

Günter Litfin

Günter Litfin was the first person to be shot and killed at the Berlin Wall. He was born on January 19, 1937 and grew up in East Berlin. He had worked in West Berlin until the Wall was built on August 13, 1961. Skeptical of the political system in the GDR and cut off from his job in the West after the border was closed, he began looking for a way to flee. On August 24, 1961 he attempted to swim across the Humboldt Harbor to West Berlin. The East Berlin transport police fired warning shots before opening fire. Günter Litfin was killed by a bullet to the back of his head. In 1962 a memorial stone was dedicated to him on the west side of the Sandkrug Bridge. In 2015 the stone was moved to the site where Günter Litfin had been shot.



Former command post at Kieler Eck, 1990
Photo: Hans W. Mende



Günter Litfin
Memorial, 2018

Contact

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Opening Hours

May–October, Saturday and Sunday, 11 a.m.–5 p.m.
Free admission

Live Speaking

Our Guides are at the memorial regularly.
Every Saturday 11 a.m.–2 p.m. and Sunday 2–5 p.m.

Group Tours

On request in the languages: German, English,
French and Italian
Tours can be booked through our website.

Please Note

The site is not wheelchair-accessible. A maximum of 15 people can enter at once. Visitors should wear sturdy shoes and not be afraid of heights. No sanitary or changing facilities and seats on site. Children under eight years are not allowed to enter.

Public Transport

U-Bahn and tram station: Schwartzkopffstraße
Bus station: Invalidenpark or Bundeswehrkrankenhaus

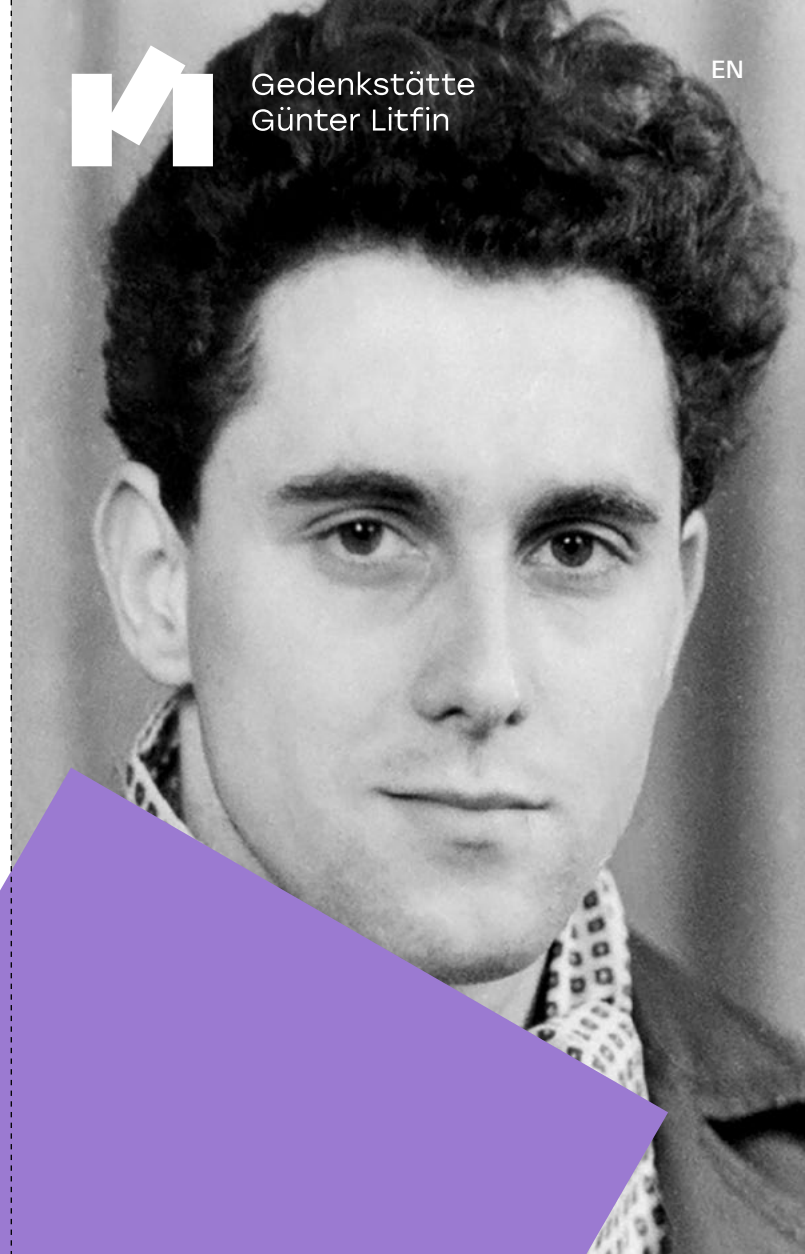
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Gedenkstätte
Günter Litfin

EN



Shot at the Berlin Wall

Günter Litfin Memorial

The memorial at Kieler Eck exists in a former command post of the GDR border troops at the Berlin-Spandau ship canal. After the Wall fell, it was established as a memorial for Günter Litfin, one of the first victims of the Berlin Wall. It documents the border regime and bears witness to its victims.



Inside the tower, 2019

Command Post at Kieler Ufer

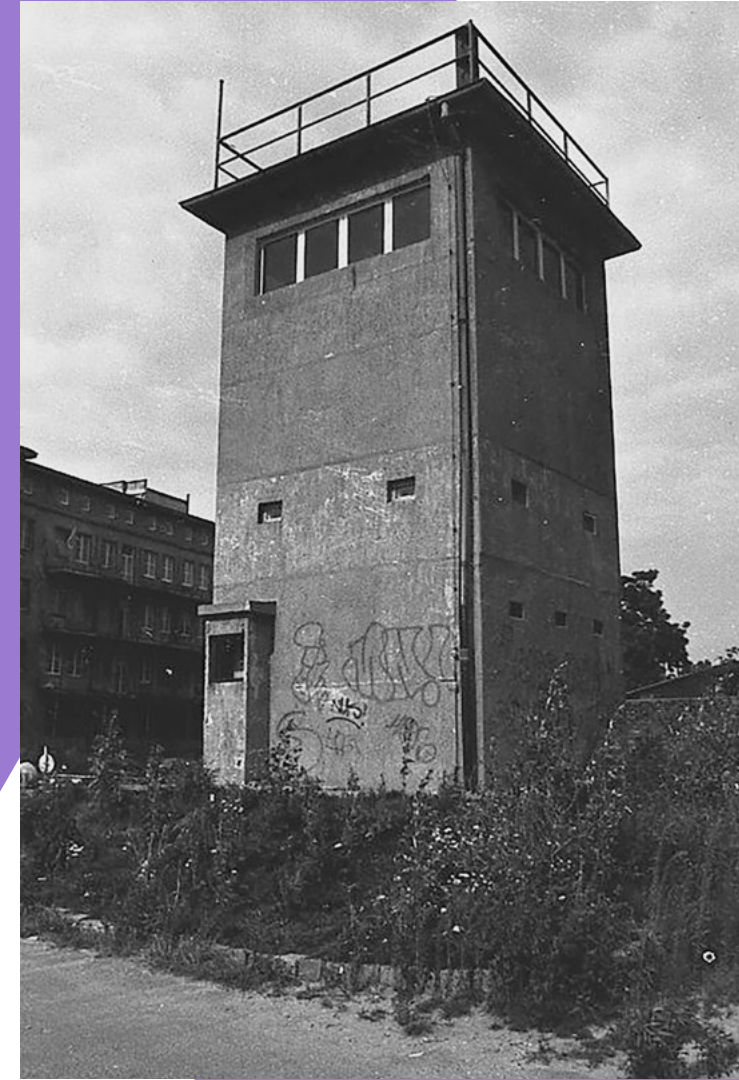
In the end there were 280 watchtowers along the Berlin Wall with border soldiers stationed on them. Thirty-two of these towers served as command posts from where officers and sergeants issued orders to soldiers on duty in watchtowers and patrolling the border. The commander was responsible for preventing escapes in his border section. He maintained direct contact with his supervisors, watchtower crews and the East German police. All information was directed to the command post where a standby unit could be deployed to stop an escape. On August 24, 1961 – just 11 days after the Berlin Wall was built – Günter Litfin was shot and killed while trying to escape to West Berlin from a site near the command post at Kieler Ufer.

Establishing the Memorial

After the Wall fell, Günter's brother, Jürgen Litfin, lobbied to have the former command post preserved. Thanks to his civic commitment, the watchtower was left standing amidst new housing construction. On August 24, 2003, Jürgen Litfin opened a memorial in the tower dedicated to the Berlin Wall and to the first fatally shot victim. He founded an association that maintained the site until 2017, after which it was entrusted to the Berlin Wall Foundation.



The command tower at Kieler Eck in the border strip, 1988
Photo taken by the border troops
© Berliner Mauer-Archiv
Hagen Koch



The former command tower on Kieler Strasse, 1990 Photo: Christian Halbrock