Events leading up to the "Turn" (Wende) in East Germany

1971 3 May  Erich Honecker (b. 1912) succeeds Walter Ulbricht (b. 1893) as First Secretary of the SED
1978 March  Honecker recognizes the Lutheran Church of East Germany as an independent organization
1985 11 Mar.  Election of Gorbachev as general secretary of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union
1986 8 June:  [for example:] GDR parliamentary elections: 99.74% turnout, 99.94% for National Front parties.
9 June: 3000 demonstrate in E. Berlin for demolition of wall, in support of Gorbachev.
7 Sept: Honecker in West Germany, agreement to promote exchange of experts
12 Oct:  broad amnesty in E. Germany: 24,612 prisoners released; 1 Nov. easing of import restrictions
1988 17 Jan: 100 arrested during official commemoration of Rosa Luxemburg and Karl Liebknecht's murders; members of E. Berlin Church of Zion protest restrictions on speech and travel.

Nov:  Sputnik, popular Soviet news magazine, banned in GDR
1989 15 Jan: 80 arrested at demonstration during Lux-Lieb. anniversary commemoration. RL: "Freedom is always [also] the freedom of those with dissenting opinions." vs. GDR: "Freedom is the insight into necessity"
2 May: Hungary begins demolition of fences at Austrian border
17 May: 98.85% reported voting for National Front candidates at local elections.

Widespread allegations of fraud by opposition and church leaders monitoring elections.
5 June:  Neues Deutschland (SED newspaper) defends 3 June massacre at Tiananmen Square in China
15 July:  first reports of GDR citizens taking refuge in W. German embassies in Budapest, Prague, E. Berlin
13 Aug:  W. German embassy in Budapest closed (181 sought sanctuary there)(130 emigrés in E.Berlin, 8 Aug.)
19 Aug: During pan-European scientific conference in Hungary ca. hundred GDR citizens cross to Austria
26 Aug:  Initiative for Social-Democratic Organization started at human rights seminar
4 Sept:  hundreds demonstrate in Leipzig (periphery vs. center) for freedom of travel
7 Sept: 80 arrested in E. Berlin in demonstration against election fraud
10 Sept: First call for public reforms by New Forum
11 Sept: Hungary voids agreement with GDR to enforce visa restrictions of GDR citizens; in 3 days ca. 15,000 GDR citizens cross to West; New Forum "founded" (Havemann, Bohley, Reich)
18 Sept: 100 people arrested at Leipzig Monday demonstration
24 Sept: 80 representatives of various news reform groups meet in Leipzig

- 25 Sept:  ca. 8,000 demonstrate in Leipzig (for legalization of New Forum, freedom to travel); 12 arrests
2 Oct:  police break up Leipzig demonstration of 10,000-25,000 persons; 3 Oct: visas for refugees in Prague
4 Oct:  train on way to W. Germany with 10,000 GDR emigres from Prague stormed by Dresden residents
7 Oct: Gorbachev arrives in E. Berlin for 40th anniversary celebration, suggests change.
"Danger threatens only those who can't react to life's challenges." Mass arrests to suppress mass protests.
9 Oct:  ca. 50,000 demonstrate in Leipzig, police do not intervene (Honecker vs. Masur or Krenz?)
16 Oct: over 100,000 demonstrate in Leipzig, 10,000 in Dresden, 3,000 in Berlin. Police do nothing
23 Oct: 250,000 demonstrate in Leipzig
24 Oct:  Egon Krenz succeeds Honecker, meets w/ New Forum leaders on 26 Oct.
27 Oct:  Travel to Czechoslovakia w/o visa possible again (prohibited since 3 Oct.)
30 Oct: 500,000 demonstrate in Leipzig, 80,000 in provincial capital Schwerin (for example)
1 Nov:  Krenz in Moscow, says unification of two Germanies is not "on the agenda of history"
4 Nov:  Demonstration of 750,000-1 million in Berlin organized by Union of Artists; for freedom of expression, travel, association, and free elections. Criticism of SED; Stefan Heym, Christa Wolf
6 Nov: 500,000 demonstrate in Leipzig; aged politburo resigns (Hager/Ideology is 77; Mielke/Stasi is 81)
- 9 Nov: border to W. Berlin is opened, tens of thousands cross (role of media: Schabowski vs. Brokaw)
20 Nov: demonstrations in many cities against leading role of SED, Krenz meets with W. German officials
28 Nov:  Kohl releases 10-point plan for new all-German structure, a "confederation leading to a federation"
3 Dec:  Party Central Committee, Politburo, General Secretary Krenz resigns
7 Dec:  Gov't and opposition parties meet at Round Table; demand dissolution of Stasi, elections in May
8 Dec: Extraordinary SED Congress elects Gregor Gysi chair, Modrow and Berghofer vice-chairmen.
19 Dec: Kohl in Dresden, agrees with Modrow to form a "contractual community"
"We are the people" → "We are one people/nation" ("Wir sind das Volk" → "Wir sind ein Volk")
- 31 Dec: New Year's celebration at Brandenburg Gate: now primarily demand for unification