

## **Segment of the wall on campus represents peace**

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“The segment of the Berlin Wall on the Rice campus is a tangible reminder of the physical barrier that separated oppression from freedom for 28 years and the ultimate victory of freedom and the rule of law,” Rice President Malcolm Gillis told guests at a Nov. 10 ceremony dedicating the monument.

Gillis and Juergen Chrobog, ambassador of the Federal Republic of Germany to the United States, unveiled the Berlin Wall Monument to Rice students, faculty and staff and other guests of the James A. Baker III Institute for Public Policy. The 12-foot-high structure recently was relocated to the southeast corner of Baker Hall to acknowledge former secretary of state James A. Baker III’s leadership of America’s foreign policy in 1989 when the Berlin Wall was taken down and the subsequent successful effort to unify Germany in peace and freedom.

The Baker Institute hosted the dedication and a panel discussion to commemorate the 11th anniversary of the fall of the Berlin Wall.

Gillis recalled the wall’s origin. “I remember it well because I was of draft age,” he said. “In August ’61, the Soviets took the drastic step of building a wall, not like the Chinese to keep enemies out, but to keep its own people in.”

The wall was erected to stop the mass exodus of people who were fleeing East Berlin and the Soviet section of Germany in the aftermath of World War II to pursue better jobs and freedom in West Berlin and the noncommunist world. The East German government realized that the continual loss of highly educated professionals and skilled workers would soon hinder the country’s economy, so the Soviets created a barrier to restrict their citizens from leaving. The wall divided West Berlin and East Germany, and government permission was required to cross it.

Gillis cited the symbolic significance of the wall on the campus. “Rice University always has been dedicated to the freedom of the human mind and the human experience,” he said. “Let this historic piece of concrete be a reminder that no physical barrier is strong enough or big enough or tall enough or thick enough to confine the human mind and the human spirit in its quest for freedom.”

Chrobog recalled the 1989 destruction of the wall that had separated families and friends for nearly 30 years. Many Germans remember precisely where they were and what they were doing when they learned that the Berlin Wall would no longer restrict travel between the East and West, he said. “It was one of those rare moments when one could witness history in the making. I cannot think of anything that better symbolizes the end of the Cold War.”

Chrobog said the wall crumbled “because the people of the former Germany in a display of remarkable courage exerted the will to be free.”

Noting that the monument at Rice can give only “a faint idea of how oppressive and disturbing” the Berlin Wall was, he said the wall’s concrete face, barbed wire and guards imprisoned 70 million Germans.

“The fall of the wall did not automatically usher in unification,” Chrobog said. He acknowledged the support of the U.S. government and the role of “farsighted statesmen” like Baker in unifying Germany (see story on [new exhibit at the Baker Institute](#)).

Baker was scheduled to speak at the ceremony but had to travel to Florida unexpectedly when Texas Gov. George W. Bush asked for his assistance with the presidential election recount. Edward Djerejian, director of the Baker Institute, presented Baker’s speech.

“For many who were not personally involved, the fall of the Berlin Wall has receded from memory,” Djerejian quoted from Baker’s speech. “Yet there are important lessons to be learned from the West’s long struggle with totalitarianism. The most important is the need for leadership.”

In his speech, Baker paid tribute to the leadership role of former presidents Reagan and Bush. “Were it not for the inspiring vision of Ronald Reagan and the consummate diplomacy of George Bush, the Cold War would have lasted far longer than it did, and its end might well not have been peaceful beyond all our expectations,” Baker wrote.

“Eleven years after the fall of the wall, hundreds of millions of people enjoy freedom. But in far too many places around the world, freedom of speech, religion, association and the press is only a dream,” Baker wrote. Fulfilling that dream and advancing freedom’s cause will require leadership.

“We must all understand that the fall of the Berlin Wall marked not just the end of one chapter in the history of human aspiration, but the beginning of another,” Baker wrote. Djerejian noted that generations of Rice students will pass the monument at Baker Hall and be reminded of the historical significance of the fall of the wall and the end of the Cold War.

After the dedication ceremony, the Baker Institute hosted a panel discussion on “Consequences of the Fall of the Wall.” Richard Stoll, Rice professor of political science and associate director for academic programs at the Baker Institute, moderated the panel, which included John Ambler, Rice professor of political science; Peter Caldwell, Rice associate professor of history and German studies; Allen Matusow, the William Gaines Twyman Professor of History at Rice; Gale Stokes, the Mary Gibbs Jones Professor of History and interim dean of humanities at Rice; and Susan Scarrow, University of Houston associate professor of political science.

Music for the dedication ceremony was provided by a Shepherd School of Music brass quintet: Sarah Bach on french horn; Zach Enos and Zeb Upton, both on trumpet; Carson Keeble on trombone; and Steve Lamb on tuba.

The Shell Oil Co. Foundation provided support for the commemoration.

Wall travels fro Berlin to Rice campus

Rice’s Berlin Wall Monument was originally installed on the campus in 1991 between the Speros P. Martel Center for Continuing Studies and the Rice Media Center. Weighing 5,000 pounds, the panel is 12 feet high and four feet wide. It was extracted from the Frohnau district of West Berlin, on the border with the East German district of Oranienburg, in April 1990.

ALBA GmbH Corp., a German waste-disposal company, obtained the panel and presented it to

Browning-Ferris Industries of Houston as a token of friendship between the two companies. Browning-Ferris donated the wall to Rice at the urging of Mary McIntire, dean of the School of Continuing Studies. The writing on the monument is actually on the side of the wall that faced east, which suggests the graffiti was applied after the wall came down or after people had access to the east side when the wall was no longer guarded.

*Source:* B.J. Almonds, "Segment of the wall on campus represents peace," Rice University press release, November 30, 2000, <http://www.media.rice.edu/media/NewsBot.asp?MODE=VIEW&ID=3552> (accessed on March 18, 2008).