deutsche-einheit/43650/ddr-geschichte?p=all](http://www.bpb.de/geschichte/deutsche-einheit/deutsche-teilung-deutsche-einheit/43650/ddr-geschichte?p=all)



Collection of German movies related to this topic

- Baloon (2018)
- Gundermann (2018)
- Der gleiche Himmel (2017)
- Als wir träumten (2015)
- Bornholmer Straße (2014)
- Barbara (2012)
- Westwind (2011)
- Das Leben der anderen (2006)
- Good Bye, Lenin! (2003)
- Die Stille nach dem Schuss (2000)
- Die Unberührbare (1999)
- Sonnenallee (1999)
- Go Trabi Go (1991)
- Der Himmel über Berlin (1987)
- Im Lauf der Zeit (1967)

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Andrea Pfeil, Claudio Conidi, Amelie Lohmann

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Andrea Pfeil, Claudio Conidi, Amelie Lohmann (Goethe-Institut New York)  
Kerstin Hämmerling, Mehrnosch Mirzaei-Reyes (Goethe-Institut Boston)

## Übersetzung/English Translation and Editing

Sarah Jokar Deris

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Alexandra Reese

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