



THE FALL OF BERLIN WALL

The fall of the Berlin Wall Background Paper

Committee: The Fall of The Berlin Wall

Topic: The impact of civil resistance on the fall of the Berlin Wall and its implications for a unified Germany

Moderator: Santiago González

Director: Gonzalo Ortiz

Written By: Santiago González and Gonzalo Ortiz

Disclaimer:

This committee takes place immediately after the events of the fall of the Berlin Wall. Therefore, all information used by delegates must be limited to what was known or available at that specific moment in time. Any reports, conclusions, or developments published later may only be referenced in the background paper as external context, but cannot be used by delegates as in-committee knowledge.

Delegates must remain consistent with the historical perspective of the aftermath. Any use of information that characters or agencies would not have known in 1989 may result in a warning.

Letter to Officials:

This background paper was created to help delegates understand the topic and prepare for SPISMUN 2026. It summarizes the key events and ideas surrounding the fall of the Berlin Wall, but it is not meant to cover every detail. Delegates should still research on their own to get a complete picture and form strong, well-supported arguments during debate.

The committee takes place right after the fall of the Wall in 1989, so all solutions and discussions should stay within that historical moment. Any interpretation in this paper is only meant for academic use and does not represent a political opinion or judgment.

Our goal with this guide is simply to give you the context you need to debate confidently, think critically, and create meaningful solutions. We encourage you to use this information as a starting point and build on it with your own ideas, research, and creativity.

Good luck, your chair.

Committee Overview:

The committee is based on the civil war from 1961 to 1989 in Germany. The division of countries that wanted a different way to do Germany. After World War Two (WWII), Germany was split into four zones, but the nation was able to join and eventually reunify, in 1989. The country was split into two sides by the Soviet Union because the United States, the United Kingdom, France (but principally the United States), and the Soviet Union all had different perspectives about democracy and how the future of Germany would develop, so they created the Berlin Wall and consequently the Cold War.

Two powers controlled one side for each of them, the east side had the idea of a communist future, where all people shared and they were all the same, just as the Soviet Union democracy was. The west side of Germany, where capitalism was the type of democracy that the United States had and wanted.

for Germany. They had to make an effort, and you gain things you deserve by the work you do as a person, making justice for the effort of someone. After a long discussion and debate of what the laws or main democracy would be after the fall. The eastern spokesman and the western media communicated to both sides the free and open wall without telling important details about the statements.

After a long time in a conference on the 9th of November of 1989, the political changes in some zones of Eastern Europe and the civil unrest in Germany put pressure on the East German government. The East German spokesman, Günter Schabowski, announced that there was free travel between the two sides of Germany, making civilians immediately go to the wall, but the spokesman did not clarify some regulations that would stay after the fall, while the western side reported inaccurately that the border opened.

Topic Background:

After World War 2 (WWII), diplomacy faced innumerable challenges in Germany. German surrender in May of 1945 left the country without a government or a clear leader. During a negotiation at the Potsdam Conference, Germany's future was decided, it was to be divided into several fragments, each controlled by an Allied country. There was the US zone, the Soviet Union zone, the French zone, and the British zone. The east zone was controlled by the Soviet Union (German Democratic Republic), while the west side was shared between the other 3 allies (Federal Republic of Germany).

The East population began a massive migration into the west side of Germany due to the lack of opportunity and employment on their side. Qualified workers, professionals, and young people were leaving East Germany. Between 1949 and 1961, about 3.5 million Germans fled, creating a “Brain Drain”. The United States, the United Kingdom, and France controlled West Berlin and West Germany which adopted a democratic, capitalist system, reflecting the principles of its Western allies. It was part of the Federal Republic of Germany, characterized by a multi-party system, free-market economy, and respect for individual freedoms. In contrast, East Berlin was the capital of the German Democratic Republic, a socialist state under the influence of the Soviet Union, featuring a one-party system and a centrally planned economy.

Both sides had tensions, East Germany's communist regime covered Berlin. In 1948 a blockade of all land and water routes into West Berlin was imposed to stop the Soviet Union and The Allies from tensions. Rumors started that they would build a wall. They declared no one had the intention to build a wall, but the east side of Germany sealed a barrier overnight with barbed wire in August, separating neighborhoods and families overnight. When U.S. diplomats discovered the construction, they broadcast live radio, warning listeners who might want to escape. Their protest against the wall delayed it 48 hours, but in the end it was meaningless. In the year 1961, the wall of Berlin rose and set a barrier between West and East Germany, setting a regime on East Germany. The fleeing of mass population created problems for East Germany in the political and economic areas, and the USSR took the initiative to build the Berlin Wall. It was thought to prevent the West from having further influence on the East and stop the flow of migrants out of the communist sector.

When the wall was completed, it ran 26.8 miles across Berlin with a “dead man zone” in between. Marksmen in towers had orders to shoot and kill citizens who tried to cross the wall, at least 100 East Germans died violently attempting to leave. Some fortunate relied on tunnels, cars, and aircraft. This

wall created discomfort, fear, and anger among the Germans, as a form of protests, they would graffiti the wall. Graffiti on the west side included "KZ," which meant concentration camp.

40 years later, after the foundation of the GDR, civil rights movements were growing day by day. A turning point was the Monday Demonstration, which began in September of 1989 at St. Nicholas Church in Leipzig. Starting from prayer meetings pleading for peace, developed into a protest of hundreds of thousands of Germans that marched through the city calling for freedom of speech, freedom of travel, and democratic reforms. Many were afraid that the East German military would open fire on them, but they didn't, instead, they showed East Germany that the people were no longer afraid. Similarly, East Germans fled through Hungary, Czechoslovakia, and Poland, which were communist allies. When Hungary opened its borders to Austria, they used this opportunity to flee to West Germany. In the same year, more than 500,000 people gathered at Alexanderplatz in East Germany demanding democratic rights. Among these people there were artists, intellectuals, and even some government officials, the opposition to the regime was no longer confined to small cities.

However, the final trigger came on November 9, 1989. Government spokesman Günter Schabowski made a mistake at a live press conference. He announced new travel rules allowing East Germans to cross into West Berlin. This led citizens in a rush to cross the border, overwhelmed border guards opened the gates. The wall that stood between West Germany and East Germany for 28 years finally fell.

Current Situation :

The Berlin Wall has fallen! Finally, after a long discussion and debate of what the laws or main democracy will be after the fall. The eastern spokesman and the media communicate to both sides the free and open wall without telling important details about the statements. This makes an important difference, principally with the freedom of speech, getting to talk with people from other sides, talking without fear of the Russian government, and the ability to go outside of the country freely. This signifies the end of the Cold War and the tensions of the two sides of Europe.

All Germany is flooded with people celebrating, dancing, and destroying the wall with hammers. The people that are the happiest are the families that were separated by the barrier and can unify again, telling each other the experience. But this has a lot of consequences, especially trying to unify the two sides of Germany. Some of the challenges of the fall of the wall are merging the two sides and making a neutral political and economic society and government. When both sides have had extremely different ruling systems. The different ways of teaching of the government make it difficult to integrate the two sides to each other.

Right after the fall of the wall of Berlin, East Germany was in a rapid state of collapse. The German government's credibility and authority were damaged and repressed. Massive protests by the east side proved that they were no longer feared and they no longer had control over the people.

Since the East Side of Germany had an inefficient government, their economy was very poor. The fall revealed how weak and outdated it was, they are now an underdeveloped zone because of the lack of innovation and technology there, and they had no balance with the other side's improvements. They were decades behind the West's technology. Eastern people

migrated to the west not only to visit but also to buy things that they didn't have. Businesses failed in the east because of the amount of people in the west. In the end, East Germany couldn't hold itself politically or economically, which forced it to reunite Germany sooner than expected.

Key Players:

- **Erich Honecker:**

Leader of East Germany (until October 1989). He is key because he represented the communist leadership in Germany, which resisted change. He refused reforms and wanted to keep the Wall standing even when other eastern countries were changing. His resistance sparked protests, and his removal allowed the door to be opened.

- **Hans-Dietrich Genscher:**

West German Foreign Minister. He is key because of his diplomatic skills and his role in the negotiations of East and West Germany. He negotiated with other countries, mainly the Soviet Union and the U.S about future Germany. He helped East Germans who fled to West Germany and promised a safe passage. He became one of the main people in foreign policy's that led to the reunification.

- **Mikhail Gorbachev:**

Leader of the Soviet Union. He is key because of his reform policies and transparency on Germany's situation. He introduced reforms like openness and restructuring, which showed their willingness to support communist governments. East Germans asked for support to stop the protests, and he decided not to help and not to send troops. So when the Wall fell, it fell peacefully with no military intervention.

- **NATO Diplomatic Observer:**

Representing the perspective of NATO during the Cold War period. He was a key player because he represented a mediator image in the region. NATO wasn't directly involved, but it monitored Germany closely because it is crucial for European security. It wanted the transition to be as stable as possible, and it supported efforts that reduced tensions.

- **George H.W. Bush:**

U.S. President at the time, overseeing foreign policy in Europe. He was key because he represented the United States viewpoint and posture on the issue. The United States supported German unity but encouraged a careful approach so that they wouldn't upset Moscow. He helped negotiate agreements that allowed the reunification to happen.

- **Pope John Paul II:**

Representative of the Catholic Church and religion. Key because of his words of faith and hope to people behind the iron curtain, representing a hopeful and firm image during this time. He wasn't directly involved in German politics, but his influence inspired many people and strengthened nonviolence resistant movements.

- **John F. Kennedy:**

He was another president of the US during the tense period of the Cold War and during the construction of the Berlin Wall. When East Germany built the wall, he avoided military conflict, but he sent troops to West Berlin to signal that they would defend the city and ensured that Berlin remained free. He also strengthened American commitment to West Germany and made it clear they would stand against the Soviet Union. He is most famous for his “Ich Bin ein Berliner” speech that boosted the morale of citizens of Berlin and made him a symbol of Western support.

Conclusion:

The Berlin Wall, which divided Germany between 1961 and 1989, symbolized the Cold War's ideological conflict between the US-backed West (capitalism) and the Soviet-controlled East (communism). The Allied powers split Germany into four zones after World War II; the ideological struggle resulted in the creation of two independent German states in 1949 and the construction of the Berlin Wall in 1961, which physically divided East and West Berlin. The 1990 reunification of Germany was made possible by the fall of the Wall in 1989.

The Fall was not just a political event but the result of the determination of people who demanded freedom through protests and civil resistance. They grew tired and angry of the authoritarian communist system and these protests demanded freedom and travel rights. They called for a democratic change. At the same time political figures shaped an environment that allowed this revolution to succeed. The East Germany government lost control and supports weakened under Gorbachev's new policies, their economic and political leadership made the reunification of Germany not only possible but necessary. The fall of the Berlin Wall marked not only the end of the Cold War but also a new chapter for Germany.

Guiding Questions:

1. What of these solutions can be for other situations in the future?
2. Which solution is more ethical and viable?
3. Who is going to finance this solution?
4. How is it going to evacuate the people affected by the fall?
5. Where is it to evacuate or secure the affected people by the division?
6. How are the two sides of Germany gonna unify?
7. How can the economy of the two sides balance?
8. When can the solution be solved
9. How is the difference between the citizens' sides going to be solved?

Quorum:

1. **Erich Honecker** – Leader of East Germany (until October 1989)
2. **Hans-Dietrich Genscher** – West German Foreign Minister
3. **Mikhail Gorbachev** – Leader of the Soviet Union
4. **Helmut Kohl** – Chancellor of West Germany
5. **Egon Krenz** – Last Communist leader of East Germany(after Honecker)
6. **Christa Wolf** – East German writer and dissident
7. **Lech Wałęsa** – Leader of the Polish Solidarity Movement
8. **Vaclav Havel** – Czech dissident and future President
9. **George H.W. Bush** – U.S. President at the time, overseeing foreign policy in Europe
10. **Stasi Official** – East German Ministry for State Security (Stasi) officer responsible for surveillance
11. **U.S.Ambassador to Germany** – The representative of the U.S. government in Germany at the time

12. **East German Protest Leader** – A symbolic representative of the Berlin-based protest movements
13. **West German Student Leader** – A representative of the West German student movement for democracy
14. **West German Journalist** – Reporting on the events as the Wall fell
15. **NATO Diplomatic Observer** – Representing the perspective of NATO during

Bibliography:

Germany is split up | Anne Frank House. (n.d.). Anne Frank Website.

<https://www.annefrank.org/en/timeline/229/germany-is-split-up/>

The Berlin Wall - The Cold War - KS3 History - homework help for year 7, 8 and 9. - BBC

Bitesize. (2023, October 25). BBC Bitesize.

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/bitesize/articles/z3gptrd>

Hesse, U. B. (2021b, August 13). Hace unos 60 años, el muro de la Guerra Fría comenzó a construirse para que los alemanes del este no se escaparan hacia el oeste. Una batalla de décadas para huir lo hizo desaparecer. *National Geographic*.

<https://www.nationalgeographicla.com/historia/2019/11/por-que-se-levanto-el-muro-de-berlin-y-como-cayo>

Smith, R. (n.d.). *When the wall went up: Britain and the Berlin crisis, 1961*. Gov.uk.

Retrieved October 16, 2025, from

<https://history.blog.gov.uk/2021/07/28/when-the-wall-went-up-britain-and-the-berlin-crisis-1961/>

Fall of the Berlin Wall and Collapse of Soviet Union. (2025, August 22). Fiveable.

<https://fiveable.me/united-states-history-since-1945/unit-11/fall-berlin-wall-collapse-soviet-union/study-guide/r0vPvpkmCbA5pua3>

(N.d.). Org.uk. Retrieved October 23, 2025, from

<https://www.iwm.org.uk/history/what-was-the-berlin-wall-and-how-did-it-fall#:~:text=East%20and%20West%20Berliners%20came,fall%20of%20the%20Berlin%20Wall.>

Deutsch, R. G. (2024, November 9). How st. John Paul II helped bring down the

Berlin wall: 35 years later. *National Catholic Register*.

<https://www.ncregister.com/cna/how-st-john-paul-ii-helped-bring-down-the-berlin-wall-35-years-later>

A comparison of life in East and West Berlin - posters. (n.d.). Halsbury Travel.

Retrieved October 28, 2025, from

<https://www.halsbury.com/resources/a-comparison-of-life-in-east-and-west-berlin-posters>

Fall of the Berlin Wall. (n.d.). EBSCO. Retrieved October 29, 2025, from

<https://www.ebsco.com/research-starters/history/fall-berlin-wall>