



# The Berlin Wall: August 13, 1961 - November 9, 1989

By Frederick Taylor

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**The Berlin Wall: August 13, 1961 - November 9, 1989** By Frederick Taylor

On the morning of August 13, 1961, the residents of East Berlin found themselves cut off from family, friends and jobs in the West by a tangle of barbed wire that ruthlessly cut a city of four million in two. Within days the barbed-wire entanglement would undergo an extraordinary metamorphosis: it became an imposing 103-mile-long wall guarded by three hundred watchtowers. A physical manifestation of the struggle between Soviet Communism and American capitalism—totalitarianism and freedom—that would stand for nearly thirty years, the Berlin Wall was the high-risk fault line between East and West on which rested the fate of all humanity. Many brave people risked their lives to overcome this lethal barrier, and some paid the ultimate price.

In this captivating work, sure to be the definitive history on the subject, Frederick Taylor weaves together official history, archival materials and personal accounts to tell the complete story of the Wall's rise and fall, from the postwar political tensions that created a divided Berlin to the internal and external pressures that led to the Wall's demise. In addition, he explores the geopolitical ramifications as well as the impact the wall had on ordinary lives that is still felt today. For the first time the entire world faced the threat of imminent nuclear apocalypse, a fear that would be eased only when the very people the Wall had been built to imprison breached it on the historic night of November 9, 1989.

Gripping and authoritative, *The Berlin Wall* is the first comprehensive account of a divided city and its people in a time when the world seemed to stand permanently on the edge of destruction.

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## **The Berlin Wall: August 13, 1961 - November 9, 1989** By Frederick Taylor Bibliography

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### Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly

*Starred Review.* Walls, like those of Hadrian and Maginot, do not have a good reputation, and Taylor (*Dresden*) has written a superb narrative of the rise and fall of the monstrous one that scarred Berlin between August 1961 and November 1989. Walls, too, are more than merely bricks and mortar (or, in the 100-mile-long Berlin version's case, anti-vehicle crash obstacles, unclimbable barriers, barbed-wire fences, self-activating searchlights and heavily armed border guards), and one of Taylor's major themes is the Berlin Wall's significance in the global power politics of the Cold War. According to Taylor, Kennedy, Macmillan and de Gaulle were not decisively opposed to the division between East and West Germans. Berlin, in truth, was a dangerously volatile potential flashpoint, and while the erection of the wall was brutal and oppressive to those caught behind or trying to get over it, it stabilized Europe and symbolized the differences between capitalism and communism. Reagan, however, emphasized the rights of the trapped and challenged Gorbachev to tear it down. The Kremlin, ironically, was undone by its own creation. Taylor's enthralling story, combined with impeccable research and its rich human interest, makes this as dramatically gripping as any of the spy thrillers that used the wall as a backdrop. 16 pages of b&w photos, map. (*June 1*)

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From [Booklist](#)

On August 13, 1961, Berliners from both the western and Soviet sectors awoke to find their city divided by a barbed wire barrier. Within weeks the barrier would be converted into a wall, and eventually other obstacles and guard towers would be added. The effect was devastating, as families were divided, friendships severed, and East Berliners forced to live in a virtual prison state for 28 years. Symbolically, the wall presented a physical manifestation of the division of Europe; it also served as a brutal reminder of the tyranny and failures of communism. Yet, as Taylor eloquently illustrates, the wall served the purposes of both the Eastern bloc and the major Western powers. For the fragile East German state, the barrier stopped the intolerable drain of the best and brightest citizens; for the Americans and other Western powers, the sealing off of the Soviet-controlled sector provided a measure of stability and predictability in their relations with the Soviet bloc. Taylor provides a fascinating and often heartbreakingly account of both the human costs and the geopolitical effects. Freeman, Jay

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Review

"A serious, edifying experience ... comprehensive history ... books that hold your attention and don't waste your time are highly prized" -- *Janet Maslin, CBS Sunday Morning "Hot Summer Books" 10 June 2007*

"[A] gripping, impassioned history of the cold war's most malevolent symbol...The tales are both horrific and thrilling" -- *New York Times 6 June 2007*

"Taylor's extraordinary narrative skill - with the pacing of a thriller and the immediacy of reportage - is at its best" -- *The Irish Times 6 January 2007*

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