

The Wall. A border through Germany

An exhibition of contemporary history by:

Federal Foundation for the Reformation of the Dictatorship of the Socialist Party of German Unity

The publications "Bild" and "Die Welt"

Areas of occupation

Iron Curtain

"The Big Three", namely British Prime Minister Winston Churchill, US President Harry S. Truman and Soviet dictator Joseph Stalin, at the Potsdam Conference in July 1945, agree on the joint administration of the defeated German Reich. Thus, Germany is divided into military occupation zones and its capital, Berlin, into sectors. The victorious armed forces are to administer their areas of occupation with full autonomy, and they are to decide on matters concerning the whole of Germany together in Berlin from now on in a Control Council. But after only a few months this agreement will fall apart. The dividing line between the British and American zones, on the one hand, and the Soviet zone, on the other, becomes a border of global interest. Churchill sensed this from the start. Only four days after the German surrender, he uses for the first time, in a telegram to Truman, the term "Iron Curtain", which has descended in Europe and now divides the continent.

The situation is getting worse, especially in Berlin. The former capital of the Reich is divided into four sectors: here the three victorious armed forces are forced to collaborate, together with France, in a confined space. From the very first months, there are harsh conflicts between the four occupying powers.

From the spring of 1946 the conflicts escalate: both open, in the form of propaganda campaigns, and camouflaged, through countless secret service actions. Thus the hope of collaboration between the victorious powers soon fails. Instead of European and world peace, the Cold War breaks out between East and West.

The Blockade

Air rescue

Nowhere is the confrontation between Western democracy and Soviet dictatorship more striking than in Berlin. In October 1946, free elections are held throughout the city - the first after 1932 and the last until 1990. People are clearly in favour of traditional social democracy and the newly established Christian Democratic Party. By contrast, the Socialist Party of German Unity (SED), which is made up of the German Communist Party (KPD) and the forcibly united parts of the German Socialist Party (SPD), receives only a fifth of the vote. However, the Soviets refuse to recognize the elected mayor general, Ernst Reuter, in June 1947.

A year later, when the Deutschmark (DM) is introduced as a new currency in West Germany, the Soviet city commander opposes a solution to the currency problem in Berlin. As a result, the three western sectors also receive the German brand.

Stalin reacts with a total blockade of all land and sea routes from the western areas to the western sectors of Berlin. It also cuts off power and food supplies to the surrounding area of the city of millions. The East German Provisional Administration sets up checkpoints around Berlin as well as at the borders between Berlin sectors.

During the blockade, however, the three western sectors are not completely cut off from their surroundings and visits are allowed. Anyone caught by East German police smuggling is threatened with harsh penalties. U.S. Military Governor Lucius D. Clay opposes the Soviet blackmail. He takes up the daring proposal of a British officer and immediately manages to supply the three sectors of West Berlin by air. Soon supply planes land at timed intervals in minutes. In May 1949, discouraged, the Soviets change their minds and clear the roads to and from West Berlin.

Class struggle

Politics against the people

In 1952 the SED (Socialist Party of German Unity) decides to build socialism. In the years before that, with Soviet support, he introduced his dictatorship in East Germany. Since 1949 Germany has been divided into two states. While living conditions in the Federal Republic of Germany are constantly improving, the SED is waging a class war against its own people. Peasants are forced to join state agricultural cooperatives, private entrepreneurs are being forced to their knees with ever higher taxes, Christians are being harassed.

In June 1953, when a 10% increase in productivity is ordered, construction workers take to the streets in East Berlin. On 17 June this protest spreads throughout the GDR. In more than 700 towns and cities, around one million people are taking to the streets. They demand free elections and an end to dictatorship. The SED's dominance is predicted to end. At this point Soviet tanks intervene and quell the protest; at least 55 people lose their lives.

The popular uprising is a shock for the SED. The party leadership reacts first with concessions to relax the situation and improve supplies. At the same time, State Security develops.

In 1958 the party feels strong again. At the 5th Party Congress it announces that it is again accelerating the "building of socialism" in all areas. In this respect, the SED is not limited to ideological campaigns. Collectivisation of agriculture is forcibly introduced. Private entrepreneurs are expropriated or forced into cooperatives, as well as the remaining craftsmen, bakers, butchers and many retailers. Christians are again terrorised in the GDR. Agriculture is suffering dramatic losses, the supply situation is worsening. In the early 1960s the SED brought the GDR back to the brink of crisis.

To the West

Exodus from the GDR

The SED's policy against its own population and the new worsening living conditions associated with it lead, in the late 1950s, to a dramatic increase in the number of people leaving the GDR for the West for good. Their destination is the Federal Republic of Germany, where the fugitives await freedom, democracy and economic miracles. Younger and better educated people choose exile.

This is by no means easy. Since 1952 the border between the two Germanies has been closed with barbed wire, the crossing points are strictly controlled. And around Berlin, East German border guards have drawn a ring of demarcation. The border inside the city is guarded, but due to the competence of all four Berlin allies, it is not completely closed. Several metro and intra-urban fast rail lines interface with the boundary between the sectors. Anyone with a lot of luggage approaching the line risks arrest.

However, the Marienfelde refugee centre in West Berlin is filling up fast. While in 1959 the number of refugees was about 12,000 a month, in 1960 it was half that number. By the summer of 1961 up to 2400 men, women and children dare daily, with at most a few suitcases, to start out west. Those who are recognised as political refugees are either given housing in West Berlin or are flown further away. Because civilian air traffic is controlled by the Western allies, the "Republican fugitives" are safe. The demand by Soviet party chief Nikita Khrushchev and SED Secretary General Walter Ulbricht to control air traffic to and from Berlin is a transparent attempt to close the exit door.

Building the Wall

13 August 1961

In the middle of the night of 12/13 August 1961 it happened like this: at 1.05 am the lights

went out: The Brandenburg Gate, symbol of the open German question, once brightly lit, is suddenly shrouded in darkness on a warm summer night. Only the ghost-like tanks that pass under the classical construction and the men in uniform, who form a chain of surveillance from the centre to the zoo along the border between the sectors, are visible. Not only here, but everywhere along the three western sectors of Berlin, armed forces of the GDR are marching these minutes. They block the approximately 80 official border crossings that had existed until then, they stretch barbed wire across streets, through ruined land and parks.

Germans from East Berlin and the GDR can only cross the border between the sectors with special free passage permits - so practically not at all. At around 1.45 a.m. the whole of West Berlin is cordoned off and surrounded by armed checkpoints.

From the spring of 1961 the wave of refugees threatened the very existence of the GDR. With this argument Walter Ulbricht managed to convince Nikita Khrushchev to close West Berlin completely. SED Security Chief Erich Honecker perfectly camouflages "Operation Rose". Although extensive preparations involving thousands of soldiers, policemen and men from "paramilitary groups in state-owned enterprises" are required, no details of the border closure are made public. Some rumours attract the attention of the Federal Intelligence Service. However, politicians in Bonn and West Berlin cannot imagine that the GDR dares to close the border between the city sectors and thus clearly violate the Four Power status.

Real politics

Allied reaction

The West is taken by surprise by the construction of the Wall. But the three protective powers see no reason for tough countermeasures. They remain quiet: US President John F. Kennedy sails past Massachusetts, British Prime Minister Harold MacMillan hunts in Scotland, French President Charles de Gaulle rests in Champagne. All three see the closure of the border as a written fixation of political reality. Kennedy notes lapidary: "We will do nothing now because there is no alternative but war."

Excessively scrupulous, the US takes care that their rights are not touched. Kennedy signalled to Nikita Khrushchev as early as 25 July 1961 what the West would and would not insist on. Indispensable for him are the presence of the Allies in West Berlin, free access to and from West Berlin and the self-determination of the West Berliners. East Berlin is not mentioned in his televised address.

But the Germans are not ready to accept the closure of the border. Mayor General Willy Brandt writes to Washington: "Inaction and sheer defensiveness could cause a crisis of confidence in the Western Powers." Kennedy therefore sends his vice president, Lyndon B. Johnson, to Berlin, appoints Lucius D. Clay as his special delegate, and reinforces the US garrison in West Berlin with 1500 troops; and the British and French send additional armed forces. Protection forces show their presence with tanks. The confidence of West Berliners returned, especially when Kennedy himself visited the city in June 1963 and uttered the famous words: "I'm a Berliner!". Berlin's radically changed status, due to the building of the Wall, is only officially regulated in 1972 by the Four-Power Treaty.

Despair

Suffering and longing for freedom

The building of the Wall not only divides Berlin, it also separates families and friends. In the first days after the August 13 closure the demarcation line still had open spaces. Thousands of East Berliners are taking advantage of this opportunity. In the first twelve hours alone, dozens of young people flee to the West, swimming through the border canal, the Heidekampgraben and the Britzer branch canals. And over the walls of the cemetery

and the enterprises on the border between the sectors, the road to West Berlin is accessible at first, relatively safely.

Much more difficult becomes the escape on 15 August 1961, when a concrete and brick dam replaces the barbed wire dam in the centre of town. A few dozen bricklayers in the army succeed in jumping to freedom; and countless sentries desert. Until 23 August 1961 West Berliners can travel with their IDs to the East. But the SED Political Bureau suspends this possibility because many East Germans leave the GDR with smuggled West Berlin ID cards. For the next two and a half years the separation of people is almost total. Only letters and telegrams get through, always strictly controlled and often delayed for days. By the autumn of 1961 the refugees were slipping westward through the sewers and were not shying away from sinking through the faeces. In some places, as early as September 1961, well-coordinated mass refugees succeeded, during the day in the early afternoon, through the barbed wire barrage cut to pieces beforehand.

In the border areas, it's a heartbreaking scene: young grooms in the West say goodbye to their parents in the East; refugee fathers see their wives and children, often for years to come, for the last time, fiancés or siblings have to say goodbye.

Demolition

Free range

In order to prevent refugees, the GDR set up no-go zones on its side of the demarcation line. On the border between the two Germanies, a 500 m strip of land has been completely cleared almost everywhere since 1952; the inhabitants have been deported, their houses demolished. This first mass deportation of 11,000 people was carried out at the time by the SED under the code name "Action Deratization".

At the boundary between sectors a very penetrating closure is impossible. Partially between the houses in West and East Berlin, there is only a narrow street and two sidewalks - a little more than 15 m. By September East Berliners take refuge by climbing out of their windows or throwing themselves into West Berlin firefighters' rescue nets. Several people die, some are seriously injured.

In September 1961, GDR border police begin evacuating buildings along the Wall. Several thousand East Berliners have to give up their homes. Wagons are often outside the doors of houses to move houses without prior warning. Bernauer Street in the Wedding district and Harzer Street in Treptow are targeted first, because here the outer walls of the houses form the district boundaries and thus the sector boundaries on the GDR side.

Since 1964 the border troops form consistent "free firing range": nearby evacuated houses are demolished. On Bernauer Street, only the remains of the partitions remain standing, with their walls completely demolished, on Harzer Street entire rows of houses are completely demolished. Not only residential houses, but even churches are blown up. Systematic cleaning up of the "near border area" continues until the 1980s.

Border regime

Mines and "Stalin barriers"

The SED leadership orders the systematic construction of the border around West Berlin and between the two Germanies. Where there is sufficient space, a five-kilometre no-entry zone is set up, which can only be entered with a free pass.

From the autumn of 1961, the German border guards install up to 1.3 million Soviet-designed anti-personnel mines along the German-German border. The mines are so

placed that they slice off legs and hands, but the victims are not killed immediately. Since 1970, special mines with shrapnel, with purposeful action, have been added, which are placed up to the last fence on the territory of the GDR - in the eastern direction. These "automatic firing devices" will pinch anyone who triggers them. A secret report says that "violators of the border injured by an SM-70" have "fatal injuries, i.e. so severe that they are unable to get through the fence".

Up to 440 km of the border between the two Germanies are made almost impregnable with these 60,000 killing machines; the SED state spends almost 50 million marks on these alone. They add measures such as trip and signal wires, lanterns and bars with 10 cm steel nails, which are called "Stalin barriers". In the language of the border troops these barriers are called "surface dams"; they are often set up on riverbanks and other "escape danger" places. Even with heavy footwear it is impossible to get through the Stalin barriers. Along 155 km of border around West Berlin, thousands of kilometres of barbed wire and brick walls make it almost impossible to flee a year after 13 August 1961. Ten years later almost all barbed wire dams are replaced by massive concrete slab walls or sharp metal fences. The border is 60% fortified with barricade pits, there are more than 200 specially trained dog runs and almost 250 observation towers. At Soviet direction, no minefields and automatic firing devices are set up on the border with West Berlin.

Order to fire

Dead and injured

Any unauthorised departure from the GDR endangers life. The first of the approximately 1000 deaths on the border between the two Germanies have been there since 1949, three years before it was closed with barbed wire barriers and made virtually inaccessible.

With the construction of the Berlin Wall, the last exit route is closed. No "normal" German in the GDR knows that the armed sentries of the border guards have no ammunition to begin with; the SED wants to avoid an escalation as long as it is not clear how the protection forces behave.

Nine days after the closure of the border Walter Ulbricht is sure that he has got it right and that the West is doing nothing. He announces in the Political Bureau: "We will shoot the Germans who represent German imperialism. He who provokes will be shot!" The next morning all the men of the border service receive ammunition for war. Just two days later, railway policemen shoot Günther Litfin, a 24-year-old tailor's apprentice, in Humboldthafen, near the Reichstag.

From now on the firing order is valid, which is not based on a single document but exists in different versions. An order to the troops of the Guards dated 14 September 1961 reads: "Fugitives attempting to evade arrest in order to flee to the Federal Republic of Germany may, after a warning shot, be shot at with aimed bullets." The SED's Political Bureau Management sets out briefly on this: "Against traitors and border violators, firearms will be used." And Erich Honecker, Ulbricht's successor as head of the SED, orders on 3 March 1974, unequivocally: "Firearms will be used, as before, without scruple, in border crossing attempts."

The firing order remains valid until early April 1989; its cancellation, however, remains a closely guarded secret.

Little Berlin

Mödlareuth in Thuringia

US soldiers in Germany call the village of 50 souls in Oberfranken "Little Berlin". Like the capital in broad strokes, it becomes, in small strokes, the symbol of German separation. Because the border between the two Germanies runs through the middle of the small

village.

Mödlareuth am Tannbach has been a border town for centuries, with one part of the town in Thuringia and the other in Bavaria. But for a long time this did not have any consequences for the inhabitants. They lived like any other village community, they had a general elementary school, a bistro and a men's choral society. Church was attended on Sundays in the neighbouring parish village of Töpen.

When Thuringia is occupied after World War II by the Soviets and Bavaria becomes American, nothing changes, even though a free pass is now required. Even after the founding of the Federal Republic and the GDR the border is accessible for Mödlareuth. In 1952 everything changes: the SED regime begins to strengthen the demarcation line. The village is now in the "protection strip" and West German citizens cannot enter it at all, and East German citizens only with special permission.

When the inhabitants of the politically untrustworthy village are forcibly displaced, the Mödlareuth border between the two Germanies is gradually rebuilt as an insurmountable obstacle. Instead of a wooden fence, a 3.40 m high concrete wall similar to the one in Berlin appeared in the mid-1960s. It serves not only as a border closure, but also as a screen, as even waving or waving from the East or West is forbidden.

It will take 37 years before the wall in Mödlareuth no longer separates. People's joy is no less in "Little Berlin" than in the capital.

Shelters

With the courage of despair

Against general human rights, the SED leadership does not allow its population to leave the country to the West. Requests to emigrate for relocation are frequently refused and result in professional damage as well as repression by the Stasi (State Security).

For many, the only thing left is to run away. The reasons are varied: among them, political oppression and lack of economic prospects, but also the desire for family reunification. The escape routes are also diverse. They go, by heavy vehicles, straight through border closures, through tirelessly dug tunnels, through the air, with hot air balloons or airplanes, or over the Baltic Sea, sometimes in a dinghy, sometimes on a surfboard or even swimming.

Many flee through "neighbouring socialist foreign countries" with forged passports or are smuggled across the border in trunks.

The majority of the "fugitives from the republic", however, are the "remnants", as they are called in Stasi jargon, those who do not return from their visit to the West.

Running away is full of risks. The number of failed attempts is much higher than the number of successes. Among the victims were Chris Gueffroy, who was shot in February 1989, and Winfried Freudenberg, who crashed an improvised gas balloon in March 1989. They are the last to die on the road from Germany to Germany.

Trade with people

Redemption of political prisoners

In the period between the building of the Wall and the fall of the Wall, more than a quarter of a million men and women are arrested in the GDR for political reasons. Many are arrested for many years as failed "fugitives from the Republic", as accomplices of the fugitives or for real or alleged opposition.

For every eighth of them, a hope long talked about behind closed doors is fulfilled: they are redeemed by the Federal Republic of Germany.

The "people trade" begins in 1962, at the end of the Adenauer era, during the work of the Minister for All-German Affairs, Rainer Barzel.

An important role in initiating contacts is played by the Evangelical Churches in Germany.

After tireless discussions, which are conducted on the East Berlin side by lawyer Wolfgang Vogel, the first redemption is agreed at Christmas 1962. 20 political prisoners and as many children are free. The price is three wagons of fertiliser. But very soon East Berlin makes demands. While in the early days, the price per prisoner was DM 40,000, in the 1980s it was almost DM 100,000. The amount, which the Federal Republic of Germany often equates with deliveries of goods, is motivated by expenditure on education in the GDR. The choice of those arrested is problematic. While, on the GDR side, the SED Secretary General Honecker or the Minister of State Security Erich Mielke decide in many cases personally, in the Federal Republic of Germany this is the responsibility of the Federal Ministry for Relations between the German States. The state secretary in charge, Ludwig Rehlinger, writes later: "Through relatives and charities I have met many names and destinies. Each time it was clear that the DDR would release only a few prisoners. That's why we had to decide, first of all, for whom to intervene specifically. A very onerous task." By 1989, 33,755 people had been released by way of ransom from Bautzen, Hoheneck and other dreaded prisons in the GDR.

Exchange of agents on the Glienicke Bridge

The Glienicke Bridge is one of the most famous symbols of the Cold War: on top of the steel construction, which connects Berlin and Potsdam over the Havel River, agents are exchanged three times, a total of 38 people. They include Soviet atomic spy Rudolf Abel, U2 pilot Gary Powers, who was shot down over the USSR, and human rights activist Anatoly Shearansky.

The "Unification Bridge", as it is called in the GDR, is also legendary because it is closed to private traffic of any kind: since 1953 only vehicles of the four Allied military missions are allowed to cross it. Today a small museum in the Schöningen Villa in Potsdam is a reminder of this period.

"Normalization"

Regulated coexistence

In the 1970s, the German question seemed to lose importance. The world and more and more West Germans are getting used to the separation of the country. It's about "normalisation". This was made possible by a series of conventions governing the relationship between the Federal Republic of Germany and the GDR. The demarcation is made by the Basic Treaty signed in December 1972, which states that both sides "shall respect the independence of each of the two States in its internal and external affairs".

With this de facto recognition, the Federal Republic of Germany does not renounce either a reunification stipulated in the Constitution or a citizenship for all Germans. However, the fundamental treaty marks the end of the claim to a single West German representation. The GDR is soon recognised worldwide. In 1974 the United Nations admitted both German states simultaneously.

In the domestic connection all federal governments now follow a policy of small steps. This

should alleviate the consequences of separation, improve the living conditions of East Germans and thus strengthen the unity of the nation.

In 1973 there were more than 3.5 million trips to East Berlin and the GDR, three times as many as in 1970. Also in the reverse direction there are first improvements: 40,000 East Germans under retirement age can visit the West "on urgent family matters". The number of telephone calls between the two German states, which until 1970 was less than a million a year, explodes to more than 23 million by 1980.

But the SED leadership consistently follows a policy of ideological demarcation, as the influence of Western television grows. West German correspondents, admitted since the mid-1970s, are strictly supervised.

Everyday life in front of the Wall

Life in the shadow of the demarcation line

From the east, border troops are camouflaging the border closure areas as best they can with parapets and no-go zones. Unlike the West Berlin part, here the Wall is integrated into life. For graffiti sprayers it serves as a giant canvas, for campers it provides quiet weekend retreats, and for pub owners a place for impromptu beer gardens - as if the Wall wasn't there at all.

Soon tourists' interest in the life-threatening border in the middle of a city of millions is greater than that of the locals. It's only when the forbidden streaks are pulled again that they bring them back to general consciousness.

Since the actual separation building is everywhere a few metres back towards the eastern space, there are outlawed spaces in the middle of Berlin that the West Berlin Police are not allowed to enter. Illegal constructions often appear here, which existed until 1990 and, partly legally, even today.

West-Berlin children, growing up in the shadow of the Wall, occasionally play, instead of "cops and robbers", "the border policeman and the fugitive". They mimic reality so realistically that the "fugitive" is usually shot "dead". Children meditate on the lack of humanity unconsciously, adults often not at all.

People have only apparently adapted to reality. In reality, each of them suffers from the "Wall disease" that psychiatrists and neurologists talk about. It is a syndrome of psychosomatic disorders, often accompanied by depression and the feeling of being "surrounded by walls". After the construction of the Wall, West Berlin is considered the city with the highest suicide rate in the world. For East Berlin the number of suicides and suicide attempts is, of course, even higher.

The Revolution

We are the people!

Mikhail Gorbachev's reform policy is changing the world. In the West it raises hopes of an end to the arms race, in the East of democratisation. However, the SED retains nothing from Glasnost and Perestroika. Depression reigns in the economically depressed GDR.

In May 1989 the oppositionists prove that the municipal elections just held were falsified. The state leadership reacts with ignorance and repression. The number of applications for emigration is increasing.

In summer thousands of people decide for a holiday of no return. They travel to Hungary, where the Iron Curtain on the border with Austria has been made accessible, and occupy the German embassies in Prague and Warsaw.

When they are allowed to emigrate to the West, and the party leadership celebrates the 40th anniversary of the GDR unperturbed, the protest becomes a mass movement. The words of state guest Mikhail Gorbachev, "He who comes too late is punished for life", now act as a lantern. Hundreds of people take to the streets in Leipzig, Berlin and other cities.

"We are the people!" is the slogan of the Peaceful Revolution. New political groups are formed. Like-minded parties in the coalition emancipate themselves from the SED, which ousts Honecker. But his successor, Egon Krenz, also has little to oppose the dynamics of events. In order to ease the growing pressure on the new state and party leadership, a regulation is decided to make travel to the West possible.

Fall of the Wall

09 November 1989

It is exactly 7.53 p.m. when SED Political Bureau member Günter Schabowski announces at the International Press Centre in East Berlin: "The GDR State leadership has decided to adopt today a regulation allowing any GDR citizen to cross the border." Asked by a journalist when the new travel regulations come into force, Schabowski flips through his papers and answers, by mistake: "Immediately, without delay."

The SED official triggers an avalanche with this. Because the Western news agencies are just reporting the surprising announcement that countless East-Berliners are already leaving for border crossings. Trabants and Wartburgs pile up on Bornholmer Street around 9 pm. People are calling over the loudspeakers for the border to be opened, but the officer in charge has no orders.

In the Federal Parliament in Bonn, members of parliament rise from their seats and sing the German Song (Deutschlandlied). The "Unity and Justice and Freedom" can barely be heard when the first East Berliners can cross Bornholmer Street. Gradually other crossing points are being opened, for example at Checkpoint Charlie. The pressure was simply too great, Honecker's successor Egon Krenz would later say.

Shortly afterwards, Berlin goes into a state of emergency. Hundreds of thousands of people from both sides of the city celebrate at checkpoints on the Kurfürstendamm and in front of the Brandenburg Gate, the symbol of German separation. The wall falls after 28 years. A year later, there is no DDR. Germany is reunited in peace and freedom.

Processing

Criminal trials and remembrance

Wrongs committed in the GDR must be punished as a matter of principle under the criminal laws of the GDR. Because the so-called prohibition of retroactivity belongs to the most important principles of the rule of law.

But how can the justice of the reunified Germany punish those people who killed on the border between the two Germanies? They did not act against GDR law, but carried out clear orders.

In order to be able to hold the perpetrators accountable, the Federal Supreme Court is using the principle of the jurist Gustav Radbruch. According to him, written law is not valid if it violates basic human rights - and the violent destruction of life is the highest form of human rights violation.

More than 2,000 criminal investigations have been carried out for shooters on the border between the two German states. Around 300 people are sentenced to life imprisonment, but only 30 actually end up in prison.

Prison sentences are imposed on ten other people accused of injustices in the GDR. These included Egon Krenz, Heinz Keßler and Günter Schabowski, who were guilty of the Wall shootings as members of the Party and State leadership. Against many of the main culprits, such as SED chief Erich Honecker and Stasi minister Erich Mielke, the trials for the border deaths are suspended because the accused are not fit to defend their interests in negotiations or negotiations according to the criteria of a constitutional state governed by the rule of law.

In 2005 the legal processing of injustices in the GDR was completed: all criminal acts are time-barred, up to and including murder in the narrow sense of the legal definition. "We wanted justice and we got the constitutional rule of law," says a disappointed GDR human rights activist Bärbel Bohley, commenting on the legal debate on the injustices of the SED. However, despite justified criticism, the criminal trials have made an important contribution to clarifying the injustices of the SED. Besides the scientific research, by no means complete, on the unjust state of the SED, the memory remains. A large number of institutions, such as *the Berlin Wall Memorial* in Bernauer Street, *the German Separation Memorial* at the former border crossing Marienborn bei Helmstedt, the *German-German Museum Mödlareuth*, as well as countless other larger and smaller memorials and museums on the former border between the two German states and in Berlin have taken on the task of remembering the ruthless SED border regime and its victims and providing historical-political education.

Remembrance

Never again dictatorship!

Axel Springer lays the foundation stone for his publishing house in 1959 directly on the border with the Soviet sector of Berlin. He is visionary and deeply convinced that the unnatural separation of Germany will not stand the test of history. Two years later, when the columns form, at the edge of the cornerstone of his publishing house, the walls, the publisher remains. Axel Springer and the editors of his publishing house, who have been advocating German unity for decades, are right after all: The wall falls after 28 long years during the Peaceful Revolution.

This is already close to the last generation. What suffering the separation brought, how it was overcome and what happiness the fall of the Wall in that memorable November 1989 gave people, all gradually fade in the nation's consciousness. Axel Springer Publishing's desire is to stand up against this.

The same desire is shared by the Federal Foundation for the Reformation of the Dictatorship of the Socialist Party of German Unity, which discusses the history and consequences of the communist dictatorship, German and European separation and their defeat.

The Federal Foundation for the Reformation of the Dictatorship of the Socialist Party of German Unity was established in 1998 by the Bundestag (Federal Parliament) and has since distributed more than 31 million Euros for some 2200 projects and thus made an important contribution to the clarification of the SED dictatorship.

For the *Wall* exhibition, the Federal Foundation for the Reformation of the Dictatorship of the SED collaborated with the publications "BILD" and "Die Welt", which are committed to a common goal: Never again dictatorship!