

Life Behind The Wall

Part 2: Utopia behind the wall

A film of Roland May and Karsten Laske

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LIFE BEHIND THE WALL (approximately 1961 to 1969)

The steady stream of people leaving the country was abruptly stopped in 1961 with the building of the Berlin Wall. For many this was a sign that the GDR had lost all *raison d'être* and would not exist for much longer. For the interim it was largely a question of just getting along with the reality of the situation as comfortably as possible. True believers, however, breathed a sigh of relief. One could now turn to the task of building a new society without the danger of the GDR "bleeding to death".

Many thought it was now possible to build a socialist society that was superior to Western societies in every regard. The early 1960s were a time of socialist utopia. But it was a utopia that still had to compete with Western *savoir vivre*.

When the Russians marched into Prague in 1968 and put a bloody end to Dubcek's reform attempts, this put an end to the hopes of many an East German. It was the end of the utopian idea of a more humane socialism. And it was also clear that the Wall stood on more solid foundations than one had imagined...