In 1945 the National-Socialist dictatorship collapsed after Germany lost the war. Until reunification in 1990 two German states existed next to each other and against each other over a long period of time.

1949: Germany is divided. In the west the Federal Republic of Germany is founded as a parliamentary democracy modeled on the West. In the east the German Democratic Republic is founded, which is a communist dictatorship. The dominating figures were Konrad Adenauer for Western Germany and Walter Ulbricht for the German Democratic Republic (GDR).

1950: The first Economics Minister of the Federal Republic of Germany, Ludwig Erhard, proclaims the “Social Market Economy.” The reconstruction of Germany begins. In the GDR the socialist model of a planned economy is introduced.

1953: On June 17 there is an uprising against the Communist system in East Berlin; hundreds of thousands of people take to the streets to protest the political dictatorship and the Socialist planned economy. The revolt is crushed by the GDR government.

1957: In the Federal Republic of Germany there is a strong upswing in business known as the “Economic Miracle.” Prosperity spreads amongst the West German people. To keep pace with the economic upturn “guest workers” are invited into the country.

1959: In the GDR “Republikflucht” (escape from East Germany) has in the meantime become a punishable offense. Despite this, every day thousands of people flee from the so-called “Workers’ and Farmers’ State.”

1961: In the night of August 13, armed units of the East German army cordon off the border of the East-German sector of Berlin. The Berlin Wall comes into being, imprisoning the people of the GDR.

1963: John F. Kennedy visits the divided city and utters the frequently-quoted words: “I am a Berliner.”

1968: In the Federal Republic of Germany dissatisfaction with middle class values, which has been growing since 1966, escalates into riots and violence directed at the system; a deep rift appears between the generations.

1970: There is finally movement in the frozen relations between East and West. The first Social Democratic Federal Chancellor, Willy Brandt, meets for talks with the East German Prime Minister, Willy Stoph. In Moscow, Brandt signs a non-aggression pact with the Soviet Union.

1972: The East German government loosens travel restrictions. The inhabitants of West Berlin are for the first time allowed to visit East Berlin again.

1984: The dissatisfaction of East German citizens with the political and economic conditions continues to grow. The number of people applying to emigrate increases and 35,000 are allowed to leave for the Federal Republic of Germany.

1985: Mines along the border fences of the GDR are dismantled and restrictions on imports of Western goods are relaxed. It becomes easier to visit the West.

1989: The peaceful revolution begins: Thousands of East German citizens take to the streets to demonstrate for their freedom.

Summer 1989 Floods of citizens of East Germany begin to flee the country. Many seek asylum in West German governmental agencies in East Germany and the West German Embassies in Budapest, Prague, and Warsaw, which have to be closed when they become too full.

September 11, 1989 Hungary opens its borders. Inside of three days more than 15,000 East Germans cross over Hungary and Austria into West Germany. At the end of October the number reaches 50,000.

September 30–October 1, 1989 The approximately 6,000 refugees in the West German embassies in Warsaw and Prague are allowed to go to West Germany. They cross the GDR in locked railway cars.

October 6–7, 1989 At the official celebration of the 40th anniversary of the founding of East Germany, the Soviet head of state Mikhail Gorbachev urges the East German government to reform.

October 16, 1989 In Leipzig 100,000 people demonstrate for democratic reforms with the cry “We are the people!” [Wir sind das Volk] (Subsequently, the so-called “Monday Demonstrations” take place every Monday.)

October 18, 1989 The Central Committee of the Communist Party relieves government and party boss Erich Honecker of all power and chooses Egon Krenz as his successor.


Timeline of Modern German History

**November 4, 1989** A million people demonstrate for reform in East Berlin. East and West Germans meet in a highly emotional atmosphere at the Wall.

**November 7–8, 1989** The government of East Germany resigns. The entire politburo [governing body] of the Communist Party resigns.

**November 9, 1989** East Germany opens its borders to West Berlin and West Germany.

**November 17, 1989** The new government of East Germany under Prime Minister Hans Modrow begins work. The protest demonstrations of the citizens continue. The cry for the unification of both German states gets louder, “We are one people!”

**November 28, 1989** Chancellor Helmut Kohl presents to the West German Parliament a 10-point plan for moving toward German Unification, and continues to push forward the unification process.

**December 22, 1989** The Brandenburg Gate in East Berlin is opened.

**February 10, 1990** Chancellor Helmut Kohl and Foreign Minister Genscher meet in Moscow with General Secretary Gorbachev, who assures the Germans that they may live together in one state. Regular meetings took place subsequently with President George H. W. Bush and France’s President Mitterand concerning this issue.

**March 18, 1990** The first free parliamentary elections in 40 years take place in East Germany.

**June 21, 1990** The East German Parliament passes a treaty that outlines how East Germany is to unite with West Germany [the German-to-German State Treaty].

**July 1, 1990** The Economic, Monetary, and Social Union specified in the treaty takes effect. The German mark becomes the official currency unit.

**August 23, 1990** The East German Parliament approves the entry of East Germany into the Federal Republic [West Germany].

**August 31, 1990** The Unification treaty is signed.

**October 3, 1990** East Germany enters into the Federal Republic according to Article 23 of the Basic Law [Germany’s constitution.] The newly unified country decides to abide by the Basic Law. The Allies grant unified Germany complete and unrestricted sovereignty. The groundwork for that was laid in the Two-plus-Four Negotiations (the two German governments plus the four allied powers from World War II; the Federal Republic of Germany was represented at these negotiations by Foreign Minister Hans Dietrich Genscher).

**1991:** The Bundestag (Federal Parliament) votes with a narrow majority for Berlin as the future seat of government and parliament.

The “Aufschwung Ost” (economic upswing in eastern Germany) begins. The aim is to achieve uniform living standards in eastern and western Germany. The resulting difficulties – for instance the run-down state of eastern Germany’s industry, mass unemployment, great state indebtedness – lead to considerable tension.

**2000/2001:** Enormous efforts are still necessary to compensate for the differences in living standards which grew during the years when Germany was divided.

**2002:** Euro notes and coins introduced and replace DM as everyday currency.

**May 1, 2004:** The largest of five enlargements since 1958, the EU added 10 new member states including: Cyprus, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Poland, Slovakia and Slovenia.

**April 19, 2005** Pope Benedict XVI, born Josef Alois Ratzinger on April 16, 1927 in Marktl am Inn, Bavaria, Germany is elected the 265th and reigning Pope and head of the Catholic Church.

**May 2005:** The European constitution was knocked off course when France and the Netherlands rejected it in referendums in May and June.

**November 22, 2005** Christian Democrat leader Angela Merkel was elected Chancellor in the plenary hall of Berlin’s Reichstag. She received 397 votes of the 448 deputies belonging to the grand coalition of the Christian Democratic Union/Christian Social Union (CDU/CSU) and the Social Democratic Party (SPD). Fifty-one deputies from the “Union” and SPD factions refused to support her.

**June 2006:** Germany hosts the World Cup in 12 cities stretching from Hamburg to Munich bringing throngs of fans and tourists into the country.

**2007:** Bulgaria and Romania join the EU.