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news release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE---3 October 1990

BERLIN WALL IN WASHINGTON

WASHINGTON---Congressman Kika de la Garza today viewed a huge slab of the Berlin Wall that has been set up temporarily in front of the House of Representatives Building where he has his office. The slab is 13 feet tall, 4 feet wide and 9 inches deep and it is in Washington to commemorate the unification of the two Germans which became official this week.

In the lobby of the same House Office Building there is a large display of color photographs furnished by the West German government that depict the emotional days when East Germans were first allowed to pass freely through the Wall. The wall section, which weighs more than three tons, is liberally decorated with graffiti in bright colors. Much of the Wall was decorated by joyous Germans during the celebrations.

"Seeing the Wall in photographs and on television is one thing," Mr. de la Garza said, "but when you get up close to it as I did several years ago you realize what a monstrosity it was that divided one of the great cities of Europe. You can see why both East and West Berliners came to hate this symbol of oppression. Now many more can see at least a piece of it."

The Wall section's trip to America and its setting-up expenses are being paid for by Emporium Hamburg, a rare coin store that works closely with the West German mint in Hamburg. On Thursday Emporium Hamburg's Mr. Achim Becker will present a gold medallion from the Hamburg mint to the House of Representatives and a platinum medallion to the Senate. Speaker Thomas Foley is expected to accept for the House, and Senate Majority Leader George Mitchell for the Senate.

"When I look at the photographs and see the happy faces of East Germans flooding through the Wall during those astonishing days in November, 1989, I am reminded of what two American Presidents did that helped to keep German spirits up," the south Texas Congressman said.

"When the Soviet Union tried to strangle West Berlin with a blockade in 1948, President Harry S Truman instituted the Berlin Air Lift. Our planes literally saved West Berlin by flying in food, medical supplies and even coal. When the Wall was erected in 1961, President John F. Kennedy pledged his support for the freedom of West Berliners.

"It took those actions, plus many other things to finally breach the Wall. There was the explosion of information through modern communications technology and there was the new openness of Mikhail Gorbachev's 'glasnost' policy. Finally, there was the incredible courage of the German people, who never gave up on the idea of unification. All of these things have brought us to the events we are commemorating and celebrating this week in Washington."

The section of the Wall has been donated to Seattle and is to go there after Washington, D.C. The photographic display, entitled "The Wall," is to go on tour around the United States.

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