

# Berlin Wall

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The **Berlin Wall** (German: *Berliner Mauer*) was a **barrier constructed by the German Democratic Republic** (GDR, [East Germany](#)) starting on 13 August **1961**, that completely cut off (by land) [West Berlin](#) from surrounding East [Germany](#) and from [East Berlin](#).

The barrier included guard towers placed along large concrete walls, which circumscribed a wide area (later known as the "death strip") that contained anti-vehicle trenches, "fakir beds" and other defenses. The Eastern Bloc claimed that the wall was erected to protect its population from fascist elements conspiring to prevent the "will of the people" in building a [socialist state](#) in East Germany. In practice, the Wall served to prevent the massive [emigration and defection](#) that marked Germany and the communist Eastern Bloc during the post-World War II period.

The Berlin Wall was officially referred to as the "Anti-Fascist Protection Rampart" (German: *Antifaschistischer Schutzwall*) by GDR authorities, implying that neighbouring West Germany had not been fully de-Nazified. The West Berlin city government sometimes referred to it as the "[Wall of Shame](#)"—a term coined by mayor Willy Brandt—while condemning the Wall's *restriction on [freedom of movement](#)*. [...]

Before the Wall's erection, 3.5 million East Germans circumvented [Eastern Bloc emigration restrictions](#) and defected from the GDR, many by crossing over the border from East Berlin into West Berlin, from where they could then travel to West Germany and other Western European countries. Between 1961 and 1989, the wall prevented almost all such emigration. During this period, around 5,000 people attempted to escape over the wall, with an estimated death toll of over 100 in and around Berlin, although that claim is disputed.

In 1989, [a series of radical political changes](#) occurred in the [Eastern Bloc](#), associated with the [liberalization](#) of the Eastern Bloc's authoritarian systems and the erosion of political power in the pro-[Soviet](#) governments in nearby Poland and Hungary. After several weeks of civil unrest, the East German government announced on 9 November 1989 that all GDR citizens could visit West Germany and West Berlin. Crowds of East Germans crossed and climbed onto the wall, joined by West Germans on the other side in a celebratory atmosphere. [...] The physical Wall itself was primarily destroyed in 1990. The fall of the Berlin Wall paved the way for [German reunification](#), which was formally concluded on 3 October 1990.

**What is the text about?** – (what do you understand) – write shortly:

**How do you know that?**

(How do you see what is important in a text?) Write down your strategies!

**How can you find out more?**

Write down your strategies!

**What do you understand now?**