

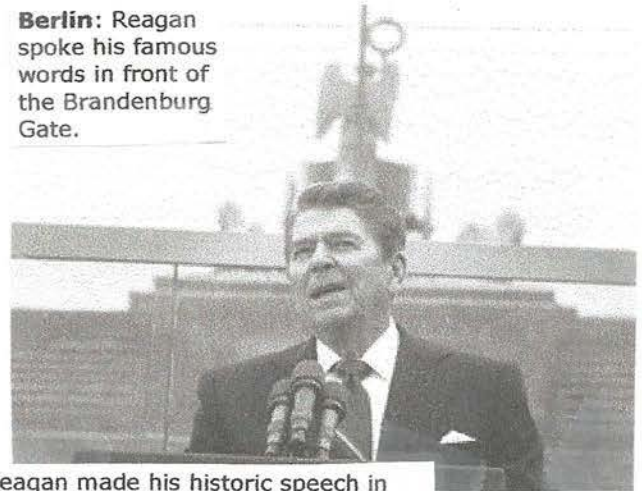
HISTORISCHE FEIERTAGE IM JUNI

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

Arrival: Reagan flew into Tempelhof Airport.



Berlin: Reagan spoke his famous words in front of the Brandenburg Gate.



Twenty years ago, then US President Ronald Reagan made his historic speech in front of the Berlin Wall. His message for his Soviet counterpart was clear: "Mr. Gorbachev, tear down this wall."

On June 12, 1987, President Reagan addressed the residents of Berlin with his back to the Berlin Wall. With these few words Reagan redirected his remarks further east toward the Soviet Union and its leader Mikhail Gorbachev.

At the time of the speech, the Soviet Union was in the midst of *glasnost*, Gorbachev's plan to liberalize the Soviet economy. The two leaders had met less than two years earlier in Geneva, where witnesses say they struck up a personal relationship.

It might have been just six words, but they were part of a long dialogue about communism, the Cold War and world peace that culminated in the fall of the Berlin Wall less than two and a half years later.

A fight over words

In the months preceding Reagan's visit to Berlin a "hell of a fight went on" regarding the precise wording of Reagan's speech at the wall, according to Helmut Trotnow, the director of the Allied Museum in Berlin.

Reagan's speech had been written by Peter Robinson, a young presidential speechwriter who spent several months in Berlin consulting officials on what should go into the 20-minute speech.

"There was a great amount of discussion at the US Secretary of State and National Security level about what should be included in the speech," Trotnow said in an interview with German news agency dpa.

During the drafting process, there was an immense amount of debate over three months, with the document being passed back and forth. US National Security Advisor and future Secretary of State, Colin Powell was among those with objections to what Reagan was about to say.

"This was, after all, a time when events were moving fast in the Soviet Union and there was much talk about Perestroika (economic restructuring) and Glasnost (liberalization and cultural thaw)," said Trotnow.