

UPF Dusseldorf, Germany: Fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989 and Role of Churches

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Members and guests gathered at the Düsseldorf UPF center to talk about the upheavals of 1989 and the development of the churches in East and West Germany after the end of World War II. Frank Bernhardt from the Old Lutheran Church led the discussion and shared captivating impressions from the time of the fall of the Wall with us.

The event began with moving film footage showing the fall of the Wall and the warm embraces between people from East and West Germany. These scenes, which took place 34 years ago, touched us deeply. Mr. Bernhardt spoke about the contacts between the churches in East and West Germany, which maintained a dialogue and promoted cooperation despite the rejection of the GDR government. The churches played a decisive role as places for the free exchange of opinions and provided space for opposition activities in the East. They provided protection and help for politically persecuted people and refugees. The Monday demonstrations, which called for political reforms, freedom of expression, and democratic change, received church support, so the Wall came down on November 9, 1989.

We thanked Mr. Bernhardt warmly for his presentation and had the opportunity to ask questions. He also told us a few interesting anecdotes. Particularly impressive were the reports of two participants, Else Noguchi and Charles Walter, who took part in the big demonstration in West Berlin in 1987, which was led by Hyo-Jin Moon, the son of the UPF founding couple, and demanded the end of the Wall. Despite severe hostility from various groups and organizations as well as the churches in the West, the demonstrators held on with prayer and dedication to the conviction that the people of East and West Germany would come together. Two years later, the almost unbelievable happened - the Wall came down.

The meeting ended with a minute's silence to commemorate the Reichspogromnacht on November 9-10, 1938, when synagogues were set on fire and Jewish businesses and homes were looted and destroyed. We commemorated these painful events and closed the meeting with the song "We Shall Overcome". Our message was clear: such atrocities must never happen again.