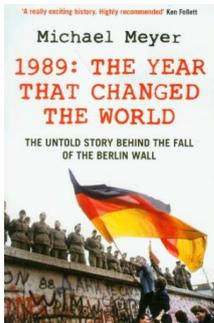


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# THE YEAR THAT CHANGED THE WORLD: THE UNTOLD STORY BEHIND THE FALL OF THE BERLIN WALL



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- Authored by Michael Meyer
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The fall of the Berlin Wall (German: Mauerfall) on 9 November 1989 was a pivotal event in world history which marked the falling of the Iron Curtain and the start of the fall of communism in Eastern and Central Europe. The fall of the inner German border took place shortly afterwards. An end to the Cold War was declared at the Malta Summit three weeks later, and the reunification of Germany took place in October the following year. The Berlin Wall fell on November 9, 1989. Almost two years after the Berlin Wall was erected, John F. Kennedy delivered one of the most famous addresses of his presidency to a crowd of more than 120,000 gathered outside West Berlin's city hall, just steps from the Brandenburg Gate. Kennedy's speech has been largely remembered for one particular phrase. 1. The fall of the Berlin Wall happened by mistake. At a press conference on the evening of November 9, 1989, East German politburo member Günter Schabowski prematurely announced that restrictions on travel visas would be lifted. When asked when the new policy would begin, he ...read more. Celebrating the fall of the wall at the Brandenburger Gate on New Year's Eve in 1989. Credit...Guy Le Querrec/Magnum Photos. Image. A young man straddling the wall between East and West Berlin. Credit...Raymond Depardon/Magnum Photos. Through its history more than 140 people had died at the Berlin Wall, the vast majority of them trying to escape. There was Ida Siekmann, 58, who became the first victim on Aug. 22, 1961, just nine days after the wall was finished. In June 1989, just five months before the Berlin Wall fell, the Communist Party of China committed a massacre against democracy protesters in Tiananmen Square. Image. East Berliners in the subway in 1980. Credit...Harald Hauswald/Ostkreuz. Image. Would the Berlin Wall have fallen, as dramatically as it did, were it not for Gunter Schabowski's bungle? It was the shrug that changed the world. And what of the commander of the East German border guard at Checkpoint Charlie? Another shrug, another bit of happenstance that through the ages has shaped history and decided the fates of men. The Berlin Wall fell in 1989, and sparked European integration, ethnic wars, Russian economic collapse, the end of Apartheid and blood shed in Congo. There is sometimes a misconception that all states east of the Berlin Wall were members of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR). The USSR members were Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Belarus, Ukraine and Moldova. The satellite states comprised of Poland, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Bulgaria and Romania. The motivation behind this was twofold; to present an alternative to any states fantasising about taking American aid and reassuring Eastern Europe that the Soviets had the resources to provide. Propaganda became a useful tool of control for the communist and the East German Democratic Republic (DDR/GDR).