

SUMMARY

Title: **"The situation of Germany during the Cold War"**

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The purpose of this text is an attempt to synthesise my work about the situation of Germany during the Cold War. It happens to be difficult to synthesize all the things explained in my thesis, since it was basically itself a synthesis and many things were supposed to be explained more deeply. My work covers the period that goes from the end of the Second World War in 1945 to the end of the Cold War, which officially coincides with the collapse of the Berlin Wall in 1989.

The interest in this topic comes from some masterpieces such those written by Hobsbawm or Gehler, authors who explained the situation from a perspective which I have tried to use myself in the work. It consists in analysing the German situation in a wider context, as it was dominated by USA and USSR and all the historical facts related in my work are linked to the situation of these two countries and all their values and conflicts. All the facts are mentioned briefly and not explained deeply since this is just a summary of a complex period and since the subject it refers to is European Contemporary History, and this restricts the possibility of getting deeper in all the foreign facts. They can just be taken in consideration as they are of extreme relevance for the true understanding of the dynamic that led the events.

After the conclusion of the Second World War, Europe appeared to be extremely weakened and broken into fragments, which was actually a difficult situation to emerge from. Particularly Germany suffered from the division, since the winners of the War met in three conferences (in Teheran, Yalta and Potsdam) and decided to literally split Germany into four parts : one for USA, one for Great Britain, one for France and last but not least one for the Soviet Union. USA took the South part, from Baden and Württemberg to Bavaria, Great Britain had Schleswig-Holstein and big cities such as

Hamburg and Düsseldorf, France received Saar and a piece of Baden and Württemberg and the Soviet Union got the North part until Oder-Neisse. Berlin as well suffered the division between the four, which is of extreme relevance for the future facts.

It was clear from the beginning that Great Britain and France were not able in that moment to sustain all the costs that the supremacy involved, and they would rather leave the control to United States, which embodied at that time the role of supremacy. It must be always remembered that the period considered in this work is the period of the Cold War. It is difficult to find a complete definition of this war, since its peculiarity is the fact that there was actually no war. It was Thomas Hobbes who said that a war consists not only in a battle or in the act of fighting, but in a lack of time wherein the will to contend the battle is sufficiently known. It is clear that his definition perfectly fits with what happened after the Second World War, since from its conclusion burst the beginning of the world division. At that time there were only two big nations: United States and the Soviet Union. They were in contrast with each other due to their deep differences concerning values and ideologies and their hegemony on the other countries was uncontested. On the one hand there were United States which were completely against despotism and militarism, which had been the fundamentals of Nazism. United States were devoted to democracy and free market, which they intended to spread in their part of Germany, with a new perspective that wanted to contrast the diffusion of Communism. On the other there was the Soviet Union, led by Stalin, who embodied all the values of Communism. He was a despot and he wanted to set the Russian way of living in their part. So from this huge division Germany was divided into the West and the East part, respectively belonging to USA and to USSR.

From the very first moment it was clear that the two Powers would not have followed an unitary strategy, despite this was what they declared in the three conferences mentioned above. It is easier to find out the differences between the two parts by analysing the two leaders: the American part was led by Konrad Adenauer and the Russian by Walter Ulbricht. The differences between these two men are representative of the huge gap between the way of living in the two parts of Germany.

To begin with, Konrad Adenauer, who has been elected by the German Parliament in 1949, was a radical anticommunist. He voted his life to the fight against totalitarianism: he was in fact against Nazism as well. Ulbricht instead was faithful to Communism and to

its principles. At Yalta the leaders of the four nations had decided the demilitarization of the whole Germany, with a process of denazification. It was commonly reckoned that Germany had been guilty of the destruction caused by the War and that it should have taken the consequences of its behaviour. At Potsdam they decided that every occupier could have taken independently war reparations from its part, in the form of industrial or agricultural equipment. From the very start USA and USSR set a real domination.

United States intended to strengthen the West part, and they pursued this aim with the diffusion of democracy. It has been much discussed how peculiar this democratization has been, since it came not from the people but from governants, which is definitely unusual for this kind of government. By the way, the principal aim for Americans was to revitalize economy. They started with the substitution of the Reich Mark with the Deutsche Mark, secretly printed in America and then exported in Germany. The positive effect of the new money has been really quick, and it was in this period that, thanks also to the ERP (European Recovery Program) the economy really increased and Germany could live a period of growth which has for this reason been called "Wirtschaftswunder", a true economic miracle.

The situation was completely different in the East part, where the Soviet Union tried to establish a way of living similar to the one of the other communist countries. Russians thought that the real evil for society was capitalism, for this reason they intended to destroy it. Their strategy wasn't so successful and economy started to withdraw. It was based essentially on programmes which controlled all the economical sectors. Everything was controlled by the system, from the agricultural products to first matters. The economic policy roused many remonstrances, which were roughly restrained, showing the classic behaviour of the communist party which leded that part of Germany, called SED (Sozialistische Einheitspartei). It was this policy that caused the huge gap between the people and the State, and that caused as well the escape from the East part. It is important to pay attention to this point, since it is crucial for what would have happened next. The population of the East part could not accept the rough ways of their dominants, and their uneasiness was increased by the comparison between them and the population of the West part. They could see how different their life was: in the West people had civil rights and their economical life was growing

quickly. It is for that reason that many people, especially the young part of the population, left the DDR (Deutsche Demokratische Republik) to make an attempt to find a different condition in the West. This led the Soviet Union to interfere with the communication between their part of Berlin and the West part, and the increased this blockage until the reaching of a real blockage of Berlin. All the means of communication were closed. This went down in history as the first crisis of Berlin. Americans reacted with a spectacular air connection, a sort of "air bridge" which started on the 26th of June 1948 and lasted for a year. This experience meant a lot for international relations, since it represented for Americans a great success on the technical and psychological side. With a lot of work they could send commissions to their part of the city and this had a great influence on the population, because it was a proof of the real interest in helping them in their rebirth.

Another important step in the Cold War was represented by Stalin's death in 1953. It came as a shock for his colleagues and for the population as well. After his death it was decided to share power in a common leadership: this appeared as the conclusion of a thirty-year totalitarianism. After a brief period anyway it was especially Chruscev who could take the leadership in his hands. He was very different from Stalin, and agreed with Lenin's ideology. His attitude was a public condemnation of Stalin's ways of ruling, and he proposed a different way, which set a limit to the role of police in abusing its authority and in foreign policy he abandoned Stalin's strictness. Anyway, this kind of relaxation that came from Urss did not immediately reach the East of Germany. There Ulbricht went on with his communist programme and this provoked a lot of protests. In particular on the 17th of June 1953 a huge remonstrance blew up. The main problem for the DDR continued to be the mass migration for a better condition in the West part: many left the East part looking for a job, many for familiar reasons and many because they could not identify themselves with that kind of "Russian State" USSR was trying to create. Only in 1961 the number of people who abandoned the East part amounted to 47.433.

To avoid this exodus the East of Germany finally decided to build a wall up: its construction started the 13th August of 1961 and it is remembered as the "death border", because it was inspected day and night for its perimeter, and all those who tried to go beyond it found only death. It is certainly shocking how the entire world

finally accepted this wall, which physically divided the two parts of Germany and more deeply divided the whole world, in its contrast between the two big Powers and their ideologies. The German division comes as a result of the intellectual division between USA and USSR and meant a gap in Europe and as well in the world. This wall was intended to avert the exodus of people and labour from the East part, and it actually improved somehow its economic condition, but as much as economy improved, the feelings coming from the population worsened. They felt in prison, and this wall represented an occasion for United States to make clear the differences between their way of leading a State and the Russian's. It was after a short time that many civil rights were deleted from the East Constitution: the right of choosing a job, right of strike or freedom of the press.

Things started to change only when in 1969 elections in the West part were won by Willy Brandt. He must be remembered for his great ability of thinking about a period in which Europe would have been over the division. His policy is known as "Ostpolitik" which means policy of the East, opposite to Adenauer "Westpolitik". As said before Adenauer thought that the only way for Germany to succeed in the renewal was leaving space and power to United States. Brandt truly intended to stretch the relations between the two parts out and as a proof of this intention he announced the will of preventing proliferation of nuclear weapons. He was convinced that, although there actually were two different part of Germany, they were not stranger one to the other and that their relationship could only be a special one.

Another event contributed to the détente, and it was the oil crisis: during the Arabic war all the countries which exported oil reunited in an alliance and increased four times the prices, in order to boycott the friendly position of United States for Israel. This event wreaked havoc in all European countries, and took a great change in the international climate and in the West-East relationship. Despite USSR increased its expansionistic policy, other important changes occurred and brought the two of them nearer to peace. A leading figure for this purpose was Gorbačëv, who took the place of Cernienko in the leadership of the PCUS, the Russian communist party. He proposed a new way of ruling based on "glasnost" and "perestroika". The first term, glasnost, means clearness and transparency of the politic process, instead the second, perestroika, reflects the will of improving and bettering the standard of living for the

population under the Soviet control. He perfectly knew that it was necessary for USSR to low military spending and to face up the disarmament, and to do this he signed with Ronald Reagan, president of United States, the negotiation INF (Intermediate Nuclear Force) in Geneva in 1987. The relation between them become closer after Reagan's visit in Berlin when he pronounced the famous words "Mr Gorbačëv, please tear down this wall" and "Es gibt nur ein Berlin" which means "There is only one Berlin". It was Helmut Kohl, Chancellor of the Federal Republic, who found the tuning with the Russian leader and invited him in Bonn, and leading him to admit that the Wall was not intended to last forever. This declaration aroused consequences both in the West and in the East part, and on the 9th October 70.000 demonstrators in Leipzig marched with the slogan "Wir sind ein Volk", which means "We are the people". The demonstration went on until 9th November, when it reached the peak. It was Schawbowski, a member of Politburo, who turned the situation upside down. He said that the passages between the Federal Republic and the Democratic Republic were about to be opened. When a journalist asked when it would have happened, he did not know the correct answer and just said "As far as I know, immediately". In theory, the announcement was intended to be said the morning of the day after by radio, but the news, taken without Mosca's agreement and permission, shed quickly and had enormous consequences.

Even the population was not ready for such a big event, and the first hole was opened in Bornholmer Strasse, where some citizens overstepped the Wall and reached the Federal Republic. Even the guards, completely unprepared, opened the ways due to their inferiority in numbers. This can be defined as the most crucial event which actually brought to an end the Cold War. After this event it was clear that Germany should have been reunificated and that happened after some meetings between dominants. The strong ideologic contrasts between USA and USSR led them to manipulate the events in Germany, but, after a while, things changed and the contrasts could no longer live. Europe had grown as a powerful country and it was clear that ideologies were no more strong as they had been before. In 1990 George Bush and Michail Gorbačëv announced the conclusion of the Cold War, which has then been officialized on the 21st November in Paris. This date marked the end of bipolarity in international relations.

Even if it is much more difficult trying to explain what happened during the period

discussed, the meaning of the whole text is explaining the deep bond that there was between the Americans and Russians events with the German situations. That happened because of the weakness of Germany after the Second World War, which Germany itself was responsible for. None in that period would have discussed the position of those two Powers, and everything emerged as a consequence of their wishes and behaviours. Germany became a sort of battlefield where they could prove their value and strength. Since the beginning of the Cold War, the problems between USA and USSR have been many. Starting from 1946 with the contrast between the Soviet Union and Turkey, supported by the United States. This event brought President Truman to believe that a failure would have meant the expansion of Communism in the world and this led him to the "containment" policy, a policy that stood in for the necessity for a real containment of the Russian expansionism. Only a year after this, in 1947, USA proposed a huge programme for financial aid to all those countries who would have accepted it. This programme is known as the Marshall Plan, from the name of George Marshall who pronounced his speech in Harvard in 1947, or ERP (European Recovery Programme).

USSR repulsed the plan and forced all the satellite states to do the same. In the same year in the Soviet Union "cominform" was formed, which appeared as a union between all the communist parties, and that confirmed the division between two grounds: on one side USA with their big economic power and their strong hate for Communism and Totalitarianism, on the other USSR which wanted to establish Communism in the world. This shows that behind the events mentioned about Germany, there actually was a real contrast between bigger powers who somehow clashed in Germany, that really appears to be the nucleus of the Cold War and that in an indissoluble way ties its history to those of USA and USSR.