

## PREFACE

From the 13<sup>th</sup> August 1961, the Wall – built by the communist rulers in East Berlin – not only divided the German capital into East and West. The Wall was also a symbol of the inhuman regime behind the ‘Iron Curtain’ and of the divided world – the Soviet ruled communist dictatorship in the East block and the democratic states in the western hemisphere.

In the summer of 1989, the communist states were already in a state of ferment and their people had already begun to voice their protests with ever growing courage. Neither those in the East, nor those in the West could have imagined that the Wall would fall anytime soon, nor could they have imagined that the communist dictatorship would be vanquished and the Cold War would come to an end.

Whilst the GDR government continued to talk at great length about the permanency of the Berlin Wall, trade union federation ‘Solidarity’ was celebrating the first legislative elections in Poland. The GDR government continued to open fire on citizens who wanted to choose their own path in life and fled to the West. At the same time, Hungary began to open the ‘Iron Curtain’.

As late as 5<sup>th</sup> February 1989, East German border troops shot 20 year old Chris Gueffroy as he attempted to get over the Wall and into the West. Hundreds of people were shot at the Berlin Wall and inner-German border as they tried to flee East Germany. The inhuman border regime and the Wall ruined the lives of countless people who lost their friends, family or homes.

The Peaceful Revolutions in almost all countries in the former East Block and the Fall of the Berlin Wall make up some of the most significant events in history. With these revolutions, the people of the GDR and Central and Eastern Europe vanquished the communist dictatorships and brought about the beginning of the end of German and European division.

As a result of the revolutions in Central and Eastern Europe, the Soviet Empire collapsed within a few months. As hundreds of thousands of people danced and celebrated on top of the Berlin Wall, the Wall also became a symbol for free will and the triumphant struggle against oppression and dictatorship.

Almost all traces the Wall left on the cityscape had disappeared within a few years. After experiencing freedom, democracy and unity, it seemed there was a strong desire to remove any traces left by this awful past. It was not until 15 years after the Fall of the Wall, when there was almost nothing left to see of the monument that once divided the city, that the Berlin Senate began to work on a memorial concept to remember the Berlin Wall and the division of the city. What was left of the Wall should be preserved and the relationship between the remains told as part of the memorial concept.

Whilst people in Berlin began to dispose of the Wall as quickly as possible, interest in the Wall from around the world was massive. Countless sections of the Wall, which had once surrounded and walled in West Berlin (each weighing tonnes), found new homes all around the world. Today, they can be found on every continent, where they stand as historical memorials, victory trophies, as symbols of freedom or as works of art and commemorate overcoming German division and the struggle for freedom and democracy. 146 sites all over the world, each home to a piece of the Berlin Wall, have been chosen for this book. 241 complete segments of the Berlin Wall and a further 45 smaller pieces, from both the exterior Wall and the so called ‘hinterlandmauer’ – which marked the border in West or East Berlin – are presented in this book. The

owners of the pieces of Wall have been asked to tell the story behind ‘their’ pieces of Wall. Some of the stories that have been uncovered are exciting and peculiar, some are tragic. They reflect the multifaceted and complex ways in which the Berlin Wall is remembered. The stories are by artists who wanted to create memorials to freedom, by politicians whose political careers were influenced and shaped by the Berlin Wall. The stories are also by private individuals whose fates were in some way linked with divided Germany. Art museums and collectors display the sections of Wall at their exhibitions due to their bright graffiti. They are often put on display in historical museums and stand as representatives of the confrontation between East and West and the victory for freedom and democracy against oppression and dictatorship. One section of the Wall was blessed by the Pope in the Portuguese city of Fátima and today, pilgrims from all over the world flock to it. There is also a section of the Wall in the gardens in Vatican City and thanks to NASA, the Wall has even left its mark on Mars. The Wall has been the starting point for many moving, artistic and sometimes funny and peculiar stories and works of art.

The remains of the Berlin Wall have been scattered across the globe and serve as witnesses to the Cold War and the confrontation between democratic states and dictatorships. Unattached from the concrete interpretations from where the segments of Wall once stood, they make one thing very clear: people all over the world remember the division of Germany and the joy felt when the Wall fell. The Wall is still seen today as a symbol of the collapse of the totalitarian communist systems.

We would like to sincerely thank all those who have shown support or contributed to this book, be it by supplying photos, researching or anything else. Without your willingness to share your stories and experiences, photos and memories as well as going to the most remote places in search of traces, we would not have been able to show and tell many of the stories included in this book. Many thanks!

Berlin, March 2014  
Anna Kaminsky