

Germany's inner border

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One half of the city continued with western capitalist shops and businesses, while the other half developed under the more repressive communist regime. Citizens and visitors could not cross over from one side to the other without extensive border checks, and most Berlin families were suddenly divided by this physical barrier. Many East Germans tried to break through the alarmed fences, which were guarded by troops in watchtowers. More than a hundred people were killed in these attempts because the guards operated a shoot-to-kill policy. The ugly wall, with its defensive mines and barbed wire, became known as "the death strip." The purpose of this wall was to keep East Germans inside the communist area and to prevent them from escaping to the wealthier and freer society in the West. In 1989 the wall was finally destroyed when communism failed, and ever since then, Germany has been reunited. The wall survives today only in a few symbolic places as a reminder of the recent past.