

How had the rise and fall of the Berlin Wall affected Germany?

Louise Mead
Wellsway School



Tutor: Mrs Sally Cartwright
Wellsway School

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank the following people for their help and support during this project:

Maren Böhm who was kind enough to tell me about her own experiences.

Mr Roy Lofkin who read through my essay to check for any factual errors.

Mrs Anne Pears who provided me with invaluable sources, including *Goodbye Lenin*, *Fünf Wochen im Herbst* and *The Lives of Others*.

Dr Jack Whitehead & Marie Huxtable who helped us to form our Research Community.

Nathan Moore, James Mould, Simon Clark & Devon Buchanen who constructively criticised my work.

Mrs Sally Cartwright and Mrs Shirley Anderson for inviting me to participate in the Extended Project and for supporting us throughout the project.

Summary

Keywords Search:

Rise, Fall, Effects, Berlin Wall,
Germany

Keywords Search:

Wellsway, Extended Project,
Germany

How has the Rise and Fall of the Berlin Wall affected Germany?

This essay explores the different ways in which the Berlin Wall has affected Germany. There are various reasons for its construction, and the essay begins by explaining the series of events which led up to this event. By using information from an interview with an East Berliner the essay then deals with the immediate effects of the Wall, and how daily life in East and West Berlin became so different. Finally the essay looks into the fall of the Wall, the process of reunification and the ongoing effects of the 27 year long separation, including the infamous "Wall in the Head".

Contents

	Page
Introduction	1
An Isolated Berlin – The Berlin Blockade	2
Why was the Wall built?	3
The Building of the Wall	6
Immediate Effects	9
Differences between Daily Life:	
- Life in the East	10
- Life in the West	13
Escape Attempts	14
<i>Die Wende</i> – The Fall of the Wall	17
Effects of the fall of the Wall and Reunification	19
What happened to the Wall?	22
Conclusion	23
<u>Appendices:</u>	
Appendix A - Stalin	24
Appendix B – Bertolt Brecht	25
Appendix C – Marxist-Leninist Ideology	26
Appendix D – David Bowie	27
Appendix E – Germany’s Debt	29
Appendix F – Government Expenditure of GDP	30

How has the rise and fall of the Berlin Wall affected Germany?

In February 2008 I visited Berlin for the first time, and the whole city fascinated me. For more than 28 years a wall 27 miles long and 11 ft high divided Berlin; a city that has played a major political role since the Nazi period. However the actual construction of the wall was only the final act of dividing the city, after the initial separation in 1945 after World War II. Those who experienced the building of the wall felt angry and let down, however, nobody expected a total separation for such a long period of time. I have had the privilege of contacting Maren Böhm, the mother of a German friend, who lived in East Berlin while the wall existed. I felt that it was important to personally communicate with someone who experienced life during this period in order to gain an honest view and opinion. Böhm was born after the building of the wall and therefore did not know any different. "Living in the East was normal for me, just like growing up in Bristol would be like for you." When I was in Berlin, there was little trace of the wall, with the exception of a few stretches, most noticeably on Bernauer Straße in the East (See Figure 1). I personally noticed some distinct differences between the former East and West sides of Berlin; however I would like to investigate further the ongoing effects. Does the wall still affect Berlin and the rest of Germany? Do Germans still feel the divide? Or has it been left in the past - destroyed with the 3m high concrete blocks which formed the physical barrier between East and West?

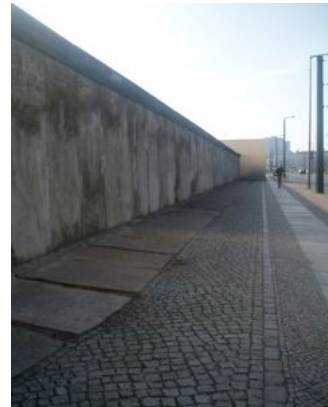


Figure 1: Bernauer Straße
today

An Isolated Berlin

There were early signs that the Soviets wanted full control over Berlin. In 1948 Stalin (see Appendix A for more information on Stalin) ordered a complete blockade of the Western sectors of the city preventing any ground movement in or out of the Berlin. However the Western powers organized an airlift that lasted nearly a year from June 24th 1948 to May 12th 1949. According to the Berlin Airlift Historical Foundation coal, heating oil, medicine, food and necessary supplies for 2 million Berliners were all airlifted into Berlin in a continuous flow of aircraft operating at 2 minute intervals throughout the day and night in all weather conditions. As reported in an article on 60 years of the airlift, these “life-saving” aircraft were landing at airports in Berlin without the use of radar. This operation was known as the Berlin Airlift and was the largest single airlift in history.

Why was the Wall built?

Following World War II, the former Nazi Germany was divided into four occupied zones at the Yalta Conference. Each zone was controlled by one of the Allies; America, Britain, France and the Soviet Union. Berlin was similarly divided into the four sectors, despite the city being situated deep within the Soviets' sector (See Figures 2 and 3). The city then became the focus of tension between the West and the East. On May 24th 1949 the French, British and American zones combined to form the Federal Republic of Germany which also included West Berlin. The Soviet zone was excluded, and as a result formed the German Democratic Republic (G.D.R) on October 7th 1949.

Figure 2 – Berlin Wall in 1961



Figure 3 – Berlin in Germany



East Berlin was made the capital of the GDR. This created, what Winston Churchill described as in 1946, an “Iron Curtain” which split Europe into two blocs: the eastern bloc including countries such as Poland, Hungary, Romania, Russia, Bulgaria, and of course East Germany; and Western Europe. The British historian and peace activist E.P.Thompson wrote in 1987 that the world was “glaciated into its Cold War form” (Blanning, T.C.W. 2001).

The Cold war was no ordinary war. There was no open conflict; it was a war fought through spies, threats and of course the race to build nuclear arms. The construction of nuclear weapons was the factor which prevented the shift to a “hot war” due to the fear of nuclear destruction; both sides had the power to destroy the other entirely. Mutual suspicions were aroused between the

West and the East, and nobody could be trusted. One of the many spies includes the “nuclear super-spy” Dr. Klaus Emil Julius Fuchs. After fleeing Nazi Germany for being a communist, he worked with the British Government in creating the atomic bomb. Goodman (2007) described how at the same time he fed information to the Soviet Union, and provided hundreds of sheets of valuable material: “it is claimed his information saved the Soviet Union two years in constructing their first atomic bomb.”

Berlin was the focus of the tension between the West and the East, and the city became much divided. Tusa (1996) quoted a foreign office official as describing Berlin as a “Bridal trousseau, with two of almost everything”. From 1949 there were two separate headquarters for the soviet sector and the western sectors. There were two currencies (Deutschmarken for the West and Ostmarken for the East), two local governments, two police forces, two fire and ambulance services and two different gas and electricity suppliers. Despite this, Berlin was still an open city. Residents were free to travel from East to West and vice versa. The two public transport systems were connected; trams, buses, U-Bahn (underground railway) and S-Bahn (surface railway) passed through borders unhindered. West Berliners went east for services, such as hair-cuts, tailoring and shoe repairs, which were cheaper than in the West. They also enjoyed the theatre in the East, such as Bertolt Brecht's Ensemble (See Appendix B). They ignored hidden Communist political messages in the plays, and just appreciated the brilliance of the acting and the production. East Berliners travelled west to buy better quality clothes and shoes, and for a wider variety of food which was not available in the East. A famous joke which raised a smile in Berlin for many years reflected this because the majority of East Berliners wore the same clothes and ate the same food as each other.

Q: How do you recognise an East Berliner?

A: By his shoes and his sandwich.

These prominent differences between East and West are perhaps the underlying reason for the building of the Wall; between 1949 and 1951,

492,681 refugees arrived in the Federal Republic of Germany, predominantly from East Germany. East Germans from all different backgrounds left for various reasons; militant anti-communists; teachers who disliked the political influence in education and parents who wanted to give their children a less pro-Communist education; businessmen and smallholders whose assets had been seized or who faced nationalisation (in which case they would lose everything to the state); young men avoiding service in the *Volkspolizei* (also known as *Vopos*; English translation - People's police) or the uranium mines; Nazis hoping to hide in a new home under a new name; and finally young and old looking for pay and pensions in *Deutschmarken* rather than *Ostmarken* and a higher standard of living. Life in the West was regarded as better than the East, leading to thousands of East Germans migrating to the West.

Essentially the Wall was built to stem the flow of refugees from East to West. The East was losing its most valuable citizens; young economically active males and females, to the West. What I have found interesting during my research is how the refugees have been described as the lifeblood of the GDR: For example Tusa (1996) wrote “the East Germans would have to staunch the haemorrhage of emigrants. They [the West] certainly took no pleasure in watching the GDR bleed to death”. The irony is that so many people died trying to cross the wall, and maybe this metaphor is an indicator of the bloodshed to come.

The Building of the Wall

In mid-1961 there were rumours that the GDR planned to build a wall; the government were in fact making arrangements to do this. Twenty government officials were assigned the task of collecting the necessary building materials, including barbed wire and concrete posts, and distributing them along the border. At a press conference on June 16th 1961 a journalist enquired as to whether the GDR planned to create a state border at Brandenburg gate. Walter Ulbricht, the leader of the communist party denied this claim:

“I understand your question to imply that there are people in West Germany who would like to see us mobilize the construction workers of the capital of the GDR for the purpose of building a wall. I am not aware of any such intention. The construction workers of our city are, for the most part, busy building apartment houses, and their working capacities are fully employed to that end. Nobody intends to put up a wall”.

Nonetheless, when in August 1961 over 1000 East Germans arrived in West Berlin *each day*, the building of the wall could not wait any longer. The date was set for the night of the 12th August. At midnight construction began. The West Berlin police were left helpless; the East Germans were building the wall well within their own territory meaning the West police could do nothing to stop them. Military Cars pulled up beside Brandenburg Gate and armed men constructed a border of barbed wire and concrete posts. Willy Brandt, the Mayor of Berlin described how as he drove to Potsdamer Platz and to Brandenburg Gate; he saw the same picture everywhere: construction workers, barriers, concrete posts, barbed wire, GDR military.

As all Berliners woke up the next morning to the horrific scenes, they of course began to ask questions. Where had all the building materials come from? Where had it been stored? Surely the allies should have known in a city full of spies and informers? If so, why had they done nothing to stop it?

The West was shocked at what had happened, however the government deterred protests from West Berliners. “Don’t allow yourselves to be reduced to rabble! ... We must stand up, calmly, but with determination and a strong will for unity and justice and freedom” (Brandt, 1961). But why did the West seem to accept the Wall so quickly? Quite simply, the closure of the border was the simplest and safest solution to everyone’s problems. Yes, it was a breach of the Four-Power Agreement; yes, it was inhumane. But for the West it was better than an East German uprising which would have had far more negative impacts. It allowed each bloc to develop their systems without influence of the other, and generally prevented conflict between the two sides. Consequently 28 years of ‘peace’ passed in Europe or in any case an ‘absence of war’. “By the late 1960s ... the Cold War no longer threatened to become a hot war but had frozen solid.” (Reynolds in *The Oxford Illustrated History of Modern Europe*). This period of time, commonly known as *détente*¹, coincided with the existence of the Wall.

Indeed, it has been suggested that the Wall prevented a potential third World War, and on reflection I feel that at the time both sides felt the same. For example, despite Ronald Reagan’s famous statement to “Tear down this Wall”, the Americans clearly felt uneasy with the thought of the Wall falling. There are numerous reports of the American soldiers on the Western side protecting the Wall from the West Germans, such as in Andreas Ramos’² report of the night of the fall of the Wall which he wrote in 1989. Furthermore, after reading an article from 1981 in The Times reporting on the twentieth anniversary of the Wall, it is clear that the East also believed that the Wall prevented conflict: “Herr Erich Honecker, the East German leader, told the crowds on the flag-decked Karl Marx Allee that the Wall was East Germany’s greatest contribution to peace.”

It appeared that the West condemned the Wall; even the press named its construction as “a deed of inhumanity and shame” (Clough, 1981). However it seems to me that from the moment the Wall was first built, the West just

¹ A French word; English translation “Relaxation”

² Andreas Ramos was in Berlin the night the Wall fell; his account of what happened has been published in numerous history books and is now part of historical archives

accepted it. The media picked up on this at the time; for example on August 16th, the headline of the German Newspaper *Bild-Zeitung* was “The West does NOTHING”. It is difficult to know the real opinions of Western politicians; they could not be seen to agree with the construction of a Wall, and I am sure that they did not agree with the principle of imprisoning a nation. Nonetheless the Wall did have some positive aspects for the West, yet Western leaders simply could not publicly admit this without creating problems within their own countries.

Immediate Effects

The most noticeable effect of the building of the wall was the separation of families and friends. Overnight East Berliners were denied the right to travel over to the West. For those who had relatives in the West it was impossible to imagine that they would not see their loved ones for such a long period of time. This scenario affected thousands of Berliners, and there are many stories of people crying as they stood at the barrier of barbed wire, waving to relatives. 60,000 East Berliners were also cut off from their jobs over in the West. This prevented their own personal financial improvement as wages in the West were higher than in the East. This also created problems for companies in the West who often relied on Eastern Workers as they could pay them lower wages than West Berliners. Consequently the city has been forced to recruit Italians, Yugoslavs and Turks who eventually made up one fifth of the total workforce.

In the days after August 13th, a lot of blame was put on the West for the building of the Wall. As I have already mentioned the German Newspaper *Bild-Zeitung* criticised Western politicians, claiming that they did nothing. Furthermore, many posters appeared all over the Western side of the city with slogans such as "Deceived by the West". The Wall not only managed to physically separate the Eastern and Western sectors, it also created divisions and tension within the West, and led to the protest of 300,000 West Berliners, against the will of Brandt.

Differences between East and West

Life in the East

There were obviously huge differences between daily life in the East and West of Germany. The communist influence on East Germany was very prominent.

East Berlin was not restored and rebuilt after the war as the West had been. Whereas the Marshall Plan, an American scheme aimed at providing financial aid for West Berlin after the war, quickly restored buildings in the



Figure 4: Trabants and Wartburgs in East Berlin

West, the East had no such luxury. The Soviet Union was already suffering and could not afford to rebuild East Berlin. The West viewed the East as if it was stuck in a time-warp; Vesilind (1982) stated that “If you want to feel what Berlin was like before the war go visit the East.” Here young girls still curtsayed, neon lights did not exist and parents were still respected and obeyed. Over time improvements were made to the East, and it became the most prosperous and therefore most attractive city in the Soviet Union. Vesilind (1982) also described East Berlin as becoming a Paris to its communist neighbours, offering a taste of cosmopolitan flair and a comparatively wide variety of consumer goods.” In fact many Berliners regarded the GDR as “Russia de luxe”. However they still lacked many items, which were regarded as everyday commodities in the West, for example Bananas. Also only two types of cars were available in the East: the Trabant, the GDR’s economy car costing approximately \$5,000 or the more elegant Wartburg, costing about \$8,500 (See Figure 4). Despite the availability of just two cars, people would have to wait years before their car was delivered to them. This was the case with many items. Maren Böhm said: “Shopping in the GDR was not hard because there was not much to buy. You could buy basic food, but there was not a great choice.” She also told me that many people made their own clothes because they could not buy them in shops.

Over time East Berliners became much more affluent than they were before the building of the wall and economically they were miles ahead of other countries in the Soviet Bloc. However West Berliners regarded the East as drab and unattractive compared to their diverse and vibrant city, and when East Berliners compared themselves to West Berlin they felt somewhat poorer. It is interesting that East Berlin was viewed in many different ways by different people, and these opinions very much depended on their own circumstances and standards of living.

No area of every-day life in the East was free of political messages; constant indoctrination of Marxist-Leninist ideology (See Appendix C) took place, particularly in the Education system. Politics had a huge influence on the standard curriculum. Maren Böhm described how subjects such as History, Citizenship, Geography and Russian were all orientated around politics. Admiral Waldemar Verner, vice Minister of Defence of the GDR from 1959 until 1978 made a speech to a group of school children saying:

“It is a true privilege for you to be living in the GDR, because you have hope for solidarity, equality and freedom of the individual. We should not forget the terror of capitalism ... It brings inflation, no hope for peace, and constant aggression against the socialist countries.” Residents of the GDR were also restricted in their travel.

Böhm (2008) told me that she was not allowed to travel to West Germany or other capitalist countries. “That meant that we were not allowed to go to Britain, France, the Netherlands, U.S.A and Spain etc. Travelling was only permitted in socialist countries, and only under special conditions. As a child I went to Poland, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Romania and Bulgaria.”

To prevent anyone “betraying” East Germany and The Party³ the *Staatsicherheit* (East German Secret Police, also known as the *Stasi*) had control over 200,000 employees and 100,000 informers. Its declared goal was

³ There was only one Political Party in the GDR; *Sozialistische Einheitspartei Deutschland*; all other political parties were banned.

“To Know Everything” and each worker swore an oath: “We are the Party’s Shield and Sword”. Anybody who made any criticism of the regime was punished, often interrogated before time in prison. Today all *Stasi* files are available for inhabitants of the former GDR to access. Unfortunately this has created several emotional problems for those who discovered their closest friends and even family had informed on them. The film *The Lives of Others* gave me a good insight into the terror caused by the *Stasi*.

Despite the strict regulations and restrictions, the standard of living was much higher in the GDR, particularly in Berlin, than it was in other socialist countries in Eastern Europe. I believe that this was due to the influence from West Berlin. Maren Böhm (2008) explained to me that East Berliners had access to radio programs broadcast in the West. “In the 80s as a teenager I listened to music from Neil Young, David Bowie (See Appendix D), Bob Dylan, The Beatles, AC DC, The Police, and Pink Floyd.” None of this western music was available to other East Germans.

Over time a whole generation grew up with the wall; they knew no different. After the initial pain and feelings that the city had been severed in two, the Wall quickly became a fact of life. Young East Berliners could not imagine life without it, yet in spite of attempts by the government to indoctrinate the younger generation, this age group still wanted to live in the West. “I knew there were differences between the East and the West from what I heard and saw on the Media and what my parents and other adults told me. What you don’t know and cannot have is always interesting and attractive and therefore the West appealed to me” (Böhm, 2008).

Life in the West

The Marshall Plan provided money to rebuild West Berlin's infrastructure and buildings. This left West Berlin in a much better state than the East following the bombing of this city. The allies brought prosperity to the West, however conversely the West was a drain on the allies. According to Vesilind in his article in *National Geographic Magazine*, \$400 million per year of Western Funds was being spent on allied protection of the City. Despite this the Allies were determined to maintain their control over West Berlin and not surrender to the Soviets.

There was also plenty of investment from Bonn, the provisional capital of the Federal Republic of Germany. This was to prevent further depopulation of the city and to encourage other West Germans to move there. Two new universities were developed and became international centres of learning. Several famous architects were involved in the construction of new and adventurous buildings, such as the *Deutsche Oper* and Philharmonic Hall (See Figure 5), as homes for the great opera and symphony orchestra. New housing schemes were also incorporated, along with the development of museums, galleries, shops and restaurants as entertainment. Much of this investment was intended to combat the many problems resulting both directly and indirectly from the Wall.



Figure 5: Philharmonic Hall, Berlin

There was a very high dependant population in the city, and few economically active workers. In fact 20% of West Berliners were over 65, compared to just 15% in the whole of West Germany. In addition to a high proportion of elderly, 22% of the population was under 21 and many of these residents were students. West Berlin lost many of its workers when the border was closed, and as I have already mentioned, West Berlin was therefore forced to recruit *Gastarbeiter*, guest workers, from abroad. This in itself created various social problems; Turkish migrants settled together forming Turkish ghettos, such as in Kreuzberg. They also put a strain on resources in schools where the

majority of pupils did not speak German. As a result of the high proportion of young people in the city there were few married couples or families with children, and hence no future generations for the city.

Over time West Berlin became less dependent on aid as its industries were developed and improved as part of the Berlin Economic Development Corporation. This program aimed to transform West Berlin into a large industrial centre and therefore rival London and Madrid. It encouraged investment from Multinational Corporations, and between 1979 and 1982 it brought in 85 companies, who consequently brought \$300 million of investment (Vesilind, 1982). In the 1980s gross production in West Berlin was equal to approximately half that of the entire nation of Denmark.

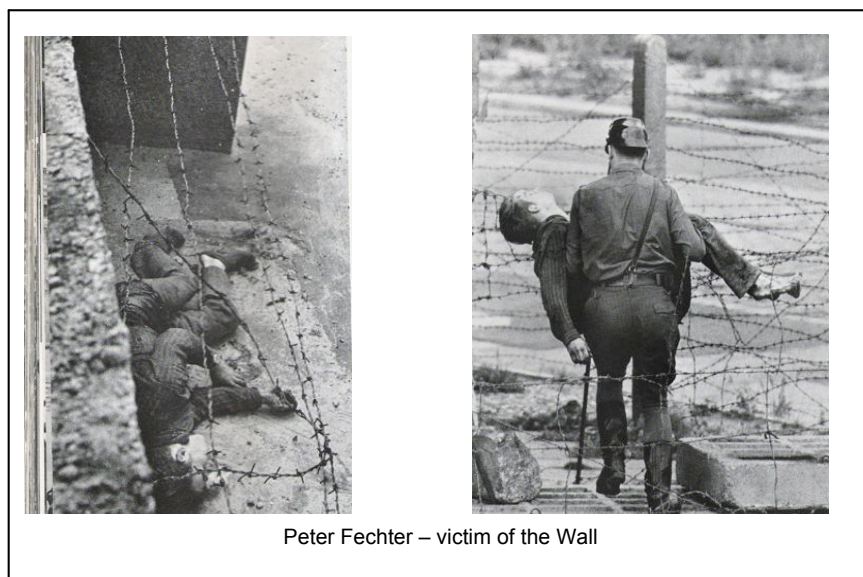
Political instability was also an issue in West Berlin. Berliners lived with the constant threat of invasion from the Russians, and this fear was fuelled by the fact that many did not believe that Western Allies would fight for the city, and some Berliners stored 30 days worth of food in their basement.

Although the residents of West Berlin were trapped in their city, in general they did not feel imprisoned. They were able to enjoy 50 square miles of parks and woodlands, which was a welcome “breathing space”. The land was organised well, to provide a space for all types of people. For example, around Grunewald Lake there were several beaches with different purposes: there were separate beaches for families, nude bathers and dogs. Everybody had their own space to avoid conflicts.

Despite the problems, West Berlin was still deemed a very attractive place to live. The city had a very relaxed atmosphere, regardless of the troubles it was encountering. This attracted many students and people of the “alternative sort”, who were looking for somewhere where they could do what they wanted and wear what they wanted without being frowned upon.

Escape Attempts⁴

There have been many weird and wonderful attempts at escaping East Germany and the communist regime. Although not the first escape attempt,



one of the most memorable and heartbreaking stories for me was of 18 year old Peter Fechter. On the 17th August 1962 he climbed over the barbed wire on the East side, and made a dash for the wall on the Western side of Death Strip. As he tried to climb over the wall, the border guards opened fire on him. He was shot and fell to the ground, unable to make the final few feet to the Western side. *“Helft mir doch”* (Help me) he cried out. West Berlin Policemen risked their lives and fire from the border guards trying to save him. Fechter lay for 50 minutes, curled up in a ball in a position of self-protection. A crowd of West Berliners watched him bleed to death and cried out *“Mörder”* (Murderer) to the border guard. I believe that this was a psychological turning point for Berliners on both sides in that his death brought home the reality that the Wall was there to stay. However there have also been numerous successful attempts and these successes were due to incredibly inventive and creative ideas. One man discovered a sports car that was so low that he could drive under the turnpike through



⁴ NB. All Photographs in this section are taken from:
Hildebrandt, R. (1992.) *It Happened At The Wall*. Berlin: Verlag Haus am Checkpoint Charlie

to West Berlin. He managed to get his fiancée and mother-in-law over to the West. Soon after this escape vertical bars were suspended from the turnpike to prevent future escapes. Many people made adjustments to cars to hide refugees for the first year until border guards were given rods to measure the dimensions of all different types of vehicles. In 1979 two families constructed a hot air balloon in which they fled East Germany. I find it incredible that, with no knowledge of aerodynamics, they were able to design a balloon to be so effective. When they finally made their escape they safely arrived 7km south of the border in West Germany (Hildebrandt, 1992). It was very interesting for me to see the gondola and instrumentation in Haus am Checkpoint Charlie.



Self-Made Hot Air Balloon

By 1989 there had been approximately 5000 successful escapes in total. Despite this, researchers from the Centre for Contemporary Historical Research (Zentrum für Zeithistorische Forschung) have confirmed that 125 people died whilst trying to escape (Corbett, 2006). However Alexandra Hildebrandt, the Director of the Mauer-Museum at Checkpoint Charlie claims that the death toll exceeded 200. In reality, nobody knows exactly how many people died at the Wall, and it is important to consider whose estimate is likely to be more accurate. In this case it is possible that Hildebrandt's estimate is more unreliable as she is very emotionally involved with the history of the Wall. Her late husband Dr. Rainer Hildebrandt, a human rights activist, set up the museum just after the building of the Wall to "show people the truth about the Wall" (Ung, 2008). The apartment was also an activist centre, where he helped those who smuggled East Germans into the West. Therefore emotion may play a major role in her estimation of the death toll. The last victim of the wall was Winfried Freudenberg, who died on May 8th 1989 trying to flee the GDR in a self-made hot air balloon, just a few months before the fall of the wall.

Die Wende - The Fall of the Wall

The 9th of November 1989 is the night the Wall began to crumble. In Germany they call it *die Wende* or the 'political turning point', as Stated in the Collins German Dictionary. Nonetheless in early 1989 the Wall appeared to be as strong as ever, and the GDR celebrated its 40th anniversary in style in October 1989. Indeed in January 1989 Eric Honecker declared that "the Wall will still be standing in 50 or 100 years time."

In May 1989 Hungary made a historic decision to open its border with Austria, enabling 30,000 East Germans to escape the Communist East; they travelled through Austria to West Germany where they automatically became West German Citizens (See Figure 6, a regional map of Europe). The Wall had been built to stop refugees getting out, and therefore it came down because it could no longer keep them in.



Figure 6: —▶ = Direction of East German Refugees

On the evening of the 9th November 1989 the government spokesman Günter Schabowski made an official announcement to relieve the strain on other countries, including Czechoslovakia and Hungary, where thousands of East Germans had taken refuge. "Today the decision was taken to make it

possible for all citizens to leave the country through the official border crossing points. All citizens can now be issued with visas for the purpose of travel or visiting relatives in the West." It had originally been planned that the regulations would take effect the following day, on the 10th November, to allow time to notify the border guards. However Schabowski was not told this, and when asked when the regulations would come into place he replied: "As far as I know this comes into force immediately, without delay."

The news was rapidly shown on German News Channels, less than one hour after the announcement. “The false information spread like wildfire and the rumour became the truth” (Bahr, 2008). Thousands of people formed crowds around major crossing points, including Checkpoint Charlie and Brandenburg Gate. An article in Die Welt, published on 13th November 1989 described how “a few hours after the announcement of the freedom to travel, people climbed up to the top of the concrete wall in front of the Brandenburg Gate, which represents both the separation of Germany as well as the desire for unity”. Initially guards still prevented East Germans from crossing the border, whilst West Berliners were stood on the other side chanting “*Tor Auf*” – “Open the Gate”. As the guards heard the radio broadcasts and could no longer hold-up against the crowds they began to allow people to cross the border. Bornholmer Straße was the first checkpoint to open, at 11:00 pm, and Checkpoint Charlie opened at midnight.

For four days and nights Berliners celebrated. Tusa (1996) expressed it as “the longest, biggest, happiest street party in history.” Crowds of people filled the streets, train stations and other public places (See Figure 7). A BBC viewer wrote on the BBC website “The



Figure 7 – No Vacancies at Möckenbrücke Station

“The feeling in the air was electric, as if some great force had been let loose.” School children stood at the crossing points handing out flowers to the East Germans; for once they were able to be a part of history, instead of reading about it.

Effects of the Fall of the Wall and Reunification

Naturally the huge influx of visitors to Berlin, who wished to be part of this momentous event, led to various problems in the city. Ramm (2001) quoted from the *Höchster Kresiblatt* Newspaper: “The onslaught of GDR tourists has created about 1000 extra metric tons of garbage. The weekend saw the dustmen working overtime, and on Monday the streets were mostly clean after huge efforts.” On what was named the “Weekend of Unbounded Freedom” by the same newspaper more than 2 million GDR tourists visited West Germany. This created problems for town councils who were responsible for paying out the Welcome Money; every East German who entered the West for the first time received 100 DM. Councils were forced to borrow money to pay for this.

However these effects are insignificant when you consider how the fall of the Wall and the resulting process of reunification have impacted on Germany. Unification did not come until October 13th 1990, almost one year after the Wall fell.

Economically, German reunification has had a huge impact on Germany. The process has cost much more money than initially predicted. On one hand the economies of East and West Germany were very similar, in that they were both based around industry. Nonetheless, forming one economy from two countries with completely different levels of economic development was difficult. Before reunification, East German companies were owned by the state; nobody was unemployed because the state created jobs in factories or other areas. However once West Germany took over the economy, they privatised the companies. Many Multinational Corporations took over the industries. This resulted in huge reductions in jobs in order to make the industries more productive and efficient. Consequently, unemployment rates in Germany have soared, even more so in the former East Germany than the West.

Before 1990 the West Germany economy was very affluent, even richer than the U.K. Today the two economies are fairly even, partly due to the West

German government having to spend huge amounts of money on the infrastructure of East Germany (See Appendix E and F). This includes making improvements to areas such as housing, communications and infrastructure, all of which were very poor in East Germany. An example I would like to use is the public transport system in Berlin. Much money was invested into changing the system in East Berlin to link it up with the system in West Berlin. Personally I feel that this process is like trying to link up the whole of Germany; difficult, expensive and time-consuming. Nevertheless it will eventually be successful.

I believe that the problems associated with the attempt to merge two very different economies mirror the problems with merging two very culturally different societies. The Wall has in fact an ongoing psychological impact. There is still what they call '*die Mauer im Kopf*' – The Wall in the Head. Burns (1999) declared "A truly unified Germany has yet to be. Germans still speak of the *Ossies* in the East and the *Wessies* in the West." East Germans consider West Germans to be arrogant and look down on the so-called *Ossies*. After the initial elation of becoming one country again, the hangover of the celebrations and parties began. Many East Germans felt like second class citizens in comparison to West Germans. Although they had more freedom than before, they were unable to take advantage because they could simply not afford it. Consequently '*Ostalgie*' was born, where former East Germans look back on the past with rose-tinted spectacles, only remembering the good things; job security, relative prosperity compared to other Communist states and social equality. *Goodbye Lenin* (2003), a film directed by Wolfgang Becker is considered to be a part of the *Ostalgie* movement; not only did it give me an insight into how different life was in East and West, it also showed me how former East Germans look fondly back at their lives before the fall of the Wall; they forget the terror of the *Stasi* (East German Secret Police), the lack of luxury goods and political corruption.

There are also doubts amongst West Germans, who have been left with the momentous task of rebuilding the East. Therefore their taxes were raised to help fund the reconstruction of East Germany, resulting in bitterness. A

statement on Wikipedia claims that in a poll carried out in September 2004, 25% of West Germans and 12% of East Germans said that they wished that East and West Germany were once again separated.

Despite the numerous problems and doubts, generally the fall of the Wall and reunification has been successful. For Maren Böhm the fall of the wall was very positive. "It gave me a lot more freedom. It is funny because beforehand I never really felt locked up but after the fall I noticed how big the political pressure was under which I had lived. I could finally think what I wanted and openly give my opinion. That is for me the biggest effect. I am still grateful for it today."

Today this scenario is similar for most Germans; as Germany has become more prosperous as a whole, the old feelings of regret and nostalgia have by and large disappeared. Of course there are exceptions to the rule, however as a generation has grown up in a unified Germany it is easier to look towards the future development of Germany rather than dwell in the past. Nevertheless, for people in their 50's it is not so easy to forget the recent history.

What Happened to the Wall?

It seems ironic that today the wall seems to be anywhere but in Berlin. In the city itself only a few stretches of the wall remain; one famous piece of the wall can be found in the centre of Potsdamer Platz (See Figure 8). The German reads: *An dieser Stelle entstand 1989 die erste Lücke in der Berliner Mauer*. Translated into English this means: On this spot in 1989 appeared the first hole in the Berlin Wall. Individuals chipped off fragments of the wall



Figure 8 – One of my own photos

with sledgehammers and chisels for personal souvenirs. These people were

called *Mauerspechte* or “wall-peckers” and thousands of them appeared on all stretches of the wall. Commercial dealers also took advantage of the situation; chunks of the wall were set in Perspex as paperweights and key rings. Even today it is possible to buy original pieces of the wall, often as accessories to



Figure 9 – The Wall in New York

post cards. Some slabs of concrete were donated to various institutions, for example a row outside the CIA headquarters. Further pieces of the wall were sold and auctioned off for prices ranging between \$8,000 and \$12,000 a piece. The company Daimler Benz a large area of land next to the Wall in Potsdamer Platz, and then redeveloped this land after the fall of the Wall. When Microsoft’s Chairman Bill Gates visited the Daimler-Benz headquarters in 1996, Klaus Mangold, member of the board of Daimler-Benz, presented a piece of the wall to Gates as a gift to help establish what the Microsoft Website describes as “a long-term partnership between the two companies.” This piece now sits inside the offices of Microsoft in Redmond, Washington, and relations between the two companies remain strong. In fact there are pieces of the wall all over the world, for example on 53rd Street in New York (See Figure 9). Nonetheless most of the wall, over 900,000 tonnes of concrete was pulverised to use for road building, each tonne of this concrete costing approximately £7.00. Most of the barbed wire, ironically, was taken to strengthen the borders between Germany, Czechoslovakia and Poland.

Conclusion

It is obvious that the Wall has dramatically affected Germany in so many different ways; however the question now is whether the outcomes have all been detrimental to the development of the country. Some would say yes; without the Wall Germany would not have spent so much money in the process of reunification, and today the country would not remain psychologically divided. However some would say no; the Wall has possibly prevented open conflict between the Eastern and Western blocs of which Germany would have been the centre. By preventing conflict, the Wall has averted further loss of life and political instability and a country already damaged by war.

I find it fascinating how bricks and mortar can represent years of fear, terror and intimidation. However now I believe that the Wall lies, for most Germans, in the past. I accept that for some “the Wall in the head” does exist, yet through the contacts I have made I have discovered that generally the past is no longer important.

Today, Berlin is a transformed city. From ruins it has been rebuilt and renovated into a modern, diverse and vibrant city. Potsdamer Platz is a prime example of this transformation (See Photos below). I am already looking forward to any future visits I may make, especially with the knowledge I have developed through my work on this essay.



Potsdamer Platz in 1961



Potsdamer Platz February 2008

Bibliography

Airlie, M. ed., (2005.) Collins German Dictionary, Sixth Edition, New York: HarperCollins Publishers, p2014

Anon. (n.d) 'BBC – On This Day, 1989: The night The Wall Came Down.'
Available at: http://news.bbc.co.uk/onthisday/hi/witness/november/9/newsid_3241000/3241641.stm
[online] (accessed 27/02/08)

Anon. (2008.) 'Berlin Wall.'
Available at: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Berlin_Wall [online] (accessed 27/02/08)

Anon. (2008.) 'The Berlin Blockade'
http://www.coldwar.org/articles/40s/berlin_blockade.asp [online] (accessed 8/07/08)

Anon. (2008.) 'Bertolt Brecht'
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bertolt_Brecht [online] (accessed on 5/07/08)

Anon. (2002.) 'Bertolt Brecht (1898-1956)'
<http://www.kirjasto.sci.fi/brecht.htm> [online] (accessed on 5/07/08)

Anon. (2008.) 'Geography Dictionary – Communism.'
<http://www.answers.com/topic/communism> [online] (accessed 11/07/08)

Anon. (2006.) 'Ministry for National Defence'
Available at: <http://www.economy-point.org/m/ministry-for-national-defense.html> [online] (accessed 8/07/08)

Anon. (2008.) 'Political Dictionary – Communism.'
<http://www.answers.com/topic/communism> [online] (accessed 11/07/08)

Anon. (2008.) 'Story & Images: Microsoft's Section of the Berlin Wall.'
Available at: <http://www.microsoft.com/mscorp/artcollection/exhibitions/august/story.htm> [online]
(accessed 5/06/08)

Anon. (2008.) '60 Jahre Luftbrücke – Die Fakten'
Available at: <http://www.hr-online.de/website/specials/luftbruecke/index.jsp?rubrik=36322&startrubrik=36318> [online] (accessed 25/05/08)

Bahr, C. (2008.) Divided City: The Berlin Wall, Berlin: Jaron Verlag,

Goodbye Lenin, 2003. [DVD] Directed by Wolfgang Becker, Germany: Sony Pictures Classics

Blanning, T.C.W (ed.) (2001.) The Oxford Illustrated History of Modern Europe, New York: Oxford University Press

Böhm, M. 2008. *Interview on Life in East Berlin* [E-Mail] (Personal Communication 08/03/2008)

Bowie, D. (1977.) 'Heroes'
Available at: www.lyricsdepot.com/david-bowie/heroes.html [online] (accessed 8/07/08)

Burns, C. (1999.) 'What The Berlin Wall Still Stands For.'
Available at: <http://www.cnn.com/SPECIALS/views/y/1999/11/burns.wall.nov8/> [online] (accessed 5/06/08)

Churchill, W. (1946.) 'Iron Curtain Speech 1946.'
Available at: <http://www.nationalcenter.org/ChurchillIronCurtain.html> [online] (accessed 8/04/08)

Clough, P. (1981.) East Germany hails the Berlin Wall. *The Times*, 14/08/1981, p5

Corbett, D. (2006.) 'Researchers Confirm 125 Berlin Wall Deaths'
Available at: <http://www.dw-world.de/dw/article/0,2144,2125882,00.html> [online] (accessed 6/07/08)

The Lives of Others, 2007. [DVD] Directed by Florian Henckel von Donnersmarck, Germany: Sony Pictures Classics

Edwina, E. (1987.) Germany Between East and West, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press

Federal Statistical Office (1950-2006.) 'Debt of the Overall Budget of Germany'

Available at:

<http://www.destatis.de/jetspeed/portal/cms/Sites/destatis/Internet/EN/Content/Statistics/TimeSeries/LongTermSeries/FinanceTaxes/Content100/lrfin03a,templateId=renderPrint.psm!> [online] (accessed 19/03/08)

Federal Statistical Office (1970-2007.) 'Domestic Product'

Available at:

<http://www.destatis.de/jetspeed/portal/cms/Sites/destatis/Internet/EN/Content/Statistics/TimeSeries/LongTermSeries/NationalAccounts/Content100/lrvgr02a,templateId=renderPrint.psm!>

Fry, P.S. (1994.) The Dorling Kindersley History of the World. London: Dorling Kindersley Limited

Fulbrook, M. (1990.) A Concise History of Germany, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press

Goodman, M. (2007.) 'Nuclear Super Spy.' BBC History Magazine. Vol 8, no 2, p38-42

Hildebrandt, R. (1992.) It Happened At The Wall. Berlin: Verlag Haus am Checkpoint Charlie

Lloyd, M. (n.d.) 'Heroes by David Bowie'

Available: www.songfacts.com/detail.php?id=1629 [online] (accessed 8/07/08)

McLynn, F (2008.) 'Mysterious Deaths.' BBC History Magazine. Vol 9, no 5, p. 45-48

Mohan, P. & Kearney, K. (n.d) Berlin Airlift Historical Foundation – What Was the Berlin Airlift.'

Available at: <http://www.spiritoffreedom.org> [online] (accessed 31/05/08)

Montfiore, S. (2007.) 'Stalin: Creating the Monster.' BBC History Magazine. Vol 8, no 5, p. 32-33

Montfiore, S. (2006.) 'Stalin's Two Faces.' BBC History Magazine. Vol 7, no 2. p. 14-18

Plunkett, S. (1999.) 'The Wall: Where is it Now?'

Available at: <http://www.time.com/time/daily/special/photo/berlin2/2.html> [online] (accessed 5/06/08)

Ramos, A. (1989) 'The Origins and Politics of the Berlin Wall'

Available at: <http://www.andreas.com/berlin-more.html> [online] (accessed 1/09/08)

Ramm, F. (2001.) 'Höchster Kresiblatt Newspaper - Inter-German Garbage Heaps'

Available at: <http://www.remote.org/frederik/culture/berlin/hk-14-11-03-03.html> [online] (accessed 30/08/08)

Ramm, F. (2001.) 'Höchster Kresiblatt Newspaper – Weekend of Unbound Freedom'

Available at: <http://www.remote.org/frederik/culture/berlin/hk-13-11-01-01.html> [online] (accessed 30/08/08)

Reynolds, D (2008.) '1972 Arms Summit.' BBC History Magazine. Vol 9, no 2, p. 30-31

Sesta, E. (2001.) Der Tunnel in die Freiheit, Munich: Ullstein Verlag

Fünf Wochen im Herbst (1989.) [Television Program] Germany: Spiegel TV

Taylor, F. (2006.) The Berlin Wall, London: Bloomsbury Publishing

Tusa, A. (1996.) The Last Division: Berlin and the Wall, London: Hodder & Stoughton, p31

Ung, E. (2006.) 'The East-West Divide Becomes Human at Checkpoint Charlie'

Available at: <http://www.deutsche-welle.de/dw/article/0,2144,2124436,00.html> [online] (accessed 31/08/08)

Vesilind, P. (1982). 'Two Berlins – A Generation Apart.' National Geographic. Vol.161, No. 1, p2-51

Wirth, A. & Pawassar, F. (1989.) Police from East and West protect Wall at Brandenburg Gate. *Die Welt*, 13/11/1989, p. 5

Image Bibliography

Anon. (2007.) 'Image: Berlin in Germany' [Map]

Available at: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Image:Berlin_in_Germany_and_EU.png [online] (accessed 26/03/08)

Anon. (1961.) 'Berlin – Potsdamer Platz' [Photograph]

Available at: http://www.berliner-verkehrsseiten.de/bus/Linien/E-Grenz/hauptteil_e-grenz.html [online] (accessed 29/09/08)

Cowin, A. (n.d.) 'Berlin Philharmonic Concert Hall' [Photograph]

Available at: <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/62055/Berlin/21649/Cultural-life#>

Field, M. (1990.) 'Trabants & Wartburgs in East Berlin: Any Colour You like As Long as It's Pastel' [Photograph]

Available at: <http://flickr.com/photos/16761280@N00/104273219> [online] (accessed 8/09/08)

Lewis, J. (2005.) 'A Regional Map of Europe' [Map]

Available at: <http://fs.huntingdon.edu/~jlewis/Syl/IRcomp/MapsEurope.htm> [online] (accessed 29/09/08)

Plunkett, S. (1999.) 'The Wall: Where is it Now? – New York City'

Available at: <http://www.time.com/time/daily/special/photo/berlin2/2.html> [online] (accessed 5/06/08)

Ramm, F. (1989.) 'No vacancies on the subway at Möckernbrücke station (III)' [Photograph]

Available at: <http://www.remote.org/frederik/culture/berlin/7278-3201-0483-img0011-3.jpg> [online] (accessed 19/06/08)

Woodward, O. (2008.) 'Berlin Wall in 1961' [Map]

Available at: <http://orinwoodward.blogharbor.com/blog/History> [online] (accessed 26/03/08)

NB. Figures 1 and 8, and the image of Potsdamer Platz today are my own photos.

Presentation Bibliography

- Anon. (2004.) 'Allied Sectors in Berlin' [Map]
<http://www.western-allies-berlin.com/maps/sectors/sectors> [online] (accessed 18/09/08)
- Anon. (1961.) 'August 15, 1961 at the Brandenburg Gate' [Photograph]
http://www.dhm.de/gifs/sammlungen/bildarchiv/IV/schirner/348_8.jpg [online] (accessed 22/09/08)
- Anon (1989.) 'Brandenburg Gate' [Photograph]
http://www.pohl-projekt.de/G_M_D/G_MD021b.jpg [online] (accessed 24/09/08)
- Anon (1961.) 'Building the Wall' [Photograph]
<http://www.cs.utah.edu/~hatch/images/europe/berlin.buildwall.jpg> [online] (accessed 28/09/08)
- Anon. (1977.) 'David Bowie "Heroes"' [Album Cover]
Available at: <http://i266.photobucket.com/albums/ii265/zimmer911/DavidBowie-Heroes.jpg>
[online] (accessed 1/10/08)
- Anon. (1963.) 'East Berlin Near Checkpoint Charlie' [Photograph]
Available at: <http://www.flickr.com/photos/24736216@N07/2506877022/> [Online] (accessed 13/10/08)
- Anon. (2006.) 'Large Map of East and West Germany' [Map]
Available at: <http://www.maps-of-germany.co.uk/large-map-of-east-west-Germany.htm>
[online] (accessed 10/09/08)
- Anon. (1989.) 'The Fall of the Berlin Wall' [Photograph]
<http://www.freedomagenda.com/> [online] (accessed 24/09/08)
- Boone, M. (1989.) 'East Germany / West Berlin Border from the Air' [Photograph]
Available at: <http://boonedocks.net/travel/germany/index.html> [online] (accessed 1/10/08)
- Frederiksen, O. J. (1953.) 'Occupied Areas of Germany' [Map]
<http://www.3ad.com/history/cold.war/sectors.1945.1.htm> [online] (accessed 18/09/08)
- Gaps, J. (1989.) 'The power of a single sledgehammer' [Photograph]
http://www.opendemocracy.net/arts/berlinwall_3005.jsp [online] (accessed 24/09/08)
- Niedlich, S. (n.d) 'Alexanderplatz' [Photograph]
<http://flickr.com/photos/42311564@N00/163335543> [online] (accessed 28/09/08)
- Perkin, C. (n.d.) 'An old East German Trabant' [Photograph]
http://lh3.ggpht.com/_HrIVmoHqNCo/Rxr5CYIfyTI/AAAAAAAAAD8/mrSGgkPJ_GI/_0015088.JPG [online] (accessed 28/09/08)
- Ramm, F (1989.) 'A piece of the Wall is being offered through a hole in the wall' [Photograph]
<http://www.remote.org/frederik/culture/berlin/7314-3252-4641-img0013-3.jpg> [online]
(accessed 24/09/08)
- Ramm, F. (1989.) 'The Wall is Open' [Photograph]
<http://www.remote.org/frederik/culture/berlin/7314-3252-4641-img0020-3.jpg> [online]
(accessed 24/09/08)
- Wiegmann, A. (2007.) 'Trabant is German Cult Object' [Photograph]
Available at: <http://www.abc.net.au/news/stories/2007/11/06/2082645.htm> [online] (accessed 02/10/08)