

# **ABSTRACT: THE MEANING OF THE BERLIN WALL IN THE COLD WAR**

My work is about the meaning of the Berlin Wall in the Cold War with a special focus on the evolution of international relations during the previous period. A brief analysis of the events during and after its construction find also a place in the last two chapters. What I have tried to do with this paper was to study the connections between the Western bloc and the Eastern bloc, but I have also tried to enter inside coalitions to scan internal interactions. The international trends' evolution in fact was intertwined with domestic issues. A coalition in conflict and diversified was opposed to another apparently homogeneous and harmonious. Indeed, the Soviet coalition masked outside its internal conflicts, that only sometimes were shown outside. If for the West part was easy to find out material, for the East part it was more difficult because of the mystery that still remains on some key points of Soviet policy. However, I think to have done a quite accurate research that brought me to understand the Soviet attitude through the American's reports. My intent was to represent the Europe situation in the first fifteen years of the Cold War and I have decided to draw it with the eyes of the Germans, the population that suffered more the consequences of the confrontation. Germany was a divided state since 1945 and until 1989 and its capital city reflected this situation. Berlin was also important for the intelligence to gather information. Because of its strategic position within the Soviet zone, there took place a parallel war between the secret services. My main purpose was to demonstrate that the Berlin Wall was a compromise solution of the long running dispute over the German capital, that helped to prevent an armed conflict, that could have been the last one. The period that I have considered is the one that goes from the 1945 to 1961, but I mentioned also some important follower events. My analysis starts just at the establishment of the Allied Control Council in Berlin after the Potsdam Agreement of August 2 1945. In this occasion, the Allied Powers discussed about the instauration of an occupation regime for the great loser of the Second World War. They decided to separate temporarily the Country into four areas, each one under the control of a winner state. The principal idea was to destroy the potential rebirth of the nation that had given rise to two world wars in a short period of time. However, in the end Germany would have been reunited, even if under a very tight control. On the contrary, occupants began to use different policies to manage their areas and that made impossible to find a common background for the reunification. The USA in fact decided to make rise again German economy, because they were more interested in trade than in punishment. Instead, the USSR wanted more to destroy than to

rebuild, aiming also to create a new Communist country. The struggle over Germany started after the creation of the Iron Curtain, when the Soviet leader Stalin decided for the blockade of West Berlin. The city was sited inside the Eastern zone, thus it was easy for Soviet Union to cut off supplies directed to the Western part. The airlift was not expected. It lasted for an year, until Stalin removed the blockade on May 12 1949. The Allied would not speak for five years. During this period, both US and USSR heads of government changed. In fact, both American elections and the death of Stalin took place in 1953. If in America was certain that the new President was Dwight D. Eisenhower, in Soviet Union started a power struggle inside the Kremlin. The results were not clear yet when an uprising broke out in East Berlin in the mid-June. Walter Ulbricht's regime in East Germany had just introduced new and stricter measures to accelerate the building of communism, but they were having devastating results for the economy. In June 16 the protest began with strikes but all at once it turned into a riot that involved the whole Country. Only the next day intervention of Soviet army could have preserved the government. Therefore, it was known since 1953 that the division in Europe was settled. Western Countries did not intervene in East Berlin to help the citizens against Soviet tanks. It only made sense if they had already decided that those were only Soviet affairs. Thus the Europe set-up was considered a closed issue when Allied met again in Geneva in July 1955. It did not look the same for the German question. The Country was almost split in two very different state, the German Democratic Republic (GDR), which leader was the communist Ulbricht, and the Federal Republic of Germany (FRG), guided by Chancellor Adenauer. The two part of Germany did not have diplomatic relations, but in Berlin the economy of the two zones were now interconnected. Many people from GDR went to work in West Berlin, but there was also an increasing number of people that used these connections to run away from Communism. The Democratic government was embarrassed and annoyed from this "referendum by feet", as they called it in West Germany. Ulbricht asked many times for help from the new Soviet leader, Nikita Khrushchev. He could not give to him more money as he required, but he could pick up international tension and try to solve the Berlin's problem. He gave an ultimatum to the other powers in November 27 1958: a solution to the city's problem had to be found within 6 months, otherwise, he threatened, a Peace Treaty would be signed between USSR and East Germany. This meant that occupants would have to deal with Ulbricht. It was something impossible for them because of the Adenauer's position. The "Hallstein Doctrine" did not allow to entertain diplomatic relations with both Germanies, putting Allies into a difficult situation. The Western front split up in two groups, the first one looking for an agreement, made up between Great Britain, United States and Italy, and the second one hostile to dialogue, composed of France and West Germany. The negotiations' line prevailed and there would be some high-level meetings. The Soviet forgot the

deadline and the storm seemed to be pass. But after Paris 1960 the going got tough again. Khrushchev was now waiting for seeing the new American administration that would have settled the first of 1961. When he met Kennedy in Vienna in June, he understood that it would not have been easy as he thought to force him to make concessions. Even so he launched a new ultimatum for the end of the year. But the situation had now got out of his hands. He was being criticized for his management of the situation even in his own bloc by Ulbricht and the Chinese leader Mao Zedong. He was risking a lot to gain very little. Finally, he decided to content his German allied by giving consensus to the construction of a wall that would have physically divided Berlin. Was thus put an end to the flight of the population. Officially it was built to stop West Germany hostile activities against GDR and the Countries of the Warsaw Pact, but it was clearly directed against Eastern population. The constant flow of refugees was the background of the first years of the Cold War and now the Germans were imprisoned in their own state. It was an hard blow for them, because they were separated from their family and friends. Many people tried to cross the boundary anyway. Someone succeeded, others unfortunately died. In order to discourage further escapes, the regime gradually strengthened the barrier during the years. Those who had a job in West Berlin had to abandon it and the army was placed inside the city. Its function was to make sure that there were no riots. Instead, there was not such a problem, also because the Western Powers were working to calm down the population. They were totally surprised by this action, but the most important thing to do was not to make moves that could break up a conflict. Even Adenauer made appeals to remain calm and to reassure the Soviets that he had no intentions to make moves that could upset international peace. The controversy was thus solved, even if in October there was a tanks comparison along the border line. The last event was the Kennedy's speech in Berlin in 1963, when he claimed: "I am a free man, I am a Berliner" (*"Ich bin ein Berliner"*). But the Western Country did anything to prevent the city to be divided in such a way. They thought that it was a better conclusion than a war, therefore they accepted the situation. The Wall was the symbol of the whole world's split and of the oppression to which Eastern peoples were subjected. Its fall took place November 9, 1989, and it brought freedom and democracy in several Country. Populations rose up and fought for their rights against totalitarian regimes. The collapse of the Soviet Empire will be one of the consequences. Another one will be the beginning of a new era of international relations. Resolving the status of Berlin was therefore both the beginning and the end of the Cold War. The fall of the Wall brought away with it the Cold War and started a period called "The Autumn of Nations" in which the Eastern populations rebelled against the physical and symbolic borders that divided Europe in two enemies blocs for almost half century. Anyway, the Wall took moreover a kind of balance between blocs in Europe. In fact, in spite of the rest of the world saw armed

conflicts throughout the duration of the Confrontation, such as Korean War or Vietnam war, the Old Continent lived a long period of relative peace owed above all to the conflict over Berlin and its peaceful resolution. It would be easy to rise tension beyond the limit for the war, but everybody knew that it would be different in Europe. Here, there would not have been a guerilla or a proxy war, but it would have been fielded the atomic bomb. Critical step to understand the current system of international relations, the Wall is still very present in the minds of many generations. His end has not yet become history, but the collective memory has already made an ideal of it. In order to illustrate the consequences that the construction of the Wall brought along, I had to look to his past and to the route that led him to exist. This has allowed me to better understand the power games that moved the start of the war. But, when I looked better, I also saw in the prelude to the Détente. In fact, it could come only after a long period of tension and by the demands of peace that came from several parts. The compromise would be the way to go, as at the end turned out to August 13, 1961.