

## HISTORISCHE FEIERTAGE IM JUNI

**President Reagan's Speech to Mikhail Gorbachev in Berlin  
(der 12. Juni 1987)**

**“Tear down this wall!” (Berlin Wall)**

**On Reagan Anniversary, Remembering Landmark Words at Berlin Wall**



Reagan to Gorbachev: 'Tear down this wall!'

Ronald Reagan would have turned 100 years old on February 6, 2011. The former Governor of California and actor turned president, called the “Great Communicator” and the “Gipper,” left an indelible mark, in multifarious ways, on American politics and culture.

But there is one communication delivered by the former president that, in the German psyche, takes a predominant place. That one, which came to symbolize Reagan's Cold War policy, was the famous speech delivered before the Brandenburg Gate in Berlin on June 12, 1987. For it was on that day, commemorating the 750th anniversary of Berlin, that Reagan defied advisers from his own White House, the State Department and the National Security Council, by addressing “Mr. Gorbachev” with four provocative words.

“Tear down this wall,” he implored his Soviet counterpart.

The West Berliners applauded, just as they had done a sentence before, when Reagan asked the Soviet premier, Mikhail Gorbachev, to “open this gate.” The import of one line – and, indeed, one plucked from a speech full of significance – is debatable. Its symbolism, however, less so. Moreover, the import of Reagan's overall role in the Cold War produces less disagreement than the that of those four words.

Twenty-nine months after the speech, on November 9, 1989, the gate did open – and the wall did fall.

At Reagan's death, on June 5, 2004, former German Chancellor Gerhard Schröder wrote the following in a letter to then President George W Bush: “His commitment to overcoming the East-West conflict and his vision of a free and united Europe helped pave the way for those developments that ultimately enabled Germany also to regain its unity. In Germany therefore the memory of President Reagan will always be revered.”