

shifting walls

European History through the Eyes of the Young

shifting walls: Three stories

1. The other part of Germany by Mabel

_The Fall of the Wall



(translated from the German original story, fotos from the family collection)

From an interview with my mother, born in 1967

"As a West Berlin child, the image of the Wall was nothing unusual for me - unusual only because I encountered it so rarely, growing up in the inner city. From the stories told by family and other adults, of course, one knew that a wall had been built around West Berlin that didn't belong there. Precisely because there were also relatives in the so-called "other part of Germany," it was at least mentioned more often.

Visitors from West Germany gave Berliners the feeling of being something special: unlike in Hamburg or Munich, a telephone call cost twenty pfennigs and did not become more expensive even after six hours. In addition, the employees and workers in West Berlin received the so-called Berlin allowance, an extra on top of their salary, which was supposed to compensate, among other things, for the effort one had to make as a West Berliner to visit relatives in West Germany, for example. Because at that time, if we wanted to visit family members by car, we were forced to drive through the GDR, which surrounded us, and this resulted in border controls of uncertain length. Not only did we need a passport, but we also had to let the "border guards" look into the car and the trunk. It was feared that we wanted to import "Western goods" into East Germany, which was strictly forbidden. It was not only at the border that we children from West Berlin were given

the image of a gloomy GDR, in which people were not only poor but also had to suffer from a number of prohibitions. Our relatives, parents and grandparents also confirmed this and emphasized again and again that we as West Berliners, on the other hand, had every freedom and should consider ourselves lucky.

What I remember about the GDR is that everything looked terribly grey: there were no billboards, little colour. And when I visited the GDR, I was constantly told by my grandmother that I should keep a low profile and not behave in a conspicuous manner.

The greater the personal connection to the GDR, the more often one was referred to it. I remember that my grandmother regularly, sometimes even weekly, sent large packages to her sister, nieces and nephews. Usually these contained canned goods, coffee and chocolate, as well as tights, jeans and drugstore items. Often my grandmother also received lists asking for textiles so that her GDR relatives could sew things for themselves. Some of the photos were taken from the premises of my grandfather's textile wholesale business in Berlin Kreuzberg.

As a teenager, I went on a day trip to East Berlin with my school class. We took the S-Bahn to Friedrichstraße station, where we each had to exchange 25 DM for East Marks and had the day at our leisure. I remember how difficult it was for us to spend the money. Despite going to department stores, restaurants and bookstores, most of us didn't succeed, because everything in the GDR was much cheaper than in West Berlin.

A few years later, I saw the fall of the Wall on television. My family was very happy and everyone was moved to tears. The next day I had to leave the house early in the morning and get on the bus at Kurfürstendamm, it was only shortly after seven, but the streets were full. I was very happy to get to know the former GDR citizens better in the years after the fall of the Wall, and I and my friends quickly managed to integrate them into our circle of friends."

2. Come back to reality by Natalia Sánchez

_From 1990 to 2020



It was like a direct hit, which made us face reality. In my family: my father, my two uncles and my grandfather lived and supported us with their jobs in construction. A lot of work and a lot of money, I was living an amazing childhood ... until the real state bubble burst. Suddenly, the 4 main economical supports of my family were broken and all Spain had to adapt to this new situation.

Those were not good times, but we carried on with thousands of people on the streets, the real estate sector badly damaged, a lot of houses and apartments destroyed and billions of euros

lost. It marked a turning point in the contemporary history of Spain.

This forced my mother to look for a job and today my parents have achieved good economic stability. My father, who lived through the whole experience and became unemployed for a few years, now explains to me the situation that I was unable to understand when I was young. He says: "It was obvious that that would happen, we were building too much and the prices were sky high.

However, this has made us stronger and helped us to be closer than ever. So, after so many evictions and so many people in need, we can say that we are now more supportive".

Title of the pictures:

- 1) The calm before the storm.
- 2) The consequences.
- 3) We will recover.

3. **My Country is the World** by Tsarampari, E., Chalkidou, A. & Psallida, K. _History Now!



(translated from the Greek original story)

"In Syria there is only war. There is no life. There is nothing. Only war, only death and fear. Four years ago I grabbed my wife and child and we ran for our lives. We escaped a powerful explosion and that's when I told myself that you have to save your family. I left my brothers and sisters, my parents, and ran into the unknown. We walked to the Turkish border. We stayed on the road for a month, alone and scared. The smuggler took all our money. In Turkey we were beaten, robbed, humiliated. I squeezed into an inflatable boat with 30 people and arrived in Mytilene. I saw people drowning, children crying and mothers mourning. We stayed in a tent for over a year, in really miserable conditions.

No one leaves his homeland unless it screams at him, "Go away, run away from me and save yourself! And after all, what does home mean? Home is where there is love and hope. Home to me is all the earth."

The present is a product of fiction. The persons, names and situations are fictitious, and any resemblance is coincidental and does not correspond to reality.

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