



EDUCATION

The End of the Cold War: Berlin



FROM THE
ARCHIVES

GRADES
8-12



EDUCATION

From the Archives brings primary source documents and exploration into the classroom. These educational resources, carefully curated by our Education team, are meant to enhance historical discussions around relevant topics of today in history, civics, geography, and economics.

Overview: What was anticipated to be a throw-away speech of very little importance ended up turning into one of the most iconic moments of the late 20th Century. Most people are unaware of the amount of back and forth over the text of the speech that went on between the speechwriters, the State Department, the National Security Advisor's office, and the President himself. Up until the last minute, people were still trying to change the words of the speech and in particular, President Reagan's call to "tear down this wall". In the end, President Reagan went with his gut and ended up making one of the most memorable speeches of his career.

Suggested Classroom Activities: These documents would work well as part of a combined English Language Arts/History lesson. Have students read at the suggested changes from the National Security Council, the story behind the writing of the speech from its primary writer, and the final draft. From these documents, have students discuss in small groups or as a class, the process of writing a good speech and other considerations that need to be considered in addition to grammar and usage.

Next, have students watch the video of the speech so that they can compare the speech as it is written to how President Reagan delivered the speech. What did he seem to emphasize? Were any parts more powerful spoken than in the text? Were any parts less powerful than you expected? Video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5MDFX-dNtsM>

Notes on Items:

Primary Source A: Draft speech mark-up after a meeting of the National Security Council. Some questions to consider discussing with students are:

1. What comments do you find to be most interesting?
2. Are there any comments that you are not sure why they were made?
3. Are you surprised by the process of editing a presidential speech? Why or why not?

Prologue Article: The document is an excerpt from the book *How Ronald Reagan Changed My Life*, by Peter Robinson who was one of President Reagan's speechwriters and was the primary speechwriter for the Berlin speech. This excerpt was published in *Prologue* magazine, which is published by the National Archives Administration. Some questions to use with students are:

1. What did you find most interesting about the article?
2. Was there any argument for not using the 'tear down this wall' line that you found compelling?

Text of Speech: The official transcript of the speech as it was given by President Reagan. This document can be used in concert with the video to highlight the differences between the text of a speech and how it is delivered.

Previous Page: President Reagan giving his speech at the Berlin Wall, Brandenburg Gate, Federal Republic of Germany. 6/12/87.

(Robinson)
 May 29, 1987
 6:30 p.m.

*NSC
 changes
 6/1/87*

PRESIDENTIAL ADDRESS: BRANDENBURG GATE
~~WEST~~ BERLIN, GERMANY
 FRIDAY, JUNE 12, 1987

President von Weizsacker,
 Chancellor Kohl, Governing Mayor Diepgen, ladies and
 gentlemen:

Twenty-four years ago, President John F. Kennedy visited Berlin, speaking to the people of this city and the world at the City Hall. Since then, two other Presidents have come, each in his turn, to Berlin. Today I myself make my second visit to your city.

*Some
 mention
 of
 Berlin's
 750th
 anniversary?*

We come to Berlin, we American Presidents, because it is our duty to speak, in this place, of freedom. But I must confess, we are drawn here by other things as well: By the feeling of history in this city, more than 500 years older than our own Nation. By the sense of energy in your streets. By the beauty of the Grunewald and the Tiergarten. Most of all, by your courage and friendship.

Perhaps the composer Paul Lincke understood something about American Presidents. You see, like so many Presidents before me, I come here today because wherever I go, whatever I do:

"Ich hab noch einen koffer in Berlin." ["I still have a suitcase in Berlin" -- words from a much-loved song.]

*Are we
 sure of
 this?*

Our gathering today is being broadcast throughout Western Europe and North America. I understand that it is being seen and heard as well in the East -- that Berlin television can be seen as far to the southeast as Leipzig, as far to the northeast as Gdansk; that Berlin radio can be picked up as far due east as Moscow.

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To those listening throughout Eastern Europe, I extend my warmest greetings and the goodwill of the American people. To those listening in East Berlin, a special word. [Although I cannot be with you,] I address my remarks to you just as surely as to those standing here before me. For I join you as I join your fellow countrymen in the West in this firm ^{insistence:} ~~this unalterable~~

~~belief~~ Es gibt nur ein Berlin. [There is only one Berlin.]

Behind me stands a wall that divides ^{this city. To the west, there is another wall} the entire continent of ^{that} Europe. From the Baltic south it cuts across Germany in one continuous gash of concrete, barbed wire, guard towers, dog runs, and gun emplacements. Farther south, there may be no visible, no obvious wall. But there remain ^{a heavily} ~~guards~~ ^{border} and checkpoints all the same -- ^{which} ~~still a restriction on~~ the right to travel, ^{AND} ~~still an instrument to~~ impose upon ordinary men and women the will of a totalitarian state.

Yet it is here in Berlin where the wall emerges most clearly; here, cutting across your city, where the newsphoto and the television screen have imprinted this brutal division of a continent upon the mind of the world. Standing before the Brandenburg Gate, any man is a German, separated from his fellow men. Any man is a Berliner, forced to look upon a scar.

President von Weizsaecker has said: The German question is open as long as the Brandenburg Gate is closed. Today I say: As long as this gate is closed, as long as this scar of a wall is permitted to stand, it is not the German question alone that remains open, but the question of freedom for all mankind.

Not
"belief" but
insistence
Geography
is
wrong.

Page 3

Yet I do not come here to lament. For I find in Berlin a message of hope -- even, in the shadow of this wall, a message of triumph.

In this season of spring in 1945, the people of Berlin emerged from their air-raid shelters to find devastation. Thousands of miles away, the people of the United States reached out to help. In announcing the Marshall Plan, Secretary of State George Marshall stated precisely 40 years ago this week: "Our policy is directed not against any country or doctrine, but against hunger, poverty, desperation, and chaos."

In the Reichstag a few moments ago, I saw a display commemorating this 40th anniversary of the Marshall Plan. I was struck by the sign on a burnt-out, gutted structure that was being rebuilt. I understand that Berliners of my own generation can remember seeing signs like it dotted throughout the Western sectors of the city. The sign read simply: "The Marshall Plan at work. For the building of a Free World."

"[T]he building of a Free World" -- in the West, that building took place. ~~[Japan rose from ruin to become an economic giant. Italy, France, Belgium]~~ Virtually every nation in Western Europe saw political and economic rebirth. ~~(The European Community was founded.)~~

In West Germany and here in Berlin, there took place an economic miracle, the "Wirtschaftswunder." Adenauer, Erhard, Reuter, and other leaders understood the practical importance of liberty -- that just as truth can flourish only when the journalist is given freedom of speech, so prosperity can come

Could trim.

(Still not a good idea to list only a few)

Not just leaders but individuals (per democracy theme)

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about only when the farmer and businessman enjoy economic freedom. The German leaders reduced tariffs, expanded free trade, lowered taxes. From 1950 to 1960 alone, the standard of living in West Germany and Berlin more than doubled.

Where four decades ago there was rubble, today in West Berlin there is the greatest industrial output of any city in Germany; busy office blocks; fine homes and apartments; proud avenues and the spreading [lawns of] parkland. Where a city's culture seemed to have been destroyed, today there are two great universities, orchestras and an opera, countless theaters and museums. Where there was want, today there is abundance [- food, clothing, automobiles; the wonderful goods of the Ku'damm; even home computers].

From devastation -- from utter ruin -- you Berliners have in freedom rebuilt a city that once again ranks as one of the greatest on Earth. The Soviets may have had other plans. [But, my friends, there was one thing the Soviets didn't count on: Berliner schnauze. Ja, Berliner schnauze -- und Berliner herz. ["Berliner schnauze" is a well-known phrase meaning courage mixed with good humor, "chutzpah." "Und mit herz" means "and with heart."]]

Cut

(In the 1960's, Khrushchev predicted: "We will bury you." But in the West today, we see a free world that has achieved a level of prosperity and well-being unprecedented in all human history. In the Communist world, we see failure. Technological backwardness. Declining standards of health. Even want of the most basic kind -- too little food. The Soviet Union still

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cannot feed itself. East Germany has made strides, but at harvest time the news announcers still speak, to use the well-known phrase, of "the battle to bring in the crops."

After these four decades, then, there stands before the entire world one great and inescapable conclusion: ~~Freedom leads to prosperity.~~ Freedom replaces the ancient hatreds ~~between~~ ^{among} the nations with comity, ~~and~~ peace, and well-being.

Freiheit -- Freiheit ist der Sieger. [Freedom is the victor.]

Now the Soviets themselves may at last, ^{in their own way,} be coming to understand the importance of freedom. We hear much from Moscow about a new policy of ^{reform and} openness, ~~to use the Russian term,~~ ~~"glasnost."~~ Some political prisoners have been released.

^{Some} ~~Certainly~~ foreign news broadcasts are no longer being jammed. Some economic enterprises have been permitted to operate with greater ^{autonomy.} ~~freedom from state control.~~

Are these the beginnings of profound changes in the Soviet state? Or are they token gestures, intended ^{to raise false hopes} in the West, ~~and~~ ^{or} to strengthen the Soviet system without changing it? We welcome ^{real} change and ^{real} openness. For we believe freedom and security go together -- that the advance of human liberty can only strengthen the cause of world peace. There is one sign the Soviets can make that would be unmistakable, that would advance dramatically the cause of freedom and peace.

General Secretary Gorbachev, if you seek peace -- if you seek prosperity for the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe -- if you seek liberalization: Come here, to this gate.

Don't lead with material prosperity.

Don't give them too much credit

This is not glasnost but perestroika

Should be "or."
(Two different things)

Page 6

Herr Gorbachev, machen Sie dieses Tor auf. [Mr. Gorbachev, open this gate.]

Mr. Gorbachev, tear down this wall.

And I pledge to you my country's efforts to help overcome these borders. ^{From p. 7}
~~While we watch and wait, we~~ in the West must resist Soviet

This transition para. is wrong. Should not legitimize idea that our goodwill is the missing ingredient or that it's tested by arms control.

expansion. So we must maintain defenses of unassailable strength. Yet ~~it is our nature as free peoples to make manifest our goodwill~~ ^{we seek peace, and} so we must strive to reduce arms on both sides.

Beginning 10 years ago, the Soviets challenged the Western Alliance with a grave new threat: ~~(the deployment of)~~ ^{new and more deadly} hundreds of ~~SS-20~~ ^{-- the triple-warhead SS-20 --} nuclear missiles, capable of striking every capital in Europe.

Soviet INF were there before. Need to clarify what was new (more deadly SS-20). Similarly, for policy reasons it's essential to limit the "elimination" point to INF, not other nukes

The Western Alliance responded by committing itself to a counter-deployment unless the Soviets agreed to negotiate a better solution -- namely, the elimination of ~~these~~ ^{such} weapons on both sides. For many months, the Soviets refused to bargain in earnestness. As the Alliance in turn prepared to go forward with its counter-deployment, there were difficult days -- days of protests like those during my 1982 visit to this city -- and the Soviets actually walked away from the table.

But through it all, the Alliance held firm. And I invite those who protested then -- I invite those who protest today -- to mark this fact: Because we remained ~~strong~~ ^{firm}, the Soviets came back to the table. Because we remained strong, today we ~~are~~ ^{have} ~~engaged in talks that hold out~~ ^{within reach} the possibility, not merely of limiting the growth of arms, but of eliminating, for the first time, an entire class of nuclear weapons from the face of the Earth.

Can do better

Putting this here is Page 7
 Missing the point:
 This covers both arms control + freedom issues
 To p. 6

(Only if you have previously specified INF)

I understand the fear of war and the pain of division that afflict this continent. As I speak, NATO ministers are meeting in Iceland to review the progress of our proposals for the complete elimination of intermediate-range nuclear forces (that I mentioned) At the talks in Geneva, we have ^{also} proposed deep cuts in strategic forces. And the Western Allies have [likewise] made far-reaching proposals to reduce the danger of conventional war, and to place a total ban on chemical weapons.

While we pursue these arms reductions, I pledge to you that we will maintain the capacity to deter Soviet aggression at any level at which it might occur. And in cooperation with many of our Allies, the United States is pursuing a Strategic Defense Initiative -- research that ^{seeks to} ~~(will)~~ base deterrence not on the threat of offensive retaliation, but on defenses that truly defend; on systems, in short, that will protect ^{human} lives ~~not by~~ targeting ~~(populations but by shielding)~~ them.

Essential for accuracy: Only if RSD proves it feasible

~~By these means we seek to make Europe -- and the world -- safer. Yes, our defenses are crucial -- but only the means to~~
 But we must remember a crucial fact: East and West do not mistrust ~~something far greater. the life of freedom. Perhaps when~~ each other because we are armed; we are armed because we mistrust each other. And our basic differences are not about weapons but about ~~freedom that was encircled, Berlin that was under siege. No~~ freedom. ~~longer~~ Despite all the pressures upon this city, Berlin stands as a shining example of that freedom. ~~secure in its liberty~~ And today freedom itself is transforming the globe.

Wrong point: Denial of freedom is the real source of tension. (Also, Berlin was not under siege in 1963 -- except in sense in which it's still under siege now)

In the Philippines; in South and Central America, democracy has been given a rebirth. Throughout the Pacific, free markets are working miracle after miracle of economic growth. In the industrialized nations, a technological revolution is taking

Page 8

place -- a revolution marked by rapid, dramatic advances in computers and telecommunications.

Could drop

[In Europe, only one nation and those it controls refuse to join the community of freedom. Yet in this age of redoubled economic growth, of information and innovation, the Soviet Union ^{itself} faces a choice. It must make fundamental changes. Or it will become obsolete.]

^{Thus,} ~~(In this respect)~~ today ^{is} ~~represents~~ a moment of hope. We in the West stand ready to cooperate with the East to promote true openness -- to break down the barriers that separate people, to create a safer, freer world. And surely there is no better place than Berlin, the meetingplace of East and West, to make a start.

Need to call attention to fact he is about to announce a new initiative!

Free people of Berlin: Today, as in the past, the United States stands for the strict observance and full implementation of all parts of the Four-Power Agreement of 1971. ~~Let us use this occasion, the 750th anniversary of this city, to usher in a new era -- look forward as well to new achievements, new initiatives to~~

~~to seek~~ ^{building} a still fuller, richer life for the Berlin of the future. Together, let us ^{maintain and} ~~strive to~~ develop the ties between the Federal Republic and the Western sectors of Berlin, ^{which is permitted by the 1971 Agreement. And I invite} ~~within~~

^{Mr. Gorbachev:} ~~Berlin itself~~ ^{Eastern and Western} Let us work to bring the ~~two~~ parts of the city closer together, ~~and yes, let us challenge the Soviets to join~~

("maintain + develop" are key code words from 1971 accord)

~~us~~ so that all the inhabitants of all Berlin can enjoy the benefits that ^{should come} ~~go~~ with life in one of the great cities of the world.

(Not two parts but four)

With our French and British partners, the United States is prepared to sponsor international meetings in Berlin. It would be only fitting for Berlin to serve as the site of ^{United Nations meetings, or} ~~world~~

This is part of our initiative

Page 9

Why limit it to human rights + arms control?? Or East-West issues?

conferences on human rights, ~~and~~ arms control, ~~or other issues or areas~~ ~~areas that call~~ ^{of international} cooperation ~~between East and West~~ # There is no better way to establish hope for the future than to enlighten young minds, and we would be honored to sponsor summer youth exchanges, cultural events, and other programs for young Berliners from the East. Our French and British friends, I am certain, will do the same.

~~and~~ It is my hope that an authority can be found in East Berlin to sponsor visits from young people of the Western sectors.

Centerpiece of the initiative is air access, not sports.

~~To~~ ^{And finally, to} open Berlin still further to all Europe, East and West, let us expand the vital air access to this city, ^{let us find} ~~finding~~ ways of making commercial air service to Berlin through the established corridors ^{more convenient,} ~~safer,~~ more comfortable, and more economical. We look to the day when West Berlin can become one of the chief aviation hubs in all Central Europe.

~~One final proposal -- one close to my heart~~ Sport represents a source of enjoyment and ennoblement, and you may have noted that the Republic of Korea -- South Korea -- has offered to permit certain events of the 1988 Olympics to take place in the North. International sports competitions of all kinds could take place in both parts of this city. And what ~~better way to show goodwill toward the East -- what~~ better way to demonstrate to the world the openness of this city -- than to offer in some future year to hold the Olympic Games here in Berlin, East and West?

No! Our goodwill is not the issue.

INSERT

In these four decades, as I have said, you Berliners have rebuilt a great city. You have done so in spite of threats: The Soviet attempts to impose the East-mark. The blockade. Today

June 1, 1987

Insert p. 9

Let's not just talk about change, Mr. Gorbachev. Let's make it a reality right here in Berlin.

Twenty-six years after the building of the Wall, it's time for that Wall to come down.

Twelve years after the Helsinki accords, it's time to remove all the barriers to the free movement of people, information, and ideas across the continent of Europe.

Forty-two years after the end of the War, it's time to stop treating Germans -- or any other peoples of Central Europe -- like prisoners in their own land.

So, Mr. Gorbachev, let us address the real sources of tension in Europe. Arms reduction is important to all of us, but the weapons are the symptom of the security problem in Europe, not its cause. The real issue is the denial of peoples' right to choose their own government -- the artificial, unnecessary, unnatural, and inhuman division of Europe, imposed and maintained by the Soviet Union.

* * *

Page 10

the city thrives in spite of the challenges implicit in the very presence of this wall.

What keeps you here?

[What persuades you to stay when you could so easily depart?]

Certainly there is a great deal to be said for your fortitude, for your defiant courage. [But I believe that there is something deeper. Something that involves Berlin's whole look and feel and way of life. Not mere sentiment -- no one could live long in Berlin without being completely disabused of illusions. [Something instead that sees the difficulties of life in Berlin but chooses to accept them. That stubbornly refuses to abandon this good and proud city to a surrounding presence that is merely brutish.] Something that speaks with a powerful voice of affirmation -- that says yes to this city, yes to the future, yes to freedom. In a word, I would submit that what keeps you in Berlin is love -- love both profound and abiding.]

Perhaps this gets to the root of the matter, to the most fundamental distinction of all between East and West. The totalitarian world does not produce low living standards and backwardness because of some technical shortcoming in its economic arrangements. It produces backwardness because it does such violence to the spirit, thwarting the human impulse to create, to enjoy, to worship.

The totalitarian world finds even symbols of love an affront. During the War, the sculpture atop the Brandenburg Gate was taken down for safekeeping and stored here, in the Western sectors of the city. In 19__, the West turned the sculpture over

Alternative ending attached: a more positive theme

SEE
INSERT

It's the
most
subsidized
city in
W. Eur!
And no
draft!

This is
all
rather
negative
in its
implication

June 1, 1987

Insert p. 10

This city through these past forty years has become unique. It has seen the French, the British, the Americans and the Germans working together as nowhere else. It has seen the image of a European and Atlantic community emerge that can be a vision for the West's future. This is an international city unlike any other place on earth, that demonstrates what determination and partnership can build.

Berliners have also helped shape a bridge between the West and their neighbors to the East. This bridge brings milk and meat and coal to West Berlin. It sends television pictures and tourists and modern know-how to the East. The bridge needs enlarging and expanding and what better place to carry this work out for the entire Western world than here in Berlin.

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to the East in a gesture of goodwill, and soon the sculpture was once again looking out upon "Unter den Linden" [the main avenue in East Berlin]. But something was different. The cross -- the cross the figure had borne aloft for nearly 150 years -- that cross was gone. In its place was a Communist wreath.

Are
you
sure?

— years later, authorities in the East erected what is now the tallest structure in the city, the television tower above Alexanderplatz. I understand that virtually ever since, the authorities have been working to correct what they view as the tower's one major flaw, treating the glass dome at the top with paints and chemicals of every kind. Yet even today when the sun strikes that dome -- that dome that towers over all Berlin -- the light makes the sign of the cross.

Please
check

As I looked out a moment ago from the Reichstag -- that embodiment of German unity -- I noticed words crudely spray-painted upon the wall -- perhaps by a young Berliner -- words that answer the German question. "This wall will fall. Beliefs become reality."

True?

Yes, across Europe, this wall will fall. For it cannot withstand faith. It cannot withstand truth.

Die Mauer kann Freiheit nicht zuruckhalten. [The wall cannot withstand freedom.]

Thank you. God bless you all.



The Berlin Wall, Brandenburg Gate, Federal Republic of Germany, 6/12/87.

"Tear Down This Wall"

How Top Advisers Opposed Reagan's Challenge to Gorbachev—But Lost

By Peter Robinson

Behind me stands a wall that encircles the free sectors of this city, part of a vast system of barriers that divides the entire continent of Europe. . . . Standing before the Brandenburg Gate, every man is a German, separated from his fellow men. Every man is a Berliner, forced to look upon a scar. . . . As long as this gate is closed, as long as this scar of a wall is permitted to stand, it is not the German question alone that remains open, but the question of freedom for all mankind. . . .

General Secretary Gorbachev, if you seek peace, if you seek prosperity for the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe, if you seek liberalization, come here to this gate.

Mr. Gorbachev, open this gate!

Mr. Gorbachev, tear down this wall!

—Ronald Reagan, address at the Brandenburg Gate, June 12, 1987

In April 1987, when I was assigned to write the speech, the celebrations for the 750th anniversary of the founding of Berlin were already under way. Queen Elizabeth had already visited the city. Mikhail Gorbachev was due in a matter of days.

Although the President hadn't been planning to visit Berlin himself, he was going to be in Europe in early June, first visiting Rome, then spending several days in Venice for an economic summit. At the request of the West German government, his schedule was adjusted to permit him to stop in Berlin for a few hours on his way back to the United States from Italy.

I was told only that the President would be speaking at the Berlin Wall, that he was likely to draw an audience of about 10,000, and that, given the setting, he probably ought to talk about foreign policy.

Later that month I spent a day and a half in Berlin with the White House advance team—the logistical experts, Secret Service agents, and press officials who went to the site of every presidential visit to make arrangements. All that I had to do in Berlin was find material. When I met the ranking American diplomat in Berlin, I assumed he would give me some.

A stocky man with thick glasses, the diplomat projected an anxious, distracted air throughout our conversation, as if the very prospect of a visit from Ronald Reagan made him nervous. The diplomat gave me quite specific instructions. Almost all of it was in the negative. He was full of ideas about what the President *shouldn't* say. The most left-leaning of all West Germans, the diplomat informed me, West Berliners were intellectually and politically sophisticated. The President would therefore have to watch himself. No chest-thumping. No Soviet-bashing. And no inflammatory statements about the Berlin Wall. West Berliners, the diplomat explained, had long ago gotten used to the structure that encircled them.

After I left the diplomat, several members of the advance team and I were given a flight over the city in a U.S. Army helicopter. Although all that remains of the wall these days are paving stones that show where it stood, in 1987 the structure dominated Berlin. Erected in 1961 to stanch the flow of East Germans seeking to escape the Communist system by fleeing to West Berlin, the wall, a dozen feet tall, completely encircled West Berlin. From the air, the wall seemed to separate two different modes of existence.

On one side of the wall lay movement, color, modern architecture, crowded sidewalks, traffic. On the other lay a kind of void. Buildings still exhibited pockmarks from shelling during the war. Cars appeared few and decrepit, pedestrians badly dressed. When he hovered over Spandau Prison, the rambling brick structure in

which Rudolf Hess was still being detained, soldiers at East German guard posts beyond the prison stared up at us through binoculars, rifles over their shoulders. The wall itself, which from West Berlin had seemed a simple concrete structure, was revealed from the air as an intricate complex, the East Berlin side lined with guard posts, dog runs, and row upon row of barbed wire. The pilot drew our attention to pits of raked gravel. If an East German guard ever let anybody slip past him to escape to West Berlin, the pilot told us, the guard would find himself forced to explain the footprints to his commanding officer.

That evening, I broke away from the advance team to join a dozen Berliners for dinner. Our hosts were Dieter and Ingeborg Elz, who had retired to Berlin after Dieter completed his career at the World Bank in Washington, D.C. Although we had never met, we had friends in common, and the Elzes had offered to put on this dinner party to give me a feel for their city. They had invited Berliners of different walks of life and political outlooks—businessmen, academics, students, homemakers.

We chatted for a while about the weather, German wine, and the cost of housing in Berlin. Then I related what the diplomat told me, explaining that after my flight over the city that afternoon I found it difficult to believe. "Is it true?" I asked. "Have you gotten used to the wall?"

The Elzes and their guests glanced at each other uneasily. I thought I had proven myself just the sort of brash, tactless American the diplomat was afraid the President might seem. Then one man raised an arm and pointed. "My sister lives twenty miles in that direction," he said. "I haven't seen her in more than two decades. Do you think I can get used to that?" Another man spoke. Each morning on his way to work, he explained, he walked past a guard tower. Each morning, a soldier gazed down at him through binoculars. "That soldier and I speak the same language. We share the same history. But one of us is a zookeeper and the other is an animal, and I am never certain which is which."

Our hostess broke in. A gracious woman, she had suddenly grown angry. Her face was red. She made a fist with one hand and pounded it into the palm of the other. "If this man Gorbachev is serious with his talk of *glasnost* and *perestroika*," she said, "he can prove it. He can get rid of this wall."

Back at the White House I told Tony Dolan, then director of presidential speechwriting, that I intended to adapt Ingeborg Elz's comment, making a call to tear down the Berlin Wall the central passage in the speech. Tony took me across the street from the Old Executive Office Building to the West Wing to sell the idea to the director of communications, Tom Griscom. "The two of you thought you'd have to work real hard to keep me from saying no," Griscom now says. "But when you told me about the trip, particularly this point of learning from some Germans just how much they hated the wall, I thought to myself, 'You know, calling for the wall to be torn down—it might just work.'"

When I sat down to write, I'd like to be able to say, I found myself so inspired that the words simply came to me. It didn't happen that way. *Mr. Gorbachev, tear down this wall.* I couldn't even get that right. In one draft I wrote, "Herr Gorbachev, bring down this wall," using "Herr" because I somehow thought that would please the President's German audience and "bring" because it was the only verb that came to mind. In the next draft I swapped "bring" for "take," writing, "Herr Gorbachev, take down this wall," as if that were some sort of improvement. By the end of the week I'd produced nothing but a first draft even I considered banal. I can still hear the *clomp-clomp-clomp* of Tony Dolan's cowboy boots as he walked down the hallway from his office to mine to toss that draft onto my desk.

"It's no good," Tony said.

"What's wrong with it?" I replied.

"I just told you. It's no good."

The following week I produced an acceptable draft. It needed work—the section on arms reductions, for instance, still had to be fleshed out—but it set out the main elements of the address, including the challenge to tear down the wall. On Friday, May 15, the speeches for the President's trip to Rome, Venice, and Berlin, including my draft, were forwarded to the President, and on Monday, May 18, the speechwriters joined him in the Oval Office. My speech was the last we discussed. Tom Griscom asked the President for his comments on my draft. The President replied simply that he liked it.

White House speechwriters meet with President Reagan in the Oval Office on May 18, 1987. Peter Robinson is second from the left. (Ronald Reagan Library)

"Mr. President," I said, "I learned on the advance trip that your speech will be heard not only in West Berlin but throughout East Germany." Depending on weather conditions, I explained, radios would be able to pick up the speech as far east as Moscow itself. "Is there anything you'd like to say to people on the *other* side of the Berlin Wall?"

The President cocked his head and thought. "Well," he replied, "there's that passage about tearing down the wall. That wall has to come down. That's what I'd like to say to them."

I spent a couple of days attempting to improve the speech. I suppose I should admit that at one point I actually took "Mr. Gorbachev, tear down this wall" *out*, replacing it with the challenge, in German, to open the Brandenburg Gate, "*Herr Gorbachev, machen Sie dieses Tor auf.*"

"What did you do that for?" Tony asked.

"You mean you don't get it?" I replied. "Since the audience will be German, the President should deliver his big line in German."

"Peter," Tony said, shaking his head, "when you're writing for the President of the United States, give him his big line in English." Tony put "Mr. Gorbachev, tear down this wall" right back in.

With three weeks to go before it was delivered, the speech was circulated to the State Department and the National Security Council. Both attempted to squelch it. The assistant secretary of state for Eastern European affairs challenged the speech by telephone. A senior member of the National Security Council staff protested the speech in memoranda. The ranking American diplomat in Berlin objected to the speech by cable. The draft was naïve. It would raise false hopes. It was clumsy. It was needlessly provocative. State and the NSC submitted their own alternate drafts—my journal records that there were no fewer than seven—including one written by the diplomat in Berlin. In each, the call to tear down the wall was missing.

Now in principle, State and the NSC had no objection to a call for the destruction of the wall. The draft the diplomat in Berlin submitted, for example, contained the line, "One day, this ugly wall will disappear." If the diplomat's line was acceptable, I wondered at first, what was wrong with mine? Then I looked at the diplomat's line once again. "One day?" One day the lion would lie down with the lamb, too, but you wouldn't want to hold your breath. "This ugly wall will disappear?" What did *that* mean? That the wall would just get up and slink off of its own accord? The wall would disappear only when the Soviets knocked it down or let somebody else knock it down for them, but "this ugly wall will disappear" ignored the question of human agency altogether. What State and the NSC were saying, in effect, was that the President could go ahead and

issue a call for the destruction of the wall—but only if he employed language so vague and euphemistic that everybody could see right away he didn't mean it.

The week the President left for Europe, Tom Griscom began summoning me to his office each time State or the NSC submitted a new objection. Each time, Griscom had me tell him why I believed State and the NSC were wrong and the speech, as I'd written it, was right. When I reached Griscom's office on one occasion, I found Colin Powell, then deputy national security adviser, waiting for me. I was a 30-year-old who had never held a full-time job outside speechwriting. Powell was a decorated general. After listening to Powell recite all the arguments against the speech in his accustomed forceful manner, however, I heard myself reciting all the arguments in favor of the speech in an equally forceful manner. I could scarcely believe my own tone of voice. Powell looked a little taken aback himself.

A few days before the President was to leave for Europe, Tom Griscom received a call from the chief of staff, Howard Baker, asking Griscom to step down the hall to his office. "I walked in and it was Senator Baker [Baker had served in the Senate before becoming chief of staff] and the secretary of state—just the two of them." Secretary of State George Shultz now objected to the speech. "He said, 'I really think that line about tearing down the wall is going to be an affront to Mr. Gorbachev,'" Griscom recalls. "I told him the speech would put a marker out there. 'Mr. Secretary,' I said, 'The President has commented on this particular line and he's comfortable with it. And I can promise you that this line will reverberate.' The secretary of state clearly was not happy, but he accepted it. I think that closed the subject."

It didn't.

When the traveling party reached Italy (I remained in Washington), the secretary of state objected to the speech once again, this time to deputy chief of staff Kenneth Duberstein. "Shultz thought the line was too tough on Gorbachev," Duberstein says. On June 5, Duberstein sat the President down in the garden of the estate in which he was staying, briefed him on the objections to the speech, then handed him a copy of the speech, asking him to reread the central passage.

Reagan asked Duberstein's advice. Duberstein replied that he thought the line about tearing down the wall sounded good. "But I told him, 'You're President, so you get to decide.' And then," Duberstein recalls, "he got that wonderful, knowing smile on his face, and he said, 'Let's leave it in.'"

The day the President arrived in Berlin, State and NSC submitted yet another alternate draft. "They were still at it on the very morning of the speech," says Tony Dolan. "I'll never forget it." Yet in the limousine on the way to the Berlin Wall, the President told Duberstein he was determined to deliver the controversial line. Reagan smiled. "The boys at State are going to kill me," he said, "but it's the right thing to do."

* * *

Not long ago, Otto Bammel, a retired diplomat, told me what he had witnessed in November 1989, some two-and-a-half years after President Reagan delivered the Brandenburg Gate address. Representing the government of West Germany, Bammel was living with his wife and two sons, both of whom were in their early twenties, in an East Berlin home just a few hundred yards from the wall. During the evening of November 9, as the East German state council met in emergency session—a few days earlier there had been peaceful but massive demonstrations throughout East Berlin—Bammel and his oldest son, Karsten, watched television as an East German official held a press conference.

"It was so boring," Bammel said, "that I finally couldn't take any more. So I said, 'Karsten, you listen to the rest. I'm going into the kitchen for something to eat.' Ten minutes later Karsten came to me and said, 'The official just announced everyone can go through the wall! It's a decision made by the state council!' I didn't believe

this could happen. It was an unbelievable event." Certain that his son had somehow misunderstood, Bammel took his wife to the home of a neighbor, where they were expected for dinner.

"When we got back at midnight we saw that our boys were still out," Bammel continued. "And we were surprised that there were so many cars driving within the city, but where the traffic goes and why it was, we did not know. We went to bed. When we got up at seven o'clock the next morning, we saw a piece of paper on our kitchen table from our youngest boy, Jens, telling us, 'I crossed the wall. I jumped over the wall at the Brandenburg Gate with my friends. I took my East Berlin friends with me.'

"I said to my wife, 'Something is wrong.' Without eating we took our bicycles and went to the border. And that was the first time we saw what happened in the night. There were people crossing the border on foot and in cars and on bicycles and motorbikes. It was just overwhelming. Nobody expected it. Nobody had the idea that it could happen. The joy about this event was just overwhelming all other thoughts. This was so joyful and so unbelievable."

* * *

There is a school of thought that Ronald Reagan only managed to look good because he had clever writers putting words in his mouth. But Jimmy Carter, Walter Mondale, Bob Dole, and Bill Clinton all had clever writers.

Why was there only one Great Communicator?

Because Ronald Reagan's writers were never attempting to fabricate an image, just to produce work that measured up to the standard Reagan himself had already established. His policies were plain. He had been articulating them for decades—until he became President he wrote most of his material himself.

When I heard Frau Elz say that Gorbachev should get rid of the wall, I knew instantly that the President would have responded to her remark. And when the State Department and National Security Council tried to block my draft by submitting alternate drafts, they weakened their own case. Their speeches were drab. They were bureaucratic. They lacked conviction. The people who wrote them had not stolen, as I had, from Frau Elz—and from Ronald Reagan.

Peter Robinson, an author and former White House speechwriter, is a Fellow at the Hoover Institution at Stanford University. In 1983 Robinson joined President Ronald Reagan's staff, serving almost five years as speechwriter and special assistant to the President, an experience he recounts in his 2003 book, *How Ronald Reagan Changed My Life*. Robinson provided the chief executive with more than 300 speeches, including the 1987 Berlin Wall address.

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Following Page: White House speechwriters meet with President Reagan in the Oval Office on May 18, 1987. Peter Robinson is second from the left.



Remarks on East-West Relations at the Brandenburg Gate in West Berlin June 12, 1987

Thank you very much. Chancellor Kohl, Governing Mayor Diepgen, ladies and gentlemen: Twenty-four years ago, President John F. Kennedy visited Berlin, speaking to the people of this city and the world at the city hall. Well, since then two other presidents have come, each in his turn, to Berlin. And today I, myself, make my second visit to your city.

We come to Berlin, we American Presidents, because it's our duty to speak, in this place, of freedom. But I must confess, we're drawn here by other things as well: by the feeling of history in this city, more than 500 years older than our own nation; by the beauty of the Grunewald and the Tiergarten; most of all, by your courage and determination. Perhaps the composer, Paul Lincke, understood something about American Presidents. You see, like so many Presidents before me, I come here today because wherever I go, whatever I do: "Ich hab noch einen koffer in Berlin." [I still have a suitcase in Berlin.]

Our gathering today is being broadcast throughout Western Europe and North America. I understand that it is being seen and heard as well in the East. To those listening throughout Eastern Europe, I extend my warmest greetings and the good will of the American people. To those listening in East Berlin, a special word: Although I cannot be with you, I address my remarks to you just as surely as to those standing here before me. For I join you, as I join your fellow countrymen in the West, in this firm, this unalterable belief: Es gibt nur ein Berlin. [There is only one Berlin.]

Behind me stands a wall that encircles the free sectors of this city, part of a vast system of barriers that divides the entire continent of Europe. From the Baltic, south, those barriers cut across Germany in a gash of barbed wire, concrete, dog runs, and guardtowers. Farther south, there may be no visible, no obvious wall. But there remain armed guards and checkpoints all the same--still a restriction on the right to travel, still an instrument to impose upon ordinary men and women the will of a totalitarian state.

Yet it is here in Berlin where the wall emerges most clearly; here, cutting across your city, where the news photo and the television screen have imprinted this brutal division of a continent upon the mind of the world. Standing before the Brandenburg Gate, every man is a German, separated from his fellow men. Every man is a Berliner, forced to look upon a scar.

President von Weizsacker has said: "The German question is open as long as the Brandenburg Gate is closed." Today I say: As long as this gate is closed, as long as this scar of a wall is permitted to stand, it is not the German question alone that remains open, but the question of freedom for all mankind. Yet I do not come here to lament. For I find in Berlin a message of hope, even in the shadow of this wall, a message of triumph.

In this season of spring in 1945, the people of Berlin emerged from their air raid shelters to find devastation. Thousands of miles away, the people of the United States reached out to help. And in 1947 Secretary of State--as you've been told--George Marshall announced the creation of what would become known as the Marshall plan. Speaking precisely 40 years ago this month, he said: "Our policy is directed not against any country or doctrine, but against hunger, poverty, desperation, and chaos."

In the Reichstag a few moments ago, I saw a display commemorating this 40th anniversary of the Marshall plan. I was struck by the sign on a burnt-out, gutted structure that was being rebuilt. I understand that Berliners of my own generation can remember seeing signs like it dotted throughout the Western sectors of the city. The sign read simply: "The Marshall plan is helping here to strengthen the free world."

A strong, free world in the West, that dream became real. Japan rose from ruin to become an economic giant. Italy, France, Belgium--virtually every nation in Western Europe saw political and economic rebirth; the European Community was founded.

In West Germany and here in Berlin, there took place an economic miracle, the Wirtschaftswunder. Adenauer, Erhard, Reuter, and other leaders understood the practical importance of liberty--that just as truth can flourish only when the journalist is given freedom of speech, so prosperity can come about only when the farmer and businessman enjoy economic freedom. The German leaders reduced tariffs, expanded free trade, lowered taxes. From 1950 to 1960 alone, the standard of living in West Germany and Berlin doubled.

Where four decades ago there was rubble, today in West Berlin there is the greatest industrial output of any city in Germany--busy office blocks, fine homes and apartments, proud avenues, and the spreading lawns of park land. Where a city's culture seemed to have been destroyed, today there are two great universities, orchestras and an opera, countless theaters, and museums. Where there was want, today there's abundance--food, clothing, automobiles--the wonderful goods of the Ku'damm.

From devastation, from utter ruin, you Berliners have, in freedom, rebuilt a city that once again ranks as one of the greatest on Earth. The Soviets may have had other plans. But, my friends, there were a few things the Soviets didn't count on Berliner herz, Berliner humor, ja, und Berliner schnauze. [Berliner heart, Berliner humor, yes, and a Berliner schnauze.] [Laughter]

In the 1950's, Khrushchev predicted: "We will bury you." But in the West today, we see a free world that has achieved a level of prosperity and well-being unprecedented in all human history. In the Communist world, we see failure, technological backwardness, declining standards of health, even want of the most basic kind--too little food. Even today, the Soviet Union still cannot feed itself. After these four decades, then, there stands before the entire world one great and inescapable conclusion: Freedom leads to prosperity. Freedom replaces the ancient hatreds among the nations with comity and peace. Freedom is the victor.

And now the Soviets themselves may, in a limited way, be coming to understand the importance of freedom. We hear much from Moscow about a new policy of reform and openness. Some political prisoners have been released. Certain foreign news broadcasts are no longer being jammed. Some economic enterprises have been permitted to operate with greater freedom from state control.

Are these the beginnings of profound changes in the Soviet state? Or are they token gestures, intended to raise false hopes in the West, or to strengthen the Soviet system without changing it? We welcome change and openness; for we believe that freedom and security go together, that the advance of human liberty can only strengthen the cause of world peace. There is one sign the Soviets can make that would be unmistakable, that would advance dramatically the cause of freedom and peace.

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

I understand the fear of war and the pain (Pg. 636) of division that afflict this continent--and I pledge to you my country's efforts to help overcome these burdens. To be sure, we in the West must resist Soviet expansion. So we must maintain defenses of unassailable strength. Yet we seek peace; so we must strive to reduce arms on both sides.

Beginning 10 years ago, the Soviets challenged the Western alliance with a grave new threat, hundreds of new and more deadly SS-20 nuclear missiles, capable of striking every capital in Europe. The Western alliance responded by committing itself to a counter-deployment unless the Soviets agreed to negotiate a better solution; namely, the elimination of such weapons on both sides. For many months, the Soviets refused to bargain in earnestness. As the alliance, in turn, prepared to go forward with its counter-deployment, there were difficult days--days of protests like those during my 1982 visit to this city--and the Soviets later walked away from the table.

But through it all, the alliance held firm. And I invite those who protested then--I invite those who protest today--to mark this fact: Because we remained strong, the Soviets came back to the table. And because we remained strong, today we have within reach the possibility, not merely of limiting the growth of arms, but of eliminating, for the first time, an entire class of nuclear weapons from the face of the Earth.

As I speak, NATO ministers are meeting in Iceland to review the progress of our proposals for eliminating these weapons. At the talks in Geneva, we have also proposed deep cuts in strategic offensive weapons. And the Western allies have likewise made far-reaching proposals to reduce the danger of conventional war and to place a total ban on chemical weapons.

While we pursue these arms reductions, I pledge to you that we will maintain the capacity to deter Soviet aggression at any level at which it might occur. And in cooperation with many of our allies, the United States is pursuing the Strategic Defense Initiative--research to base deterrence not on the threat of offensive retaliation, but on defenses that truly defend; on systems, in short, that will not target populations, but shield them.

By these means we seek to increase the safety of Europe and all the world. But we must remember a crucial fact: East and West do not mistrust each other because we are armed; we are armed because we mistrust each other. And our differences are not about weapons but about liberty. When President Kennedy spoke at the City Hall those 24 years ago, freedom was encircled, Berlin was under siege. And today, despite all the pressures upon this city, Berlin stands secure in its liberty. And freedom itself is transforming the globe.

In the Philippines, in South and Central America, democracy has been given a rebirth. Throughout the Pacific, free markets are working miracle after miracle of economic growth. In the industrialized nations, a technological revolution is taking place--a revolution marked by rapid, dramatic advances in computers and telecommunications.

In Europe, only one nation and those it controls refuse to join the community of freedom. Yet in this age of redoubled economic growth, of information and innovation, the Soviet Union faces a choice: It must make fundamental changes, or it will become obsolete.

Today thus represents a moment of hope. We in the West stand ready to cooperate with the East to promote true openness, to break down barriers that separate people, to create a safer, freer world. And surely there is no better place than Berlin, the meeting place of East and West, to make a start.

Free people of Berlin: Today, as in the past, the United States stands for the strict observance and full implementation of all parts of the Four Power Agreement of 1971. Let us use this occasion, the 750th anniversary of this city, to usher in a new era, to seek a still fuller, richer life for the Berlin of the future. Together, let us maintain and develop the ties between the Federal Republic and the Western sectors of Berlin, which is permitted by the 1971 agreement.

And I invite Mr. Gorbachev: Let us work to bring the Eastern and Western parts of the city closer together, so that all the inhabitants of all Berlin can enjoy the benefits that come with life in one of the great cities of the world.

To open Berlin still further to (Pg. 637) all Europe, East and West, let us expand the vital air access to this city, finding ways of making commercial air service to Berlin more convenient, more comfortable, and more economical. We look to the day when West Berlin can become one of the chief aviation hubs in all central Europe.

With our French and British partners, the United States is prepared to help bring international meetings to Berlin. It would be only fitting for Berlin to serve as the site of United Nations meetings, or world conferences on human rights and arms control or other issues that call for international cooperation.

There is no better way to establish hope for the future than to enlighten young minds, and we would be honored to sponsor summer youth exchanges, cultural events, and other programs for young Berliners from the East. Our French and British friends, I'm certain, will do the same. And it's my hope that an authority can be found in East Berlin to sponsor visits from young people of the Western sectors.

One final proposal, one close to my heart: Sport represents a source of enjoyment and ennoblement, and you many have noted that the Republic of Korea--South Korea--has offered to permit certain events of the 1988 Olympics to take place in the North. International sports competitions of all kinds could take place in both parts of this city. And what better way to demonstrate to the world the openness of this city than to offer in some future year to hold the Olympic games here in Berlin, East and West?

In these four decades, as I have said, you Berliners have built a great city. You've done so in spite of threats--the Soviet attempts to impose the East-mark, the blockade. Today the city thrives in spite of the challenges implicit in the very presence of this wall.

What keeps you here?

Certainly there's a great deal to be said for your fortitude, for your defiant courage. But I believe there's something deeper, something that involves Berlin's whole look and feel and way of life--not mere sentiment. No one could live long in Berlin without being completely disabused of illusions. Something instead, that has seen the difficulties of life in Berlin but chose to accept them, that continues to build this good and proud city in contrast to a surrounding totalitarian presence that refuses to release human energies or aspirations. Something that speaks with a powerful voice of affirmation, that says yes to this city, yes to the future, yes to freedom. In a word, I would submit that what keeps you in Berlin is love--love both profound and abiding.

Perhaps this gets to the root of the matter, to the most fundamental distinction of all between East and West. The totalitarian world produces backwardness because it does such violence to the spirit, thwarting the human impulse to create, to enjoy, to worship.

The totalitarian world finds even symbols of love and of worship an affront. Years ago, before the East Germans began rebuilding their churches, they erected a secular structure: the television tower at Alexander Platz. Virtually ever since, the authorities have been working to correct what they view as the tower's one major flaw, treating the glass sphere at the top with paints and chemicals of every kind. Yet even today when the Sun strikes that sphere--that sphere that towers over all Berlin--the light makes the sign of the cross. There in Berlin, like the city itself, symbols of love, symbols of worship, cannot be suppressed.

As I looked out a moment ago from the Reichstag, that embodiment of German unity, I noticed words crudely spray-painted upon the wall, perhaps by a young Berliner, "This wall will fall. Beliefs become reality." Yes, across Europe, this wall will fall. For it cannot withstand faith; it cannot withstand truth. The wall cannot withstand freedom.

And I would like, before I close, to say one word. I have read, and I have been questioned since I've been here about certain demonstrations against my coming. And I would like to say just one thing, and to those who demonstrate so. I wonder if they have ever asked themselves that if they should have the kind of government they apparently seek, no one would ever be able to do what they're doing again.

Thank you and God bless you all.

Following Page: President Reagan giving a speech at the Berlin Wall, Brandenburg Gate, Federal Republic of Germany. 6/12/87





Air Force One parked on the tarmac at Berlin's Tempelhof airport. 6/12/87



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