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3/4/14

History 133C: Germany 1945-Present

Source Exploration Version 2

Source Exploration Version 2: Ronald Reagan’s Berlin Speech,

June 12, 1987

1. According to [wikipedia.com](http://wikipedia.com), the Berlin Wall was built in 1961, and it soon became a symbol of communist oppression. East Germany erected the Wall to prevent Westerners from moving to the East and vice-versa. At the time, tensions were high because the U.S. had stationed short-range missiles in Europe.

b) A transcript of the speech can be found at the Reagan Presidential Library website: https://www.reaganfoundation.org

c) According to [wikipedia.com](http://wikipedia.com), in 1980, Reagan won the President election against Jimmy Carter. In 1981, a failed assassination attempt nearly took his life. Reagan advanced policies that reduced social programs and restrictions on business. There were also tax cuts to stimulate the economy. He increased military spending. He also appointed the first woman to the U.S. Supreme Court - Sandra Day O’Connor. Reagan was very anti-communist. He provided aid to anti-communist movement in Africa, Asia, and Latin America. One of Reagan’s most controversial programs was the Strategic Defense Initiative. Jokingly, it was dubbed “Star Wars” by the media for it’s over-the-top goals that included laser beams being sent up into space. According to <http://www.coldwar.org/articles/80s/SDI-StarWars.asp>, the intent of this program was to develop an anti-ballistic missile system in order to protect the U.S. from missile attacks launched by other countries. Furthermore, the article states, “The weapons required included space- and ground-based nuclear X-ray lasers, subatomic particle beams, and computer-guided projectiles fired by electromagnetic rail guns—all under the central control of a supercomputer system.” Due to budget issues, the program was ultimately set aside. During his second term, Reagan had a strong diplomatic relationship with Mikhail Gorbachev, the chairman of the Soviet Union. In 1987, the Soviets and Americans signed an agreement to get rid of intermediate-range nuclear missiles. Also in 1987, Reagan spoke at the Berlin Wall, which had become a symbol of communism. He challenged Gorbachev to “tear down this wall.” Over two years later, the wall was torn down brick by brick and with it, ended Soviet domination of East Germany.

d) A quick search on [amazon.com](http://amazon.com) reveals that Ronald Reagan has authored books. He has also allowed his personal diaries and letters to be published. The five most popular search results are:

1) An American Life: Ronald Reagan

2) The Notes: Ronald Reagan’s Private Collection of Stories and Wisdom

3) The Reagan Diaries

4) Reagan: A Life in Letters

5) Abortion and the Conscience of the Nation

e) According to <http://www.historyplace.com/speeches/reagan-tear-down.htm> , Reagan’s speech contains one of the most memorable lines in presidential speech history: “Tear down this wall!” The Berlin Wall was built by Communists to keep Germans from escaping to the Democratic West Berlin. The wall included electrified fences and guard posts. It became a symbol of the U.S. versus Soviet Russia, a symbol of the Cold War. Reagan, being a passionate anti-communist, traveled to Berlin to deliver his speech and his plea for the wall to be tore down.

f) The original speech was not in German. However, because the speech was delivered in Germany, German translations must exist.

g) From a google scholar search of “Ronald Reagan tear down this wall”: <http://www.cre.org/memberdata/pdfs/28_3_review_mccoy.pdf> . This article comes from the Counselors of Real Estate. It is a review of the book, “How Ronald Reagan Changed My Life, by Peter Robinsin, the speech writer for the Present. From the article, “Robinson was clearly one of the President’s most effective speech writers, coming up with the memorable phrase: ‘Mr. Gorbachev, tear down this wall!’ ” Robinson states that most advisors did not want the famous line to be included in the speech because they felt it had a flavor of war-mongering, but the line did make it into the speech and it has become one of the more renowned lines in Presidential speech history.

h) There’s a very good Wikipedia entry for the speech and the background surrounding the speech. The entry is titled, “Tear down this wall!” The link is here: <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tear_down_this_wall>! . The page has background information, the speech, response and legacy, and also lists credible references. A couple of these references include a USA Today article marking the 20th anniversary of the speech; located at: <http://usatoday30.usatoday.com/news/world/2007-06-12-reagan-speech_N.htm> . Another article comes from the New York Times archive database located at: http://www.nytimes.com/1987/06/13/world/raze-berlin-wall-reagan-urges-soviet.html. The article was written the day after the speech was given and is titled “Raze Berlin Wall, Reagan Urges Soviet” (I’m certain this isn’t the proper title as there are grammatical and spelling errors, but that is the title that is given in the New York Times article). In it, writer, Gerald M. Boyd, states, “President Reagan sought today to undercut Europe's perception of Mikhail S. Gorbachev as a leader of peace, bluntly challenging the Soviet leader to tear down the Berlin wall.” Another source on the wikipedia page comes from Anthony R. Dolan, a colleague of Reagan’s speechwriter, Robinson. In the article, he writes that Reagan did, in fact, come up with the line “Tear down this wall!” while others will argue that it was Reagan’s speechwriters. The article can be found at: http://online.wsj.com/news/articles/SB10001424052748704431804574538002351222272?mg=reno64-wsj&url=http%3A%2F%2Fonline.wsj.com%2Farticle%2FSB10001424052748704431804574538002351222272.html

1. I did a <https://books.google.com/ngrams> search for “Ronald Reagan” between 1980 and 2000 with a smoothing of 3. Between 1980 and 1990, Reagan’s name appears in an upward trend, peaking in 1988 and 1989, when the Berlin Wall opened.

j) Reagan’s speech can be compared to JFK’s “Ich bin ein Berliner” speech. Both speeches were aimed at the Soviets and were clear statements of American policy.