

Discussing life before and after the Berlin Wall

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October 16, 2009--More than twenty years after President Ronald Reagan urged Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev, "Tear down this wall," four members of the Army War College's faculty will recount how living with the Berlin Wall shaped their personal and professional lives during a local panel discussion next week.

Professor Bernard Griffard, Center for Strategic Leadership; Col. Richard Lacquement, Ph.D., Department of National Security and Strategy; Col. Susan Myers, Ph.D., Department of Distance Education; and Craig Nation, Ph.D., Department of National Security and Strategy, will all participate in "Living with the Wall," a Dickinson College Clarke Forum for Contemporary Issues panel discussion, to be held Oct. 21, 7 p.m. in the Great Room at the school's Stern Center.

The panel discussion highlights the twentieth anniversary since the wall which divided East and West Germany was torn down in 1989.

"I am going to focus on the then and now from my experiences visiting East Berlin in 1984," Myers explained. "We had special orders and special transit routes and that enabled us to get into East Berlin, but we were pretty limited to where we could go and there were very little shopping opportunities, so I want to talk about how our opportunity to go into East Berlin was a show of force to some degree."

In addition to recounting her previous experiences in Eastern Germany, Myers said she will also discuss the differences in lifestyles between people living in the eastern and western portions of the country.

"It was pretty bleak in the East, it was my first real exposure to a communist country and it was a tremendous opportunity for young people to see what was on the other side of that wall," Myers said. "That wall kept the west out and I never thought I would see it fall in my lifetime."

After World War II, Allied Powers split Germany into four occupied sections, and in 1949 the Soviet Union claimed its portion to be the German Democratic Republic, or East Germany. A fence was put up in 1961 and a concrete wall was later constructed a few years later to put a stop to refugees fleeing from East Germany to the west. The wall was torn down in 1989 at the end of the Cold War.

"Last year I went to the German Leadership Academy and spoke with people and they just couldn't comprehend the lives that were lived like that in East Germany for all those years," Myers said. "Today, Germany has preserved several portions of the wall, like Checkpoint Charlie, so the education about that time can continue."

Myers said that she also had the opportunity to speak with some German military officers who had a successful integration experience from East German forces into Germany's military as it is at present.

"Some of these people didn't know if they were going to be arrested or if they would be allowed to continue in the service and the integration was successful and now some of them are rising to high ranks," she said. "It was a truly interesting time and I would encourage anyone to go visit Berlin."

Myers and her fellow panelists will be discussing the Berlin Wall at the Stern Center at Dickinson College, Wednesday, October 21, 2009 at 7 p.m. For more information, visit http://clarke.dickinson.edu/single_post.php?id=810.

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