

Transcript: THE WALL – A World Divided
Written and Directed by Eric Stange
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Narrated by Joe Morton

NARRATOR: On November 9, 1989 the world changed forever ...
The Berlin Wall, the most potent symbol of communist oppression fell after 28 years
marked by violence and tragedy.

RUDOLF MÜLLER: They were shooting from a tower. I couldn't figure it out. I just
turned around and screamed, 'Run, Run, Run'.

KATRIN HATENHAUER: The Stasi pulled me by my hair and pulled me down. And
then I passed out.

MATTHIAS MELSTER: You could have gotten almost anything out of me.

[Archive Footage]

JOHN F. KENNEDY: *Freedom has many difficulties. And democracy is not perfect. But
we have never had to put a wall up to keep our people in.*

[Archive Footage]

RONALD REAGAN: *Mr. Gorbachev, tear down this wall.*

NARRATOR: In the end it wasn't politicians who brought down the wall. It was
ordinary Germans who risked their lives to stand against a repressive regime... and
make a revolution without a shot being fired.

MIKHAIL GORBACHEV: They would not be stopped. It felt like they were saying, it's
now or never.

NARRATOR: As the wall came down world leaders came together to seize the
moment and create a new Europe - bringing an end to forty years of Cold War hostility.

GEORGE H.W. BUSH: I think we got it right. I honestly believe we got it right.

NARRATOR: This is the story of how a thin ribbon of concrete rose...how it fell...and
how it brought one-time enemies together to change the course of modern history.

TITLE: THE WALL – A World Divided

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NARRATOR: At the end of World War II – the city of Berlin lay in ruins. Germany's devastated capital represented the evil that had been Nazism.

The winners of the war divided Germany, and its capital Berlin, among themselves:

The Soviet Union would occupy and control East Germany, a brand new country that promised to show the world why socialism was the best political system.

West Germany, called the Federal Republic, would be occupied by the Americans, British and French who would establish a new democratic government that stood in direct opposition to communism.

But what to do with Berlin itself wasn't so simple. The city lay deep within Soviet occupied East Germany. The US and Britain refused to give it up...so an awkward compromise was reached.

Berlin would be divided among the victors. The eastern half of the city would be controlled by the Soviets...the western half by the other allies.

That left West Berlin a non-communist island within a communist nation...

Almost immediately East Germans began to emigrate from their socialist nation to rebuild their lives in Western German.

And many of them did it simply by crossing the border within the city of Berlin – from the east to the west. By 1961, East Germany had lost millions of its citizens through West Berlin.

FREDERICK TAYLOR: And if you could get from East Germany into East Berlin and then from East Berlin into West Berlin, you could be...resettled. And this was an option that between 1945 and 1961, about 2.5 million East Germans took. They didn't like life under Communism, they didn't like the lack of prospects, they didn't like the lack of political freedom – and they voted with their feet.

[Archive Footage]

DANIEL SCHORR: *This is Daniel Schorr in West Berlin. This is a subway station. It is also an escape hatch...*

NARRATOR: Daniel Schorr was the CBS News correspondent in Germany.

DANIEL SCHORR: The number of people coming over was staggering – it was like a stampede in progress.

[Archive Footage]

DANIEL SCHORR: *One refugee out of East Germany every three minutes. And for all we know, you could be looking at one now.*

NARRATOR: The continued loss of the nation's labor force threatened East Germany's economic survival. Party secretary Walter Ulbricht knew the hemorrhage of human talent had to be stopped. The question was – 'How'?

FREDERICK TAYLOR: What he wanted was a wall, a fence, a barrier down the middle of Berlin making it impossible for East Germans physically to cross, and that would solve his problem. They couldn't go anywhere.

NARRATOR: In public Ulbricht denied he would ever seal the border...

[Archive Footage]

ULBRICHT: No one has any intention of building a wall.

NARRATOR: But in the summer of 1961, he secretly ordered a young ambitious party official named Erich Honecker to head up a covert feat of engineering. Honecker commandeered barbed wire and concrete to be stashed in and around Berlin. Then on a summer Saturday night, while Berliners were on vacation, he sprang the trap. On August 13, 1961, Berliners woke up to a city cut in two.

FREDERICK TAYLOR: And by six o'clock in the morning, it was all done.

NARRATOR: On the Bernauer Strasse in the north of Berlin, the border closure created an odd situation. The front doors of apartment houses opened onto West Berlin, but the people who lived inside the buildings were East Berliners – and now they would no longer be allowed to use their front doors.

Elke Rosin was a 16-year-old East Berliner who lived in an apartment on Bernauer Strasse. Four days after the border was sealed, Elke's father gathered the family together.

ELKE ROSIN: It was in the late afternoon. My father – my parents told us about one hour earlier that we wanted to escape, and so we had to find some things to take with us...we put it in boxes, and in some bags...and that's me...when I was running.

NARRATOR: For Elke and her family, escape meant dashing out the front door of their building and crossing the street to safety before the East German Police could snatch them back, while her father locked the apartment door to keep the police from following, then leapt from the window.

They were lucky they left when they did ... and lucky they lived on the first floor. The Border guards soon caught on and others on Bernauer Strasse had a much harder time.

ELKE ROSIN: Yeah many people lost their life you know because of this strange situation.

NARRATOR: Within weeks all the windows and doors on the street were bricked over.

DANIEL SCHORR: Something I had never seen before and very few people have seen before. To see a city cut through a center. It is really awful.

NARRATOR: In mid-October 1961, two months after the border closure, the Americans in West Berlin decided to test the resolve of the East Germans and their Soviet masters.

An American official from West Berlin challenged the East German border guards by refusing to show his papers at the crossing - and a dangerous stand-off began.

DANIEL SCHORR: Very soon tanks appear on the other side – Soviet tanks. And then for a while at Checkpoint Charlie you could see American and Soviet tanks head to head. I went and stood between the tanks. Looking at my camera, I said, ‘Look at this picture. This could be a picture of the way World War III starts.’

NARRATOR: The whole world watched Berlin for a tense 48 hours. Then after delicate negotiations between Moscow and Washington, both sides backed down. The stand-off at Checkpoint Charlie was the last time US forces openly opposed the Soviets over the Berlin Wall.

It took Berliners months to absorb the reality of living in this divided city, but no one dreamed it would take 28 years to knock that barrier down.

As the reality of the Wall sank in, Berliners on both sides made their accommodations. In West Berlin, platforms were built alongside the wall so divided families could at least see one another.

One of those waving from the west was a young father named Rudolph Müller. He had been working in West Berlin the day the border was closed. His wife and two boys were stuck in the East.

RUDOLF MÜLLER: So after considering the options, at some point we decided to dig a tunnel to get my family over here.

NARRATOR: Müller knew there was an idle construction site in West Berlin right next to the wall. With the help of his brothers and some friends he began a small tunnel that would end in the basement of an apartment house across the street in East Berlin.

RUDOLF MÜLLER: The tunnel itself began over here, behind that construction fence. It went down two meters and then right across, right here. Here were you see the indentation in the ground there is that tunnel underneath. It was never secured. And we heard the border patrols on the sidewalk so we had to be incredibly quiet.

NARRATOR: They dug every night for three weeks and finally broke through into the apartment house basement on the east side of the wall. Müller climbed out to get his family and another couple he had promised to help – and bring them back to the tunnel.

It all should have gone smoothly. But almost immediately one of the East German border guards challenged them.

RUDOLF MÜLLER: Right here is where the guard was standing. He saw us coming and he yelled, ‘Stop, where are you trying to go’.

NARRATOR: Only years later did Müller figure out that he may have been betrayed – that the other couple he was helping escape were in fact agents of the East German Secret Police. But the guards didn’t know Müller was armed.

RUDOLF MÜLLER: He raised his weapon slightly. I was watching him, I couldn’t keep my eyes off of him. And he yelled loudly, ‘Stop, where are you trying to go?’ I was shocked, my hair was standing on end, I was so afraid. I turned around and said to my wife. ‘You keep going, don’t stop. Don’t stop. My brothers are on the other side of the wall and they’re waiting for you.’ So I turned around, right around here, and over there where that line is in the asphalt, that’s where the border guard was. He looked at me. I’ll never forget. His face was all white from the excitement... ‘Where are you trying to go? Show your papers!’ And because my wife and my children kept going, he felt provoked, or whatever. He raised his machinegun and screamed this time, ‘Your wife and children have to stop or I’ll shoot.’ I tried to block his view, but when I saw the barrel of his machinegun... I had, I had a gun myself. That’s when it happened. I thought you have to shoot - or he shoots your family. He was standing there with his weapon up. And I shot.

NARRATOR: The guard died – whether from Müller’s one shot or the hail of bullets let loose by other guards - no one knows.

RUDOLF MÜLLER: It was a long time ago, but every time I talk about it, I still get chills up and down my spine. I never expected anything like this. It was horrible, horrible that a young person had to die.

NARRATOR: Desperate escape attempts became commonplace – and many succeeded...

[Archive Footage]

VOICEOVER: *In Berlin escaping East Germans punched holes in the wall of shame with homemade bombs and trucks.*

NARRATOR: Others did not.

About one year after the Wall went up 18-year-old Peter Fechter and a friend made a run at the fence near Checkpoint Charlie. Fechter's friend made it over, but the guard's automatic weapon fire caught Peter in the leg as he scaled the fence, and he slipped back to the ground.

The bullet had severed an artery.

[Archive Footage]

VOICEOVER: *West Berliner's hear his cries but are helpless. Communists who can help wait until Peter Fechter bleeds to death, then carry him away.*

NARRATOR: The GDR authorities issued new orders that anyone wounded while attempting to escape be removed from public view immediately. And, they beefed up the wall making it higher, broader, longer until it extended 96 miles surrounding West Berlin. And in most places, it was 12 feet tall.

But that was how it looked from the West – the free side.

East Berliners saw it differently.

FREDERICK TAYLOR: If you were in East Berlin and you walked towards the border with West Berlin, if you were in a park or a street whatever, you would come up against a wall right in the middle of the street with a warning sign - often nothing much more than that.

If you then climb that wall, went over and dropped down you would find yourself between 60 and 90 yards from West Berlin. And not just that, immediately in front of you was what they called the security border fence. This was a wired fence about eight feet high, strengthened at the bottom so you couldn't crawl underneath, you had to climb it. And when you climbed it you set off an alarm, you might if it were night and certain parts of the border also set off an automatic search light that would start sweeping the area.

NARRATOR: Watchtowers stood every few hundred meters, manned by heavily armed soldiers.

FREDERICK TAYLOR: They would know there was somebody trying to cross the security fence. You're over the security fence; sirens have started to go; the guards have probably started shouting out warnings; and are preparing to fire if necessary.

NARRATOR: The next obstacle to freedom was the death strip – a no man's land with carefully raked sand designed to show footprints... and dogs on long leashes that would

catch up with even the fastest runner. Some of it was covered by automatic machine guns rigged to tripwires.

FREDERICK TAYLOR: Only then, only, only after you had managed to get across the death strip without being shot, savaged by a dog, did you reach what they call not the wall at all, not what tourists in West Berlin would call the wall - but what they call the border marker.

NARRATOR: Finally, 90 yards from the first innocuous fence, this was the 12-foot high concrete barrier the Westerners saw topped with a cylinder of smooth cement that made it nearly impossible to grip.

FREDERICK TAYLOR: And if you managed to get over that by some miraculous method - then you were in West Berlin. How many people managed that? The answer is hardly anybody. People got through on trucks; they dug tunnels; they flew over it; they went around it; they used false papers. But, very, very few people in the 1970's and 80's managed to get through not the Berlin Wall - but the multiplicity of walls that made up the Berlin Wall between East and West Berlin.

NARRATOR: Officially, the East German Regime claimed the border was fortified to keep anti-socialist influences out. But most East Germans knew it made their homeland into a prison.

Though in many ways the German Democratic Republic resembled the West, the political realities made daily life very different. Travel outside of communist countries was usually forbidden and free speech severely limited.

Young people were required to join state youth groups, and the state could be a stern master.

Dieter Wendland grew up near East Berlin. Like many teenagers in the 1960s and 70s he embraced pop culture – rock and roll, and sharing smuggled Beatles records. It all seemed harmless enough.

But when he put up posters of the Woodstock rock festival on his bedroom wall – it turned out he'd gone too far.

DIETER WENDLAND: The Woodstock posters and things like that were a symbol of a kind of freedom we didn't know. We each made what we wanted from it. They represented boundless opportunities.

NARRATOR: Dieter had older brothers who lived in West Berlin so his family was already on an official watch list. His flirtation with the corrupt influences of capitalist culture drew the attention of the state security force known as the Stasi – the secret police.

After the Wall came down, like many East Germans, Deiter applied to see his Stasi file – a secret record of his private life.

DIETER WENDLAND: I had heard about them entering people's intimate and personal lives before, that they destroyed marriages. Where they went to get information on it: colleagues, acquaintances, complete strangers...we knew we were being watched. That it went that far, did shock.

NARRATOR: The Stasi was headquartered here – a complex of anonymous buildings in a nondescript East Berlin neighborhood.

From this third floor office the Stasi's longtime head, Erich Mielke, controlled his web of 90,000 agents and nearly 200,000 informants.

By the 1980s, the Stasi had collected information on one third of the country's population, eighty-one miles worth of files.

Deiter Wendland's file was nearly 300 pages and included a carefully detailed plan the Stasi had designed to sabotage his adult life.

DIETER WENDLAND: There is a passage in here that says I should be prevented from going to any university and they had a specific plan about how to infiltrate my intimate life. And that astonished me. I just thought that was particularly insidious.

NARRATOR: The Stasi didn't just spy on the people of East Germany. Thousands were arrested and imprisoned.

Mathias Melster spent 5 months here in this Stasi Prison in East Berlin for attempting to escape to the West.

Isolated, sleep deprived, interrogated for hours every day – he was led to believe his family and closest friends had turned against him.

MATTHIAS MELSTER: There were days when they would ask the same question over and over, and days when the officers were silent. And I tried not to speak, not to betray any friends. They'd bring me in this room and they'd ignore me for eight hours. At some point I became a nervous wreck. The thing that finally broke me...one of the officers looked and acted just like my father. That's how they cracked me. They succeeded in getting me to reveal things I never meant to. You could have gotten almost anything out of me.

NARRATOR: By 1980 East Germany had developed its own distinct culture. But every part of life was controlled by the ruling Socialist Unity Party and its head Erich Honecker.

The state claimed that socialist East Germany had a standard of living every bit as high as the West. But the reality was quite different. Everyday items were often in short supply. The wait for the coveted Trabant automobile could be seven years.

Most citizens simply lived their lives quietly.

FADE TO BLACK/FADE UP

In the early 1980s – in the East German university city of Leipzig, something began to happen in an unexpected place ... the protestant churches.

Erich Honecker and the East German regime had decided to allow organized religion a degree of freedom. Honecker's intention was to show that the churches would dry up and disappear – no longer needed in a modern socialist society.

His plan backfired.

CHRISTIAN FÜHRER: In 1981, here in the Nikolai Church, I started holding peace prayers with 130 young people to raise awareness about justice and peace.

NARRATOR: Pastor Christian Führer invited young people into his church to pray for peace. A similar gathering anywhere else would have been shut down, but he took advantage of the church's special status.

CHRISTIAN FÜHRER: The church was the only protected place in the GDR where the police and army would never come inside.

NARRATOR: The idea caught on...Slowly East German churches became magnets for groups of people who weren't necessarily interested in Christianity but in reform.

One of the earliest movements was environmentalism. By the 1970s East Germans were coming to realize that their country was one of the most polluted in Europe.

FREDERICK TAYLOR: And this ecological movement grew in East Germany because places were becoming nightmarish. People were dying of the kind of diseases of pollution that hadn't really been a serious problem since Victorian times.

NARRATOR: Other causes began to emerge alongside environmentalism: peace organizations, feminist groups, an anti-nuclear missile movement...

FREDERICK TAYLOR: So, the church because it was one of the few places where you could safely express your opinion became a really attractive place to be.

NARRATOR: The Stazi infiltrated the church-based groups but could do little to stop them. With the thin and uncertain umbrella of church protection over their heads, an opposition movement began to form.

But it would take events outside of East Germany to spark a revolution.

FADE TO BLACK/FADE UP

NARRATOR: In 1985 Mikhail Gorbachev, a little-known, 55-year-old Soviet party official was named General Secretary of the USSR...and everything began to change.

Vice-President George Bush attended the funeral of Gorbachev's predecessor, and met the new leader of the Soviet Union.

GEORGE H.W. BUSH: I was the first American to make contact with Gorbachev. And I wrote out a – on a yellow pad, I wrote out a cable to send back to Reagan saying this man is very different.

NARRATOR: West German Chancellor Helmut Kohl also sensed that Gorbachev was a new kind of Soviet leader. The first time the two met they discovered a shared a political vision.

HELMUT KOHL: It was a personal and honest conversation. We spoke about what we both wanted – and it was totally clear that we both wanted a new relationship between the Federal Republic and the Soviet Union.

NARRATOR: But at the White House the reaction was different. President Ronald Reagan was wary of the charismatic Gorbachev. He believed in keeping up the pressure against the Soviets despite promises of reform.

Then in 1987, Reagan became the first U.S. President in more than two decades to come to Berlin and directly confront the Russians over the Wall.

[Archive Footage]

RONALD REAGAN: *Mr. Gorbachev, tear down this wall.*

NARRATOR: The reaction was electric. Reagan's challenge reminded the West that the Berlin Wall still divided the city...But in Moscow, the reaction was muted.

MIKHAIL GORBACHEV: I get asked this often. What was your impression of this remark by President Reagan? And I say, both I and the Soviet leadership were not at all impressed. We never forgot that President Reagan's first profession was as an actor.

NARRATOR: When Vice President George Bush became president two years later, everyone wondered what his policy toward Gorbachev would be.

Eastern Europe was changing quickly – pushed along by Gorbachev's reforms. Already in Poland, dock worker, Lech Welesa, led a movement that would open the door to democratic elections.

[Archive Footage]

Announcer: Ladies and gentlemen the President of the United States and Mrs. Bush... (cheers)

NARRATOR: George Bush saw the changes first-hand during a European trip in the summer of 1989. And, in his speech delivered in Mainz, western Germany...near the hometown of Chancellor Helmut Kohl, Bush voiced US support for the reform movements.

[Archive Footage]

GEORGE H.W. BUSH: *The world has waited long enough – the time is right – let Europe be whole and free. (applause)*

NARRATOR: To the German audience, ‘whole and free’ could mean only one thing: a call to re-unify the nation that had been divided after World War II. Though, the former president says it was a far more general message.

GEORGE H.W. BUSH: Well, a Europe whole and free, I think it related more to the... overall treatment of nuclear weapons, and the reduction of conventional weapons and all of that, than it did specifically German unification. Now, German unification was a wonderful objective...but when I first started I didn’t say, “Now, what we’re going to do is plan how we’re going to unify Germany in the next couple of months.” I mean, it just didn’t work that way.

NARRATOR: In fact, Bush was coming under heavy criticism for not being more active in his Eastern Europe policy. After 6 months in office he hadn’t even spoken with Gorbachev. Once he saw how fast reform was coming ...he knew that must change.

JAMES BAKER: It was just the President, and Brent, and myself - and it was the President who said, “You know, I really think we ought to think about a meeting with Gorbachev.”

BRENT SCOWCROFT: He said, “I worry that so much time has passed, and I want to get to know Gorbachev. I’m afraid something might happen.”

GEORGE H.W. BUSH: And I’m not sure that both of them were ready at that moment for it, but I think, you know, the President had decided and they were wonderful in support of me, when I’d make decisions, whether they liked them or not...and I don’t think there’s any great disagreement on that one – just be ready - do our homework. And it was the right thing to do. Later on I got the feeling from Gorbachev he was very glad that we had said we would do this.

NARRATOR: The White House sent word to Moscow that President Bush would like to arrange a low-key meeting with Gorbachev the following December. Neither man knew that by then – the world would be an entirely different place.

In May of 1989, the reformist government in Hungary ripped the first hole in the Iron Curtain...literally cutting the fence that separated it from Austria to the west.

Within weeks thousands of East Germans were flooding to Hungary to take advantage of the open borders. Thousands more made their traditional holiday trips to Hungary into one-way journeys to the West.

J.D. BINDENAGEL: That summer East Germans began to lose faith that they could have a life in East Germany. They had to leave. But they couldn't leave because East Germany had a very restrictive travel regime. You couldn't just simply move to another country. You had to have the permission of East Germany. So they were forced to flee; to flee - to abandon their families, abandon their property – abandon everything that they had and to try to get to the West.

NARRATOR: Other East Germans took refuge in the West German embassy in Prague hoping for asylum.

West Germany's Chancellor Helmut Kohl quietly encouraged this first wave of East German refugees. But at the same time he wondered how many more they might have to accommodate.

HELMUT KOHL: It was clear that enormous changes and dramatic shifts could be starting. And it was also clear that the developments in Hungary were basically signaling an end.

NARRATOR: That the end was nearer than anyone knew ...

In October of 1989, Mikhail Gorbachev came to visit East Berlin. It was the 40th anniversary of the GDR, and Honecker had planned a big celebration in the old Soviet tradition...

During a torchlight parade, meant to show off East German youth, the young people began to chant: 'Gorby, Gorby'.

[Archive Footage]
Gorby, Gorby!

MIKHAIL GORBACHEV: People knew something important was happening. Hundreds of thousands of them were rallying to express their demands. They would not be stopped. It felt that they were saying, "it's now or never."

NARRATOR: Speaking informally the next day, Gorbachev voiced a warning to the East German regime.

J.D. BINDENAGEL: He made this statement which was repeated over and over again and refined, 'Of those who come too late will be punished, punished by history. That we

took to mean it was time for Mr. Honecker to go...After the ceremony Gorbachev immediately left and things began to happen.

NARRATOR: At the Nikolai Church in Leipzig – the small Monday night prayer meetings of the early 1980s were turning into a mass movement.

Katrin Hatenhauer was a 20 year old theology student who had become swept up in the opposition.

KATRIN HATENHAUER: I volunteered for an environmental group at the church. I had no idea that this turned be into an enemy of the state.

NARRATOR: As the opposition movement gained momentum, Katrin and her friends took ever greater risks, including providing a safe haven for a weapon that could have easily landed them in prison -- a mimeograph machine.

KATRIN HATENHAUER: For us the mimeograph was very important. You were not allowed to have one in the GDR. It's not like today where you can duplicate anything you want. The state had a monopoly on the distribution of information. Nobody knew we had one.

NARRATOR: Thanks in part to the underground printing presses, by September the Monday prayer meetings at the Nikolai church had become so large the church could no longer contain them.

Katrin and a friend decided to take yet another step and carry a banner calling for freedom. It didn't take long for plainclothes Stazi agents to enforce the ban on free speech.

Two days later Katrin was arrested.

KATRIN HATENHAUER: I have to say I only remember parts because the Stazi pulled me by my hair and pulled me down and then I passed out.

NARRATOR: Despite arrests, the opposition movement was growing bolder. In Leipzig they called on citizens to make Monday, October 9, 1989 the biggest protest yet. Honecker responded by ordering tanks and armed troops to surround Leipzig.

In everybody's mind was the horrifying memory of what had happened the previous June in another communist country. Tiananmen Square, Beijing: Hundreds of young Chinese had been shot down for demonstrating against their government.

The East German leaders had commended the Chinese for their decisive actions. So no one was surprised when the police in Leipzig told every hospital to prepare for casualties. October 9th would be a showdown ...and the authorities were clearly planning for what was now being called the "China option."

CHRISTIAN FÜHRER: On Oct 9th, we fit about 8000 people in the local churches. And after our peace prayer here we wanted to leave the church and join the demonstration...we opened the door and the square was just packed with people...later we found out that about 70,000 people had shown up. The largest voluntary demonstration in the GDR history ever.

NARRATOR: As the demonstrators moved to Leipzigs' main public square, armed police waited for the order to charge.

Honecker had banned all news media from Leipzig earlier that week. But two young East Germans smuggled in a video camera. From a high in a church steeple, they shot the only footage of the turning point moment in German history.

KATRIN HATENHAUER: On October 9th I was in my prison cell and we heard all these noises. We thought these could be tanks or trucks or who knows what. Later we found out it was the feet of 70,000 people who were marching for our freedom.

NARRATOR: In the end, there was no violent crackdown. Local church and party leaders joined by the internationally renowned conductor, Kurt Mazur, made a public statement calling on the regime not to attack the protesters. While in East Berlin, Egon Krenz, Honecker's chief aide, declined to pass on the party chief's orders to send in the police. East Germans, 70,000 of them, had been allowed to criticize their government in public.

CHRISTIAN FÜHRER: It was such a relief that no shots were fired. That evening the GDR was not the same as it was in the morning and we knew it.

NARRATOR: Within a week, Erich Honecker was ousted – replaced by Krenz.

J.D. BINDENAGEL: Now, that was the good news. Bad news for the communists was Egon Krenz took over, kept half of the politburo losing his credibility immediately. So although there was some change - it was halfheartedly, not well executed and people were not reassured.

NARRATOR: In early November at a massive demonstration in Berlin the new face of the regime promised to reform the government and even open the borders.

J.D. BINDENAGEL: And the East German government announced a relaxed travel law. It didn't work.

NARRATOR: It was too little too late.

DIETER WENDLAND: I never boomed so loud in my life...it was like a slap in the face to be addressed by these leaders...we knew where they were coming from, the old regime

was saying they could save the GDR...but it was too late, I wanted it to stop existing...it was a dictatorship that would never become a democracy.

NARRATOR: But still no one was talking about taking down the Berlin Wall. That would come about purely by accident.

On the evening of November 9, 1989 East German Politburo spokesman, Gunter Schabowski, was giving a press conference.

Schabowski read a long document announcing yet another incremental step in the lifting of travel restrictions. At the end one newsman yelled out a simple question, "When does it take effect?"

[Archive Footage]

SHABOWSKI: *immediately.*

NARRATOR: "Immediately," he said uncertainly, searching the documents. It was *not* the answer the regime meant him to give – but it was too late.

Within hours, American newscaster, Tom Brokaw, was announcing that the East Germans had opened the wall.

[Archive Footage]

BROKAW: *Good evening live from the Berlin Wall on the most historic night in this wall's history what you see behind me is a celebration of this new policy announced today by the East German government that now for the first time since the wall was erected in 1961 people will be able to move through freely.*

NARRATOR: West German TV – which East Berliners watched – reported the same thing. By 10 PM a crowd had gathered at the Bornholmer Bridge in northern Berlin – a major crossing point. The guards had no orders. They soon opened the gates and 28 years of imprisonment came crashing down.

KATRIN HATENHAUER: At the Bornholmer Bridge there were so many people.

[Archive Footage]

GERMAN CITIZEN: *In simple German, My Mom and my Dad are already over there. Can I just go?*

KATRIN HATENHAUER: The helpless border guards just opened the wall.

DIETER WENDLAND: The 9th of November was the craziest day in our lives.

MIKHAIL GORBACHEV: Everyone assumed it would be a trickle. Wrong. It was a huge flood.

CHRISTIAN FÜHRER: Not one shot was fired.

NARRATOR: In Washington, administration officials tried to nail down the details.

BRENT SCOWCROFT: We didn't know whether the wall was opening, whether these demonstrators were going to get shot when they crossed, so it was very confused period, but in the middle of it, Marlin Fitzwater, the Press Secretary, came in and said, "Mr. President, you have to make a statement of some kind." So, that's when he called people into his office, and they stood around the desk, and he answered a few questions.

[Archive Footage]

GEORGE H.W. BUSH: ...*On the latest news coming out of Germany and of course I welcome the decision by the East German Leadership*

GEORGE H.W. BUSH: I remember one of the reporters said, "What's your emotion? Don't you have any emotion at this great time?"

[Archive Footage]

NEWS REPORTER: *What you just said this is sort of a great victory by our side in the big east-west battle but you don't seem elated...*

GEORGE H.W. BUSH: *I'm elated I'm just not an emotional kind of guy.*

JAMES BAKER: President Bush was pestered pretty strongly by news organizations for being so restrained in his receipt of that news. After all, this was the end of the Cold – we'd been fighting for this for 40 years; here it is. Why aren't you showing more emotion? But he was smarter than that because he knew that we had unfinished business.

GEORGE H.W. BUSH: For us to overreact, and look like we won, and you guys lost, would have been stupid. And it's much clearer to me now – a lot of things aren't clearer to me know, but this one is –

CONDOLEEZZA RICE: He said, "This is a German moment." And that was a brilliant insight because it was a German moment and it allowed the United State to play an active diplomatic role in a way that did not embarrass the Soviet Union and that recognized that Germany was about to become sovereign.

NARRATOR: For West German Chancellor Kohl, the timing couldn't have been more complicated. On November 9th he was on an important diplomatic mission to Warsaw, Poland with no easy way to get back to Germany.

HELMUT KOHL: Finally, after delegate negotiations with his Polish hosts, he flew to Berlin and arrived exhausted, but also energized by the possibilities of a new Germany.

There are situations in life where you say "I have to get through this no matter how tired I am. That's how we felt. We felt it was the fulfillment of a dream.

NARRATOR: Germans on both sides of the wall were jubilant. But at the same time, political leaders feared that an unstable East Germany could lead to violence.

J.D. BINDENAGEL: After the wall fell, there was this eerie feeling that everything was changing and we didn't know where we were headed...something dramatic had just occurred. And it was in the hands of others, not in the hands of governments.

HORST TELTSCHIK: The question was well, we have to shape this development and the first interest at that time was not unification. The first interest was how can we stabilize the situation in GDR...to keep the development under political control.

NARRATOR: Within a few days, it was clear the Wall would remain open, and there would be no violent reaction from the East German regime.

But, what would come next?

CONDOLLEEZZA RICE: The next morning I think we started thinking about the consequences of what we'd just seen...and as the principal Soviet specialist it was suddenly my job to figure out what that meant, and not to figure it out in a kind of academic sense, but in a very real policy sense.

NARRATOR: And the clock was ticking. President Bush and General Secretary Gorbachev were scheduled for their first meeting in less than a month. Helmut Kohl was hoping to seize this unexpected moment to re-unify Germany.

Everyone knew this was a new Europe– the Berlin Wall had fallen after 28 years...

Now the work would begin to decide what would rise in its place.

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