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On the 25th anniversary of the fall of the Berlin Wall, NBC’s Tom Brokaw recounts the events that led up to the historic moment.

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Transcript

25 Years After the Fall of the Berlin Wall

LESTER HOLT, anchor:

Tens of thousands of people gather in this night, 25 years ago so did an NBC News team led by Tom Brokaw. The only American network anchor who reported live from the scene. Tonight Tom remembers how that historic day unfolded.

TOM BROKAW, reporting:

NBC News, right place, right time. Good evening, live from the Berlin Wall on the most historic night in this wall's history. For us, it was a historic exclusive. The wall effectively has come down and I mean physically as well. That's a chunk of the Berlin Wall. Men and women atop the wall tonight, hammer and chisel taking it down, symbolically because realistically it has been taken down by the people in the last eight hours or so. Earlier that day, it seemed like we had no compelling story. The communist government grip on power held firm until an afternoon press conference where Politburo's spokesman, Guenter Schabowski suddenly announced East German citizens were free to travel.

MARY SAROTTE (Author, "The Collapse"): It's like a bomb going off in the room. And he starts to see the commotion and he gradually starts to try to back pedal but it's too late.

BROKAW: My producer that day, Michelle Neubert.

MICHELLE NEUBERT: I was like, Tom, I think the Berlin Wall might be coming down.

BROKAW: Schabowski seem not to realize what he had done.

GUENTER SCHABOWSKI: It is possible for them to go through the border.

BROKAW: He told me he believed East Germans would just go and look and then return behind the wall. He was wrong.

NEUBERT: Many people have a lot to thank him for. Tens of hundreds of thousands of people, if not the world.

BROKAW: As word spread, thousands head to the Bornholmer Bridge checkpoint. Filmmaker Siggy Chefki had longed for this day for years. The GDR officials would always say they are happy here.

SIGGY CHEFKI: Yes.
BROKAW: You know what, they're happier about getting out of here, it looks like.
(Siggy Chefki speaking foreign language)
BROKAW: "Everyone is laughing," he says, "they all want to run in case a miracle might disappear."
Former border guard Gunter Fischer once under orders to shoot anyone who try to cross simply watched them go.
(Gunter Fischer speaking foreign language)
BROKAW: "It was a deep hole," he says, "as if someone had pulled away the surface under your feet."
Now a quarter century on, this nation remembers the lives lost in the struggle against the Wall and the gift it gave the world.
DR. AXEL KLAUSMEIER (Bernauer Strasse Memorial): It's a symbol of hope in many ways that peaceful revolutions are possible.
BROKAW: They are crossing this wall east-to-west and west-to-east. They are being joined once again as one, as freedom-loving people and no wall can stand in their way. It's a night to remember.