

D 409
At about five o'clock in the morning on January 4, 1965, a man, approximately 25 years old, succeeded in fleeing not far from Ruppiner Strasse. He had a wire cutter with him, as well as a rope ladder and a heaving line, when he entered the border area unnoticed. The border guards did not detect him until he set off the alarm on the signal fence. They opened fire, but the fugitive had taken cover behind a screen and was not hit. He managed to climb over the Wall to West Berlin unharmed. A number of bullets, however, flew into West Berlin territory. Some entered the bedroom of a resident who was asleep in bed at the time.

D 410
On the evening of September 7, 1966, the border guard on Swinemünder Strasse noticed a man climbing over the inner fence at Schönholzer Strasse. His supervisor chased after the man and fired at him. The fugitive, Klaus N., took cover behind an anti-tank obstacle. The border soldiers assumed that he had been hit and wanted to arrest him, but he managed to climb over the inner wall unnoticed and escape back into East Berlin. An East German policeman who had watched the escape attempt from his apartment arrested Klaus N. on Brunnenstrasse.

D 411
Klaus-Peter K. was arrested by border troops on December 14, 1973. He had tried to flee to West Berlin from Brunnenstrasse. He was apprehended along the patrol road after having gotten past the inner wall and the signal fence.

D 412
Frieda Schulze had lived at Bernauer Strasse 29 since the end of the war. In late August, just after the Wall was built, she was forced to move from her ground-floor apartment into an apartment on the first floor. The 77-year old widow fled when the large scale building evacuations began on September 24, 1961. The firemen spread out a rescue net beneath the window. Frieda Schulze first threw her cat down, along with a few small possessions. She climbed onto the window sill but was too scared to jump. West Berlin teenagers climbed up the facade and tried to help her. In the meantime, East Berlin policemen had broken into the apartment and were trying to pull her back inside. They also threw teargas grenades at the West Berlin firemen. Frieda Schulze finally fell into the rescue net.

D413
At about one o'clock in the morning on October 27, 1968, a man used a folding ladder to climb over the inner fence that stood next to the building at Schönholzer Strasse 8. He crept along the gable wall until he reached the signal fence, which he was able to climb over without triggering the alarm. He pulled the ladder behind him and ran to the border wall, which he also climbed with-

out difficulty. The border soldiers on the watchtower at Ruppiner Strasse did not notice him until he was on the Wall. They wanted to fire at him, but were unable to get the window open. By the time they had broken the window pane and fired a salvo, the man was already in the West.

D 414
Renate L., a secretary for the East Berlin housing construction administration, was accompanied by an East Berlin police officer when she inspected the building at Bernauer Strasse 31. When she briefly found herself alone and unobserved in the backyard, she seized the moment. She fled through the front door that had not yet been sealed up and ran to West Berlin.

D 415
Ulla D. and Hans K. fled to the West on the evening of September 3, 1961. Under false pretences, they managed to pass through the security and enter the border house at Bernauer Strasse 37. They broke into the apartment of family M., which had already left for the West, and jumped out the window.

D 416
Selma P. and her son Peter W. had lived on the third floor of Bernauer Strasse 35 since the end of the war. They began to think about leaving East Germany after the Wall was erected. They informed relatives in the West that they were planning to flee on the night before September 22. Peter W. barricaded the door of the apartment. Then they waited for the firemen, who arrived at 2:30 in the morning. After throwing their possessions out the window, Selma P. jumped into the rescue net and injured her lower back. Neighbors who had observed the escape

But before they were able to break into the apartment, Peter W. jumped, injuring himself only slightly.



D 417
After the border closed on August 13, 1961, the residents of the border houses were not permitted to maintain relations with people on the west side. But contact continued to exist nevertheless. Food and gifts were exchanged through windows or using ropes. If the transaction was noticed, however, residents had to reckon with a punishment or in some cases an eviction.

D 418
On the evening of September 29, 1961, a resident of Bernauer Strasse 30 reported that West Berlin police were loading objects onto a car in front of her building. East Berlin police discovered an opening in the bricked-up basement window of family D's apartment. Gerhard D., his wife and both daughters had fled through the basement window to the West.

D 419
On the evening of August 24, 1961, Detlef M. and Herbert Z. attempted to climb over the Wall to the West at the corner of Schönholzer and Ruppiner Strasse. They were arrested by border guards and handed over to the East German police.



D 420

On June 19, 1962, West Berlin police heard three shots fired at Ruppiner Strasse. Shortly thereafter cries of pain were heard, presumably from a wounded fugitive.

D 421

Jürgen B. had already climbed over the wire fence when border guards arrested him on Ruppiner Strasse on the night leading into January 5, 1963. During questioning, he admitted to wanting to flee to the West.

D 422

On the morning of September 8, 1961 the photographer of an East Berlin magazine took pictures of the Wall on Swinemünder Strasse. The border guards were checking his papers when a young man came out of a bakery located close to the Wall. He seized the moment and ran to the Wall, climbing over it without difficulty. The border guards noticed him too late to stop his escape.

D 423

Three young men were able to escape to the West at Ruppiner Strasse on the evening of August 17, 1961. Using a truck, they rammed through the recently erected wall. The border guards quickly opened fire, but the fleeing men were not injured. This was the fourth time since August 13 that shots were fired at fugitives in Berlin. The men were unharmed, but a number of bullets fired from machine pistols flew onto the West Berlin side – one went into a resident's bedroom.

D 424

Jan-Michael G. wanted to flee at Ruppiner Strasse where gates in the inner wall and signal fence allowed border troops to pass through. Driving a heavy cargo truck on the evening of April 8, 1989, Jan-Michael G. broke through both gates. But the truck got entangled in a rope barrier that was especially designed to stop trucks. Jan-Michael G. was arrested and handed over to the secret police.

D 425

On the afternoon of March 29, 1962, Johannes M. offered the border guard at Ruppiner Strasse a thousand marks to let him and his girlfriend pass through to the West. The border soldier agreed, but instead he notified his comrade. When Johannes M. returned with Klara B., they were both arrested.

D 426

On the evening of May 24, 1973, Jürgen B. approached the gate of the inner wall at Ruppiner Strasse. He shook the gate and called out "let me across, you swine." He was arrested by border soldiers.

D 427

On the morning of October 3, 1962, 200 teenagers of a tour group were viewing the Berlin Wall. Six of them climbed onto the Wall at Swinemünder Strasse to take photographs. The border soldiers demanded that they get off the Wall. When they didn't obey, the border guards threw smoke grenades. The West Berlin police responded by firing several smoke grenades back at them. The situation settled down a short time later.

D 428

To create a pathway behind the border houses, border troops tore down the side wing and rear buildings along Bernauer Strasse in 1963. Demolition of the residential buildings between Ruppiner and Swinemünder Strasse was planned for June.

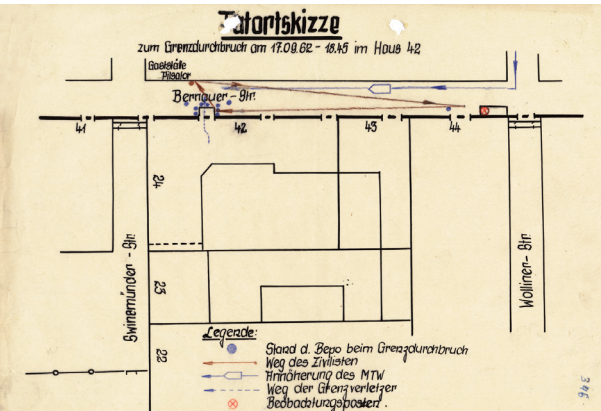
D 429

The border troops set up an observation post at Bernauer Strasse 44 to enable the guards to observe activity on Bernauer Strasse. On the evening of September 17, 1962, they noticed a man in front of the building at Bernauer Strasse 42. The border guards suspected an escape. The head guard sent for a flashlight so they could search the deserted building. Meanwhile a West Berlin policeman threatened the guard at the observation post with his drawn weapon. Other policemen were positioned in front of Bernauer Strasse 42, ready to shoot. They broke through a walled-up basement window and three young men climbed out. The fugitives were driven away quickly in a police car. The escape was already over when border soldiers arrived half an hour later.

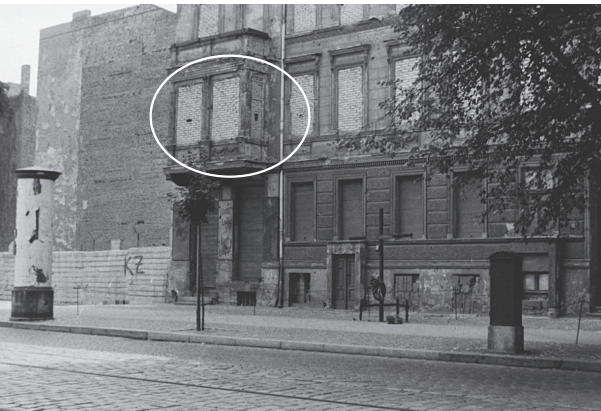
D 430

On the morning of September 29, 1961, Mrs. K., 89 years old, was waiting for two people whom she didn't know, who were interested in renting her basement at Bernauer Strasse 44. Shortly before noon a man and a woman rang the doorbell. After they entered the apartment, they walked right over to the window, intending to flee. When Mrs. K. let out a cry of fear, the fugitives covered her mouth. Neighbors who had heard the scream notified the border guards. By the time they entered the apartment, the couple had already jumped out the window.

D 428: Torn down rear buildings and side wings on Bernauer Strasse, around 1965



D 429.1: Border troop sketch of escape, September 17, 1962



D 429.2: Border troop observation post, around 1964

D 431

On the evening of October 6, 1961, border police arrested Anita L. and Erna M. in the attic of the building at Swinemünder Strasse 24. They had been planning to use a clothes line to climb down to the West. They were handed over to the East Berlin police.

D 432

On the evening of November 10, 1983, border soldiers arrested Ronni S. in the border strip as he was trying to escape to West Berlin with the help of a step-ladder.

D 433

On October 18, 1961, construction workers were monitored as they bricked up the windows of the building at Bernauer Strasse 44. The fiancé of the construction worker Norbert Raasch lived in the West. When nobody was looking, he seized the moment and jumped out the first-floor window onto the sidewalk on the west side. His supervisor had suspected that he was planning to flee, but chose not to report it to the border guards. The escape did not become known until the end of the workday when Raasch could not be found. The brigadier was brought to police headquarters at Alexanderplatz and interrogated the entire night. He was released the next morning and did not suffer any further sanctions.

D 434

Jörg S. decided to flee with his friends Erich E., Gerd Sch. and W. in July 1962. At the time Jörg S. was serving duty in the army and posted at the Berlin Wall. This was supposed to assist them in their escape plan. On August 1, 1962, Jörg S. arranged to be assigned rear guard at the road barrier on Swinemünder Strasse. At about 9:15 p.m., Erich E. and W. entered the border area. After Jörg S. pretended to check their papers, they headed for the building at Swinemünder Strasse 23. A short time later, Jörg S. asked the head guard G. to come to the building where civilians had been found. When Private G. entered the back courtyard, one of fugitives

knocked him down with a shovel. Then Jörg S., Erich E. and W. ran towards the Wall. When the head guard recovered from the blow, he set off a border alarm by firing ten shots from his Kalashnikov. But the other border guards were unable to prevent the escape. Gerd Sch., who had been waiting at the road barrier, decided not to flee when he heard the shots. He was arrested in his hometown a few days later.

D 435

On May 12, 1987, a person was arrested by border soldiers in the border strip at Swinemünder Strasse after he had climbed over the inner wall.

D 436

Erich B. lived with his wife, two children and his mother-in-law at Swinemünder Strasse 23. After the Wall was built, the family decided to flee. On September 19, 1961 they jumped from the first floor of the building next door, Bernauer Strasse 42, into the rescue net of the West Berlin fire department. Erich B. broke his thigh bone during the fall and had to stay in the hospital for six months. The rest of the family survived the escape unharmed.

D 437

In the early evening of September 2, 1961, about 200 people gathered at Swinemünder Strasse and waved across the Wall to West Berlin. Several of the parents in the group lifted their children up in the air. The police patrol was unable to break up the crowd. The crowd was not dispersed until an intervention force arrived about half an hour later.

D 438

Just past five o'clock in the morning on September 19, 1961, four men and a woman slid down a rope that they had attached to the chimney on the roof of the building at Bernauer Strasse 43. They

reached the building by crossing over rooftops from Rheinsberger Strasse. The woman lost her footing as she passed by the third floor. She crashed to the sidewalk and injured herself badly. Another fugitive suffered rope burns on both hands during the descent. The other fugitives survived the escape unharmed. Another woman who was also planning to escape was arrested by border soldiers in the same attic a short time later.

D 439

On August 9, 1986, to acknowledge the upcoming 25th anniversary of the Berlin Wall and to commemorate the division of the city, people formed a human chain between Checkpoint Charlie and Bernauer Strasse. Many thousands of people participated in the event that was initiated by the group "Arbeitsgemeinschaft 13. August" and other organizations.

D 440

Mario E. tried to escape at Wolliner Strasse at about two o'clock in the morning on November 30, 1979. He was able to flee although the border troops saw him. He was with a friend when the East German police arrested him on Eberswalder Strasse half an hour later.

D 439: Human chain on the 25th anniversary of the Berlin Wall, 1986



D 442: Stones removed by Werner T. so he could speak with his mother, December 17, 1966

D 441

Rainer P. and the former border officer Uwe W. planned their escape in May 1977. They had inspected the situation along the border. Entering from the backyard of Kremmener Strasse 8, they were able to get passed the inner wall, the border signal fence and all the other obstacles without difficulty. Uwe W. helped Rainer P. climb over the border wall but was then arrested at Ruppiner Strasse by border guards before he could climb over the Wall himself.

D 442

On December 16, 1966, construction workers were being monitored as they tore down the building at Bernauer Strasse 48. Werner T. used the opportunity to speak to his mother who lived in West Berlin, but he was caught by a captain of the border troops. The border regiment chief of staff ordered that Werner T. to be arrested and handed over to the police the next day when he arrived at the construction site.

D 443

Following a fight with his wife on the evening of January 28, 1966, Manfred B. made the spontaneous decision to flee. He first climbed over the inner fence and then the border signal fence without triggering an alarm. But the border guards on Kremmener Strasse noticed him as he approached the border fence. They called out to him and fired 80 shots in his direction. They later arrested Manfred B. and handed him over to the police.

People on the West Berlin side had seen him try to escape. The Berlin Senate responded by hanging a poster that read: "Soldier, you stand alone with your guilt."

D 444

According to the border troops, 31,500 people visited the viewing platform at Schwedter Strasse in 1986, an average of 2,625 people a month.

D 445

On the afternoon of February 19, 1962, border troops discovered a hole in a bricked-up window on the first floor of the building at Bernauer Strasse 46. It is believed that by candlelight a man used nails to scratch away the plaster from the brick joints and then jumped through the hole to the West.

D 446

The military conscripts Udo S. and Burckhardt B. were on duty at Eberswalder Strasse on March 23, 1966. They were both unhappy serving at the border. They decided to flee that afternoon. They broke through the door in the blocking screen at Eberswalder Strasse and moved beyond the other border guards' field of vision. To the right of the blocking screen, they climbed over the wall of the freight depot and jumped to the West. The escape was not detected until a West Berlin police officer called over to the border guards: "So! Now there are two fewer of you!"

D 447

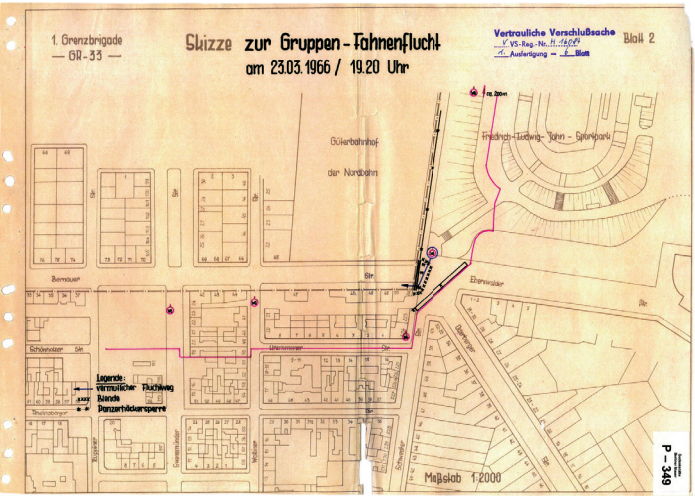
On the afternoon of September 12, 1961, an unknown man managed to escape to the West. He had broken into the first-floor apartment of the Sch. family in the building at Bernauer Strasse 47 and used a telephone cable to climb down from the window.

D 448

On the evening of August 28, 1961, Dieter R. managed to enter the apartment of Bruno P. at Bernauer Strasse 47b without any border guards noticing. A short time later he jumped to the West from the second-floor window. According to the border troop investigation, Bruno P. had escaped once before.



D 446: Escape route of the border soldiers, March 1966



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Escape Tunnels

At least seven escape tunnels existed in exhibition area D, but only one of them was successful. West Berlin students dug "Tunnel 29" from factory ruins at Bernauer Strasse 78 to Schöholz Strasse 7. During two nights in September 1962, 29 people were able to escape to West Berlin through this tunnel. A short time later, a few of these tunnel builders began digging a second escape tunnel from the same cellar rooms. But the tunnel was betrayed. When the tunnel builders broke through to the East in February 1963, secret police agents were waiting for them in the cellar of Brunnenstrasse 45. They recognized the threat in time. But fourteen people who were planning to escape and three couriers were arrested and sentenced.

The tunnel builders who had begun digging from the cellar of Bernauer Strasse 82 in August 1962 feared that this project had also been betrayed. The tunnel was already thirty meters long when they gave up on it at the end of the year. Eight years later another tunnel was begun at Bernauer Strasse 80. In May 1970, after receiving a tip and employing listening devices, the East German secret police began digging a trench that intersected and exposed the 85-meter-long escape tunnel.

Three more escape tunnels were built on the northeast end of Bernauer Strasse in 1962 – 1963. In late 1962, escape helpers stopped working on a ten-meter-long tunnel they had begun from the corner house at Wolliner Strasse 46a. They worried that too many people knew about the project. In the spring of 1963, teenagers began digging one of the few tunnels that ran from East to West Berlin. It began at Kremmener Strasse 15 and had almost reached Bernauer Strasse when it was discovered in May 1963 by a resident who informed the border guards. Nineteen people were imprisoned. The third escape tunnel ran from the grounds of the freight depot to the corner house at Eberswalder/Oderberger Strasse. The tunnel, which had almost reached its destination, was discontinued in July 1963 after the escape plans were betrayed and two of the tunnel builders were arrested in East Berlin.

Credits:
D 409 Alex Waidmann
D 417 Photographer not known
D 428 Border troop photo, Bundesarchiv
D 429.1 Bundesarchiv Militärarchiv
D 429.2 Ingrid Breinlinger, Gedenkstätte Berliner Mauer
D 439 Secret police photo, BSTU
D 442 Border troop photo, Bundesarchiv Militärarchiv
D 446 Border troop photo and sketch, Bundesarchiv Militärarchiv

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