

# Neues Deutschland (New Germany)

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## **World History from a Personal Perspective “We were so free... Snapshots 1989/1990” at the Museum of Film and Television by Anouk Meyer**



A youth with a poster reading, “I am having fun on no-school Saturday!” with a view of men in trenchcoats in the background. A garden in Zeuthen, on the lawn an array of neatly arrayed plastic chairs as if left over after a meeting. A row of police with serious faces, holding up a large, transparent sign that reads, “Legal Security for Citizens and Vopos!” (the GDR state security police). Since last Friday, these unusual, and at times very private perspectives regarding the end of the GDR are on display as part of an exhibition at the German Film Archive at Potsdam Place.



“We were so free... snapshots 1989/1990” is the double-entendre title for the exhibition, which, in addition to photographs and videos made by private individuals from the East and the West also includes highlights of international television reports and excerpts from East and West German documentary films, all made during the time between May 1989 and December 1990. In the anniversary year 2009, the private photographs and films provide refreshing variety juxtaposed against the other images.

The curator, Ulrike Schmiegelt, reviewed six thousand photographs and 40 hours of privately donated film. One can only imagine the difficulty she faced in selecting the 300 photographs and 40 minutes of film from this quantity of material that are displayed here in a “divided” room with mint-green zigzag walls. The curator explains that a great deal of the experiences of this period—from concern and fear to joy and enlightenment as the borders were finally opened—were rekindled by viewing these images. Most of the private snapshots— proof that “I was there” for their originators and preserved for their children and grandchildren— convey the atmosphere of that time: not merely as documentation, but as memory. Arranged in six topical areas, ranging

from apparent normality all the way to German unification, the images tell a story of personal encounters with world history.



Of equal interest are the stories that are told in brief texts, such as the one about Edward G. Murray from the USA, who hid in the midst of a crowd of parade participants with 400 illegally exchanged German marks in his sock and found himself unknowingly taking part in the last May Day parade on the Karl Marx Allee. In order to avoid attention, he began to take pictures as if he were a journalist on assignment. A veritable study in red emerges from the mostly black-and-white images of torch-lit processions and demonstrations.

The private photographs are as memorable as experiences. Too bad for the rest of the exhibition, which also offers much that is of interest: how the British, Americans, Russians and French experienced the fall of the Berlin Wall on television and the feelings of the correspondents are shown in Room II, and excerpts from East and West German documentary films in Room 3. There is a supplemental Internet archive, in which everyone has the chance and should take the opportunity to see photographs and films from 1989/90.

*Through 11/9, Filmhaus, Potsdamer Str.2, Mitte; Tues.-Sun. 10:00 AM-6:00 PM, Thurs. until 8 PM;*

[www.wir-waren-so-frei.de](http://www.wir-waren-so-frei.de) URL: [http://www.neues-deutschland.de/artikel/148211\\_weltgeschichte-aus-privater-sicht.html](http://www.neues-deutschland.de/artikel/148211_weltgeschichte-aus-privater-sicht.html)