

“Tear Down This Wall”

Background

On June 12, 1987, two years before the fall of the Berlin Wall, which divided West Berlin and Soviet-supported East Berlin, President Ronald Reagan gave a famous speech in which he challenged Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev to destroy the Wall.

Speech

Our gathering today is being broadcast throughout Western Europe and North America. I understand that it is being seen and heard as well in the East. To those listening throughout Eastern Europe, I extend my warmest greetings and the good will of the American people. To those listening in East Berlin, a special word: Although I cannot be with you, I address my remarks to you just as surely as to those standing here before me. For I join you, as I join your fellow countrymen in the West, in this firm, this unalterable belief: Es gibt nur ein Berlin. [There is only one Berlin.]

Behind me stands a wall that encircles the free sectors of this city, part of a vast system of barriers that divides the entire continent of Europe. From the Baltic, south, those barriers cut across Germany in a gash of barbed wire, concrete, dog runs, and guard towers. Farther south, there may be no visible, no obvious wall. But there remain armed guards and checkpoints all the same--still a restriction on the right to travel, still an instrument to impose upon ordinary men and women the will of a totalitarian state.

Yet, it is here in Berlin where the wall emerges most clearly; here, cutting across your city...

In the West today, we see a free world that has achieved a level of prosperity and well-being unprecedented in all human history. In the Communist world, we see failure, technological backwardness, declining standards of health, even want of the most basic kind--too little food. Even today, the Soviet Union still cannot feed itself. After these four decades, then, there stands before the entire world one great and inescapable conclusion: Freedom leads to prosperity. Freedom replaces the ancient hatreds among the nations with comity and peace. Freedom is the victor.

And now the Soviets themselves may, in a limited way, be coming to understand the importance of freedom. We hear much from Moscow about a new policy of reform and openness. Some political prisoners have been released. Certain foreign news broadcasts are no longer being jammed. Some economic enterprises have been permitted to operate with greater freedom from state control.

Are these the beginnings of profound changes in the Soviet state? Or are they token gestures, intended to raise false hopes in the West, or to strengthen the Soviet system without changing it? We welcome change and openness; for we believe that freedom and security go together, that the advance of human liberty can only strengthen the cause of world peace.

There is one sign the Soviets can make that would be unmistakable, that would advance dramatically the cause of freedom and peace. General Secretary Gorbachev, if you seek peace, if you seek prosperity for the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe, if you seek liberalization: Come here to this gate! Mr. Gorbachev, open this gate! Mr. Gorbachev, tear down this wall!

Text Based Questions

1. Based on the passage, what does the author mean by the phrase "Es gibt nur ein Berlin"?
 - A. There is only one city named Berlin.
 - B. There is only one free Berlin.
 - C. There is only one communist Berlin.
 - D. There is only one united Berlin.

2. According to the passage, what does the wall in Berlin symbolize?
 - A. The division between free and communist sectors.
 - B. The technological backwardness of the Soviet Union.
 - C. The decline of standards of health in Eastern Europe.
 - D. The restriction on the right to travel in Western Europe.

3. What evidence from the passage supports the idea that freedom leads to prosperity?
 - A. The failure of the Communist world.
 - B. The release of political prisoners in Moscow.
 - C. The limited policy of reform and openness.
 - D. The level of prosperity achieved in the West.

4. Based on the passage, what does the author believe about the recent changes in the Soviet Union?
 - A. They are token gestures to raise false hopes in the West.
 - B. They are intended to strengthen the Soviet system without changing it.
 - C. They are the beginnings of profound changes in the Soviet state.
 - D. They are a result of the advance of human liberty.

5. What does the author mean by "tear down this wall" in the context of the passage?
 - A. Remove the physical barriers in Eastern Europe.
 - B. End the division between free and communist sectors in Berlin.
 - C. Promote reform and openness in the Soviet Union.
 - D. Advance the cause of world peace.

6. How does the author characterize the Soviet Union's ability to feed itself?

- A. Technologically advanced.
- B. Prosperous and well-fed.
- C. Backward and lacking food.
- D. Free from state control.

7. Which of the following best describes the author's tone in the passage?

- A. Critical and confrontational.
- B. Sarcastic and mocking.
- C. Optimistic and hopeful.
- D. Neutral and objective.

8. What is the main purpose of the passage?

- A. To describe the division in Berlin caused by the wall.
- B. To criticize the failures of the Communist world.
- C. To encourage reform and openness in the Soviet Union.
- D. To advocate for the tearing down of the Berlin wall.

9. What does the author believe about the relationship between freedom and security?

- A. They are mutually exclusive.
- B. They are closely linked and reinforce each other.
- C. Freedom is more important than security.
- D. Security is more important than freedom.

10. Based on the passage, what does the author want General Secretary Gorbachev to do?

- A. Release all political prisoners in the Soviet Union.
- B. Allow foreign news broadcasts to be jammed.
- C. Open the gate to the Berlin wall.
- D. Tear down the walls in Eastern Europe.

Answer Key:

1. B
2. A
3. D
4. C
5. B
6. C
7. C
8. D
9. B
10. C