UNDERSTANDING THE BORDER

THE BERLIN WALL 1961–1989

The history of the Berlin Wall is the history of a city’s brutal division. It was here that the two power blocs of the Cold War converged. When the Berlin Wall was erected in 1961, families were torn apart and friends and neighbors were separated. East Germans could no longer reach the West. Twenty-eight years would pass before the Wall was brought down. By wailing in its own people, the SED secured its power in the GDR. When it came to the pressure of the peaceful demonstrators and opened the border in 1989, its dictatorship collapsed. The border fortifications cut through the middle of the city along 48 kilometers and continued for another 135 kilometers, cutting Berlin off completely from its outskirts. The fortifications were continually expanded and modified over the years. The border strip’s dimensions and the combination of border elements were determined by the surrounding area.

The exhibition provides insight into the development and function of the border and its system of surveillance. It provides examples of how people tried to flee across the border and shows how the Wall affected life in the divided city.

13.08.1961 Border sealed with barbwire and barriers, later with a wall
24.08.1961 First person is shot and killed at the Berlin Wall
17.12.1963 First travel permit agreement between the GDR and West Berlin
01.02.1965 Central planning of systematic expansion of the border
02.05.1974 Permanent Museum of the Federal Republic and the GDR opens in East Berlin and Briesen

ESCape
01.04.1976 Construction of "Border Wall 75" (pre-fabricated wall with pipe element)
31.10.1977 GDR border troops introduce medals of merit for "exemplary border duty"

COLD WAR
15.02.1985 GDR decree to facilitate transit traffic
17.01.1988 Protests at the annual Laskenhof-Luxembourg demonstration, arrests by the Stasi
07.10.1989 Official celebration of the GDR's 40th anniversary and protests in East Berlin

SOLDIERS
09.11.1989 Announcement of freedom to travel, Wall opens under pressure of masses

FALL OF THE WALL

STIFTUNG BERLINER MAUER

This project was sponsored by the Bundesstiftung Aufarbeitung
A poster exhibition by the Berlin Wall Foundation and Infographics Group

The poster exhibition provides insight into the history of the Berlin Wall using infographics, historical photographs and biographical stories. It also raises questions about borders in general and their function.

The exhibition, which consists of 12 DIN A1 posters, can be ordered by educational centers and public institutions for a token sum of 30 euros (plus delivery costs). The exhibition is available in both German and English.

Information and order form: