

HISTORISCHE FEIERTAGE IM JUNI

**President Reagan's Speech to Mikhail Gorbachev in Berlin
(der 12. Juni 1987)
"Tear down this wall!" (Berlin Wall)**

"I wonder if they have ever asked themselves that if they should have the kind of government they apparently seek, no-one would ever be able to do what they're doing again."

Reagan later recalled that police on the other side were restraining throngs of East Berliners from approaching the Wall to hear his words.

But on the West side, he wrote, "I addressed tens and tens of thousands of people – stretching as far as I could see.

"I got a tremendous reception – interrupted 28 times by cheers."

At the time, the speech didn't earn Reagan the garlands or achieve the impact that its valorisation since would suggest.

The Soviet TASS press agency called it "an openly provocative, war-mongering speech."

And the American press didn't focus on the exhortation to remove the wall at the time, with many Americans completely unaware that the president had uttered those words – [as TIME reported in 2007](#) on the 20th anniversary.

In fact, it was only with hindsight that the speech began to appear significant.

It took 29 more months for resistance among the East German population to the communist regime to finally reach boiling point and force the panicked government to open the gates.

East Germany – and the whole Eastern Bloc – had bigger, deeper reasons for collapsing than a punchy speech from a US president.

Nevertheless, reading Reagan's words again today exposes the fundamental differences of his policy from that of previous leaders.

He extended a hand to engage with a changing Soviet Union under Gorbachev where his predecessors had been stuck in an implacable confrontation.

If those two men had not been in the right place at the right time, who knows how many years longer the wall might have stood?