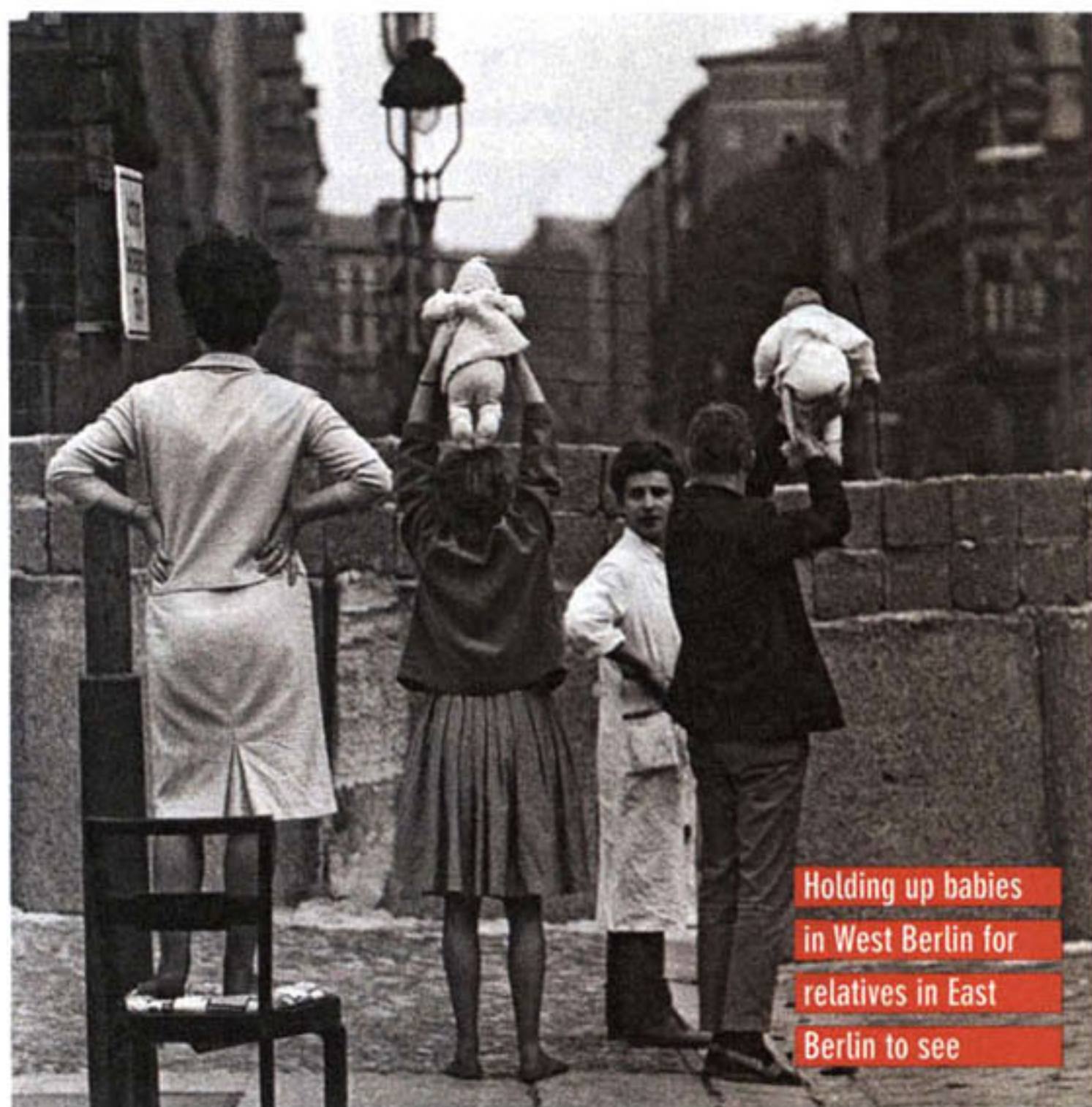


Building  
the Wall  
in 1961



Holding up babies  
in West Berlin for  
relatives in East  
Berlin to see

# 1989: THE FALL OF THE

**THE WALL NOT ONLY DIVIDED BERLIN, IT WAS A POWERFUL SYMBOL OF THE COLD WAR. WHEN IT CAME CRASHING DOWN 20 YEARS AGO, IT LITERALLY CHANGED THE MAP OF THE WORLD.**

By Craig R. Whitney

**F**or several hours on the night of Nov. 9, 1989, an East German border guard named Harold Jaeger hesitated. With astonishment, he had watched a Communist official say on TV that East Germans were now free to travel without getting special permission.

He had no idea what was going on. In the almost three decades since the Berlin Wall had gone up in 1961, Jaeger had stood guard there. “That wall was my life,” he recalled in an interview. “I’d defended it for 28 years.”

But shortly after 11 p.m., in the absence of instructions from superiors and in the face of a growing crowd, Jaeger gave the order to open the gates at his checkpoint.

“I did not free Europe, or release my people, or any of that nonsense,” Jaeger insisted. “It was that crowd in front of me and the hopeless confusion of my leadership that opened those gates.”

So began the end of the Cold War, the struggle between democracy and Communism that largely defined the world between 1945 and 1991. The pre-eminent symbol of that struggle, and the painful division of post-World War II Europe, was the Berlin Wall—a 96-mile barrier dotted with 302 sentry towers and gun emplacements, topped with razor wire, and protected by minefields.

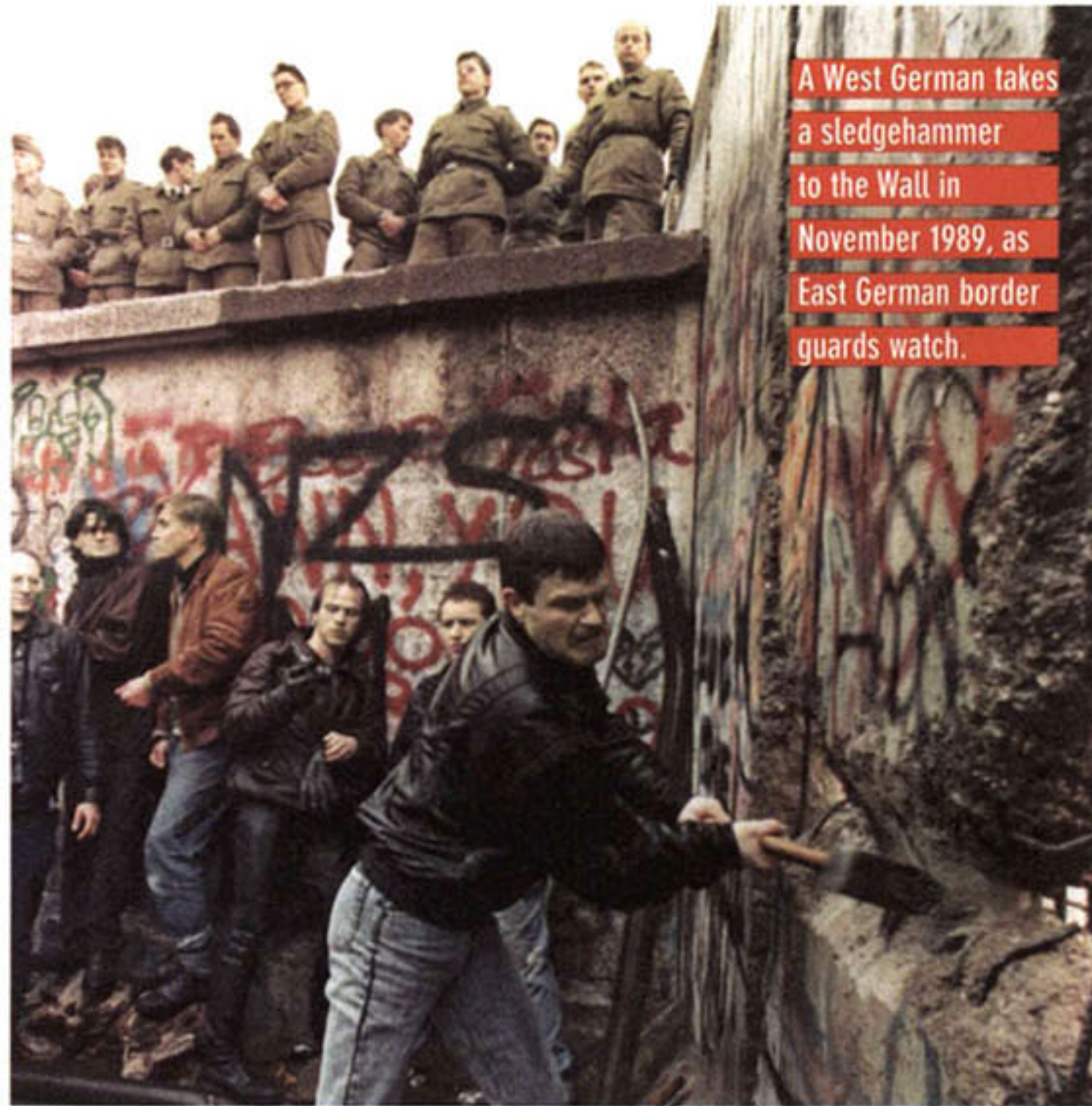
## THE IRON CURTAIN

When the gates finally opened, crowds poured through from East Berlin to freedom. It wasn’t clear at the time, but the end of Soviet domination of much of Europe—and the end of the Soviet Union itself—was soon to follow, leaving the United States as the sole global superpower.

The Cold War began after the end of World War II in 1945. It’s known as the “Cold War” because it never turned hot



East German border guards remove the body of 18-year-old Peter Fechter, shot while trying to escape over the Wall in 1962.



A West German takes a sledgehammer to the Wall in November 1989, as East German border guards watch.

# BERLIN WALL

(though at times, like the Cuban Missile Crisis, it came close). The U.S. and the Soviet Union and their allies knew that any serious escalation of tensions could lead to a nuclear conflict in which millions might die.

During World War II, the U.S. and the Soviet Union, along with Britain and France, had fought as allies against Nazi Germany. As German forces retreated, Soviet troops advanced and ended up in control of most of Eastern Europe and Germany by the time the war ended in 1945. A year later, former British Prime Minister Winston Churchill warned that an “iron curtain” had descended, dividing Eastern and Western Europe.

Behind it, Communist governments took power in Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia, Poland, Hungary, Romania, Yugoslavia, and Albania. Germany was partitioned into democratic West Germany and Communist East Germany. Berlin was located in East Germany,

but because U.S., British, and French forces had captured West Berlin in 1945, the city was divided into democratic (West) and Communist (East) halves (*see map, p. 18*).

Between 1949 and 1961, 1.6 million people—10 percent of the population—fled the political repression and stagnant state-controlled economy of East Germany. The easiest escape route was a subway ride from East Berlin to West Berlin, and by 1961, more than 10,000 East Germans were leaving every month.

To halt the hemorrhaging, on August 13, the Soviets and the East Germans began building a concrete wall that slashed through Berlin, and soon imprisoned its 16 million people. East German guards were ordered to shoot anyone trying to get over the Wall, with more than 130 people killed trying to escape in the next



The New York Times, Nov. 10, 1989

Craig R. Whitney is an assistant managing editor of The New York Times. Additional reporting by Roger Cohen of The Times.



## ▲ 1945 YALTA CONFERENCE

In February, British Prime Minister Winston Churchill, President Franklin D. Roosevelt, and Soviet leader Joseph Stalin meet at Yalta, in the Soviet Union, to discuss plans for postwar Europe. Germany surrenders three months later.

## 1947 MARSHALL PLAN

With postwar Europe in ruins and the U.S. worried about Soviet expansion, Washington launches a massive economic recovery program for Western Europe. Named for Secretary of State George Marshall, the plan provides billions in aid.



## ▲ 1948-49 BERLIN AIRLIFT

In June 1948, the Soviet Union blockades West Berlin, the only part of East Germany not under Soviet control. The U.S. and its allies begin a daily airlift of food and supplies to keep the city from starving. The Soviets lift the blockade in May 1949.

## 1950-53 KOREAN WAR

Communist North Korea invades South Korea in June 1950. U.N. forces, led by the U.S., defend South Korea, while China backs the North. The war, in which 36,000 Americans die, lasts three years and ends in a stalemate.



## 1957 SPUTNIK

The Soviets send the first satellite into orbit, catching the U.S. off guard and launching the "space race." The U.S. ultimately "wins" when it lands the first men on the moon in July 1969.

three decades—in addition to the 1,200 who died trying to escape to the West from elsewhere in East Germany.

The Wall divided Berlin, literally and figuratively, running through buildings and separating families. People had to stand on rooftops or climb street lamps to wave to relatives on the other side or show them newborn babies.

Over the years, the western side of the Wall became a raucous, graffiti-covered tribute to free speech. On the eastern side, authorities tore down buildings to create an open area known as the "death strip," where soldiers in guard towers could shoot anyone trying to escape.

## JFK & REAGAN

"I know the Wall is an ugly thing," Soviet leader Nikita Khrushchev said soon after its construction. "But what was I to do? It isn't hard to work out how long it would have taken for the East German economy to collapse unless we took immediate action against the mass exodus."

So why did the U.S. and its allies allow the Berlin Wall to be built in the first place? After 1945, the U.S. decided to confront Communism through containment rather than risk nuclear war. Containment meant applying patient pressure—military, economic, and moral—and avoiding a frontal attack. While the

Wall imprisoned people and symbolized the division of Europe, it was not a land grab.

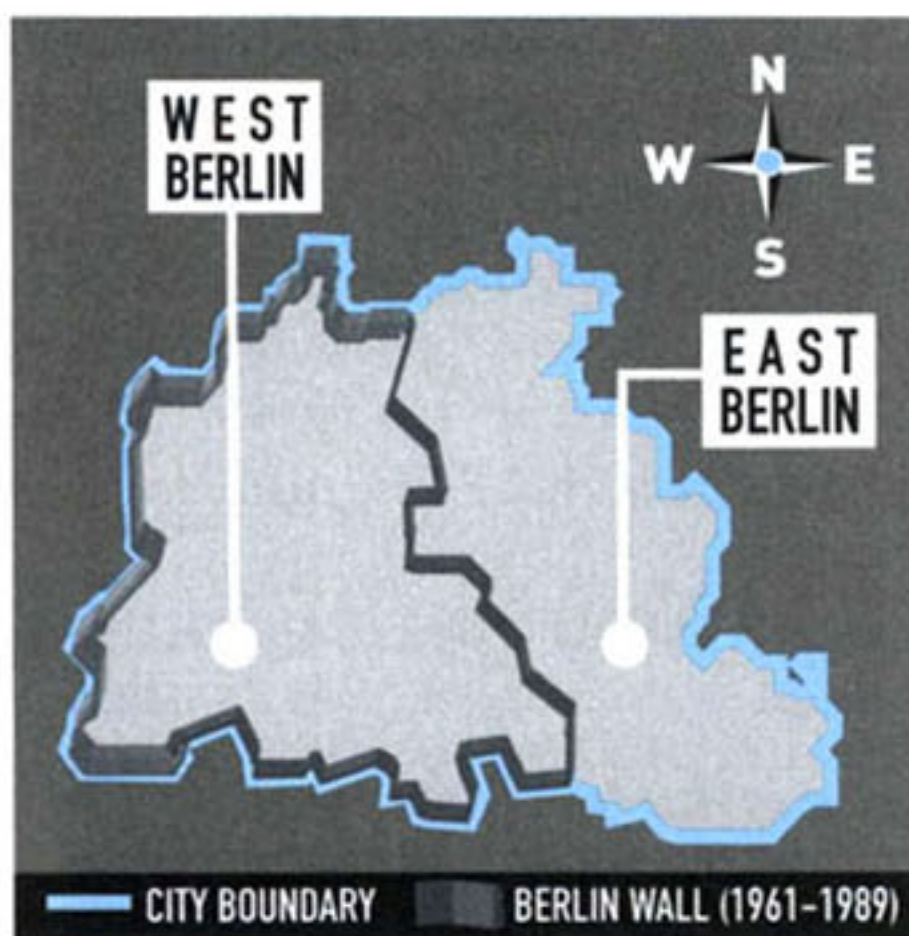
From the start, President John F. Kennedy showed his solidarity with West Berliners. On June 26, 1963, standing in front of West Berlin's City Hall, he declared: "As a free man, I take pride in the words, *Ich bin ein Berliner.*" ("I am a Berliner.")

His words made it clear that Berlin was the epicenter of the West's struggle to free Europe from Soviet control. Twenty-four years after Kennedy, in 1987, another American President, Ronald Reagan, came to Berlin and issued a dramatic challenge to Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev, while standing just 100 yards from the Wall.

"Secretary General Gorbachev, if you seek peace, if you seek prosperity for the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe, if you seek liberalization: come here, to this gate," Reagan said. "Mr. Gorbachev, tear down this wall."

Gorbachev never did order East Germany to tear down the Wall. But by the late 1980s, the Soviet Union was militarily drained, economically stretched, and morally sapped. The Soviets no longer had the discipline or conviction to maintain a failed economic and political system based on the threat of violence toward dissenters.

**DIVIDED & SURROUNDED** Berlin was cut in two, with West Berlin encircled by a hostile East Germany.





## ▲ 1962

## CUBAN MISSILE CRISIS

U.S. spy planes discover nuclear sites being built by the Soviets in Cuba. After a 13-day standoff between the U.S. and the Soviet Union that takes the world to the brink of nuclear war, the Soviets remove the missiles.



## ▲ 1960s-1975

## VIETNAM WAR

In 1965, the U.S. sends troops to aid South Vietnam in its war against Communist North Vietnam, which is supported by the Soviets and the Chinese. By the time the war ends in 1975, 58,000 Americans have died.

## 1979 AFGHAN INVASION

Soviet troops invade Afghanistan. With help from the U.S., Pakistan, and others, Islamic insurgents known as *mujahideen* wage a 10-year guerilla war against the Soviets, who withdraw in 1989.



## 1985 GORBACHEV'S RISE

Mikhail Gorbachev becomes leader of the Soviet Union. In response to his nation's dire economic situation, he introduces free-market reforms known as *perestroika*, and a limited expansion of political freedom known as *glasnost*.

## ▲ 1991 SOVIET COLLAPSE

After popular uprisings sweep away Communist regimes in much of Eastern Europe, the Soviet Union formally disbands and Gorbachev (above, with President George H.W. Bush) gives up power.

The first break in the Iron Curtain came two years after Reagan's visit. Some of the Soviet "satellite" nations had been gradually liberalizing their political and economic systems in the 1980s. When Hungary opened its border with Austria in August 1989, thousands of East Germans (who were allowed to travel to other Soviet satellites) headed to Hungary as a way to escape to the West. Demonstrations soon broke out all over East Germany, with a million people gathering in East Berlin on November 1 to demand freedom.

## A NEW ERA

A week after Gorbachev made it clear that Soviet troops in East Germany would not intervene, East Germany began opening checkpoints at the Wall and allowing East Berliners to cross. Jubilant West Berliners met them on the other side. Disbelief soon gave way to euphoria; people danced on the Wall, while others took turns swinging sledgehammers to tear it down.

The Wall had held back the tide of history for almost 30 years; once it was breached, change came at a furious pace, sweeping Europe and the world into a new era. A year later, East and West Germany were reunited, and in 1991, the Soviet Union itself col-

lapsed. After four decades, Russia—as the country is once again called—and the U.S. are no longer adversaries, if not exactly friends or allies.

With the U.S. as the sole remaining superpower, there was a great deal of talk about a "new world order" free of conflict and a "Pax Americana"—a reference to the Pax Romana, when Rome was the sole superpower of the ancient world.

"At that moment, there was a kind of euphoria," says Sheldon Himelfarb of the U.S. Institute of Peace in Washington. "There was a hope of a more peaceful, more prosperous, more interconnected world."

But it wasn't long before conflicts, new and old, resurfaced: Ethnic tensions (many of which had been suppressed under Communist rule) sparked wars in the Balkans and genocide in Rwanda. And in the Middle East, the rise of Islamic fundamental-

ism fueled terrorism against the West, with the 9/11 attacks on the U.S. coming just 12 years after the fall of the Wall.

"The bipolar world was suddenly a multilateral world, and we are not ready for it," says Himelfarb. "We have a lot of learning to do." ●

## COLD WAR EUROPE The Iron Curtain divided Europe from 1945 to 1989.



# MINIMUM WAGE: DOES IT HELP YOU OR HURT YOU?



### CRITICAL THINKING

Ask students to share their work experiences. What types of jobs do they hold, and what are their qualifications? → Ask the students who work whether they work at, below, or above minimum wage? Do they feel they are paid fairly? Why or why not? → What do students do

with their money? How much do they spend, save, and donate? → Why is financial responsibility important, even at a young age? The term "living wage" refers to the hourly wage that, at a minimum, supports a standard of living above the poverty level in a specific place.

How does living wage differ from minimum wage? Should they be the same? Explain.

### WRITING PROMPT

Take the position of an hourly worker or a business owner and argue in an essay for or against raising the minimum wage, backing up your position with facts and examples.

### DEBATE

Support or refute: A higher minimum wage will stimulate

### WEB WATCH

<http://www.dol.gov/dol/topic/wages/minimumwage.htm>

Explanations of minimum wage laws and regulations, statistics, information sheets, and more, from the U.S. Department of Labor

the economy because workers will have more money to spend.

### DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

What arguments are made in the article that a minimum-wage hike will hurt those it's designed to help? Do you agree or disagree, and why?

Why was the minimum wage first created? What else do you think should be required for all workers?

What jobs are typically minimum-wage jobs?

How can minimum-wage jobs help teens prepare for future employment?

Why do young people account for such a large percentage of minimum-wage earners?

### FAST FACT

Along with establishing a national minimum wage, the Fair Labor Standards Act of 1938 set standards for overtime pay and child labor. It was later amended to require equal pay for men and women. ●

## TIMES PAST

# 1989: THE FALL OF THE BERLIN WALL



### CRITICAL THINKING

Divide the class in half with a barrier of desks. Assign one half to represent West Berlin and the other to represent East Berlin. Ask students to share their thoughts of their lives, their country, and the future.

The East German government called the Wall the "Anti-Fascist Protection Rampart." Why? What did the Wall represent to Berliners, East and West, as well as to people in other parts of the world?

### WRITING PROMPT

Write a first-person narrative from the perspective of someone on one side of the Berlin Wall. How does this person view the Wall and the governments and people on either side? How has it changed his or her life and how might things change if the Wall were dismantled?

### DEBATE

Support or refute: The U.S. and its allies should have taken a stand

### WEB WATCH

[www.newseum.org/berlinwall](http://www.newseum.org/berlinwall)

The Newseum's interactive online exhibit on news coverage of the Berlin Wall from its construction in 1961 to its destruction in 1989

against the building of the Berlin Wall.

### DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

What did the East German government hope the Wall would keep in and keep out?

Why do you think Winston Churchill's imagery of the "Iron Curtain" was so powerful?

What weakened the Soviet Union and its control of other countries by the late 1980s?

Who took down the Wall, both literally and figuratively? How and why?

What did the "Pax Americana" refer to? Why was the euphoria over the end of the Cold War so short-lived?

### FAST FACT

The Brandenburg Gate is the only structure incorporated into the Wall that is still standing. It is located near Checkpoint Charlie, which is now the Berlin Wall Museum. ●

# 1989: THE FALL OF THE BERLIN WALL

❶ Put these events in chronological order:

- a President Kennedy states, "Ich bin ein Berliner"
- b Winston Churchill's "Iron Curtain" speech
- c East Germany opens checkpoints in the Wall
- d Work begins on the Berlin Wall
- e Collapse of the Soviet Union
- f Beginning of the Cold War
- g Hungary opens its border with Austria

❷ Which of the following is *not* true of the Soviet Union in the decade following the end of World War II?

- a It began to stockpile nuclear weapons.
- b It controlled East Berlin.
- c It helped Communists take control of countries across Eastern Europe.
- d It was on the brink of economic collapse.

❸ Until the Berlin Wall was built,

- a the Soviet Union controlled the border between East and West Berlin.

- b the U.S. maintained a laissez-faire attitude about the partitioning of Berlin.
- c it was fairly easy to flee East Berlin and enter West Berlin.
- d East German guards patrolled the city's streets.

❹ The U.S. and its allies did not intervene to stop the building of the Berlin Wall because

- a there was no economic reason to do so.
- b they feared sparking a war, possibly a nuclear war, with the Soviet Union.
- c it was unclear what this physical division would do to the city.
- d East German leaders refused to talk to them.

❺ In 1987, President Reagan famously challenged Russian leader Mikhail Gorbachev to "\_\_\_\_\_."

- a tear down this wall
- b join a Pax Americana
- c set your people free
- d pull back the Iron Curtain

## IN-DEPTH QUESTIONS

- ❶ Why did change come at such a fast pace after the Berlin Wall came down? What were some of the political, social, and economic effects of that event?
- ❷ What other countries have employed physical barriers to keep people or ideologies in or out? How are those examples similar to and different from the Berlin Wall?

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**READ** the statements.

**CALL** on the first team with a hand raised.

CORRECT ANSWER = 10 points  
WRONG ANSWER = -10 points  
(And another team may respond for the same chance to gain or lose 10 points.)

## G.I. JANE

- |  |                                       |
|--|---------------------------------------|
| 1 Some women fought in the Civil War by doing this.  | What is disguising themselves as men? |
| 2 Women's branches of the Army, Navy, Marines, and this branch of the Armed Forces were created during World War II. | What is the Coast Guard?              |
| 3 From 1948 to 1967, the number of women in each branch of the military was capped at this percentage.               | What is two percent?                  |
| 4 Women in the U.S. military have been critical in the current wars in these two countries.                          | What are Afghanistan and Iraq?        |
| 5 More than a dozen countries allow women in all or some of these types of operations.                               | What are ground combat operations?    |

## 1989: THE FALL OF THE BERLIN WALL

- |  |                           |
|--|---------------------------|
| 1 During the Cold War America and its allies worked to contain the spread of this ideology.  | What is Communism?        |
| 2 Former British Prime Minister Winston Churchill said that this had descended across Europe, dividing East from West.                 | What is an iron curtain?  |
| 3 Construction of the Berlin Wall begin in this year.  | What is 1961?             |
| 4 After World War II, the U.S. and its allies decided that confronting Communism through containment was better than the risk of this. | What is nuclear war?      |
| 5 The collapse of this superpower was a direct result of the dismantling of the Berlin Wall.   | What is the Soviet Union? |

### ANSWER KEY

#### QUIZ 1 ► PAGE TE 5

- [c] as nurses
- [a] placed a 2 percent cap on the number of women serving in any one branch.
- [b] Their success has been widely publicized.
- [d] conventional battle lines do not exist.
- [b] doubled

#### QUIZ 2 ► PAGE TE 5

- [b] they are difficult for governments to control.
- [d] encourage other countries to send in military assistance
- [a] an uprising in Mexico
- [a] monitor web postings
- [c] their economic growth may depend on them.
- Answers will vary, but may include the printing press and telegraph.

#### QUIZ 3 ► PAGE TE 6

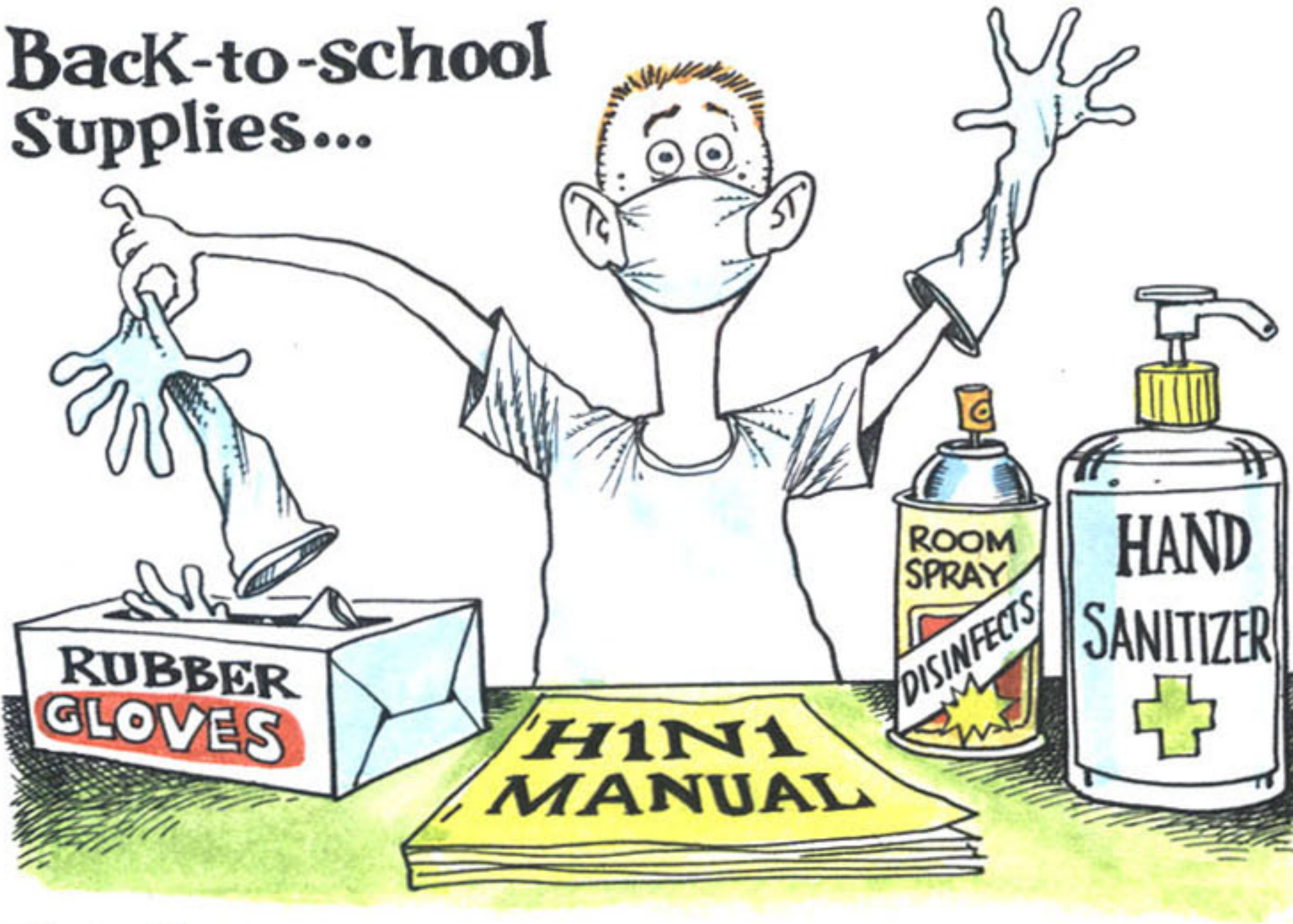
- f, b, d, a, g, c, e
- [d] It was on the brink of economic collapse.
- [c] It was fairly easy to flee East Berlin and enter West Berlin.
- [b] They feared sparking a war, possibly a nuclear war, with the Soviet Union.
- [a] tear down this wall

#### GRAPH EXERCISE ► PAGE TE 4

- [d] 2004-2008
- [c] 2003
- [b] 350
- [a] 1997
- [b] 3 percent

**ONLINE TEACHER TOOLS PASSWORD: senate**

# Back-to-school Supplies...



DAVE GRANLUND © www.davegranlund.com

## ANALYZE THE POLITICAL CARTOON

- 1 What new school supplies does this student have, and where would you normally find them?
- 2 What does H1N1 refer to, and why is it an issue in schools this year?
- 3 How would you describe the student's expression?
- 4 Were any of these supplies on your school supply list this year?
- 5 How do you feel about the media's coverage of this issue?

DAVE GRANLUND • CAGLE

## PHOTO ANALYSIS



## ANALYZE THE PHOTO

(See page 17 in the magazine)

- 1 What two groups of people are shown in this photograph? How might each group have felt about the events taking place?
- 2 What do you think the photographer heard when taking this picture?
- 3 What did the destruction of the Wall by ordinary citizens symbolize?

**ESSAY**  
 What physical barriers separate groups of people around the world today, and why?