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The Berlin Wall. Thirty Years After

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Cover: "My God, Help Me to Survive this Deadly Love" (*Mein Gott, hilf mir, diese tödliche Liebe zu überleben*). Graffiti painting by Dmitri Vrubel on the eastern side of the Berlin wall, depicting Leonid Brezhnev and Erich Honecker in a socialist fraternal kiss. The original photography was taken in 1979 during the 30th anniversary of the foundation of the German Democratic Republic.

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THE BERLIN WALL

Michael Cramer

Member of the German Green Party in the Berlin
City-State Parliament (1989-2004) and
in the European Parliament (2004-2019).

He is the initiator of the "Berlin Wall Trail", the
"Iron Curtain Trail" and the author of these books.

michacramer@t-online.de

This year, we remember the 30th anniversary of the fall of the Wall in Berlin and of the Iron Curtain in Europe. "Where was the Wall?" is a question that many visitors of Berlin still ask today. Many teenagers know about the years before 1989 only from their history books. Today, the former course of the 40-kilometre inner-city border is marked by a double row of cobblestones, with metal plaques at regular intervals on the West Berlin side, bearing the words "Berliner Mauer 1961-1989".

The Wall around West Berlin was 3.60 m high and 160 km long. Its appearance and location changed over the course of time. The barbed-wire fencing was replaced by pre-manufactured Wall segments, which were in some parts reinforced with metal grid fences. Between the "outer border wall" facing West and the "inner border wall" facing East was the brightly lit notorious "death strip" with the "patrol path", on which GDR border troops guarded the frontier. On the GDR-side, only selected people were allowed to live in the neighbourhoods directly behind the Wall. Their friends and relatives had to be registered before any visits and needed to obtain a special permit. More than 300 guard towers, 30 headquarters, 20 bunkers, floodlight systems, signal and alarm fences, as well as dog running areas and tank traps were installed to prevent people from escaping to West Berlin.

Before the construction of the Wall, about four million people successfully escaped the GDR. Afterwards, people from the East continuously tried to cross the barricades. 128 people lost their lives at the Berlin Wall. From the 80 responsible marksmen who were identified after the end of the GDR and brought before a court, 77 received a suspended sentence.

On 24 August 1961, 24-year-old Günter Litfin was shot when he attempted to swim to the western side of the Humboldthafen. A monumental plaque is dedicated to this first victim after the construction of the Wall. The final fugitive to be shot dead at the Berlin Wall was 20-year-old Chris Gueffroy, who was killed on 5 February 1989 in a hail of bullets as he attempted to swim across the Britzer canal to Neukölln.

Immediately after the fall of the Wall, many environmental and transport initiatives started with the aim of developing the Wall strip as a bicycle round tour. In order to win support for their initiative, they put up bike pictograms in many places along the Eastern patrol path. Today it is possible to cycle along the entire length of the former border.

The "Berlin Wall Trail" is an exciting route, full of history. It takes cyclists past many important and famous landmarks. There are also many names that serve as a reminder of past events: Checkpoint Charlie, Potsdamer Platz, Invalidenfriedhof or Bernauer Straße. The route also passes the "Bösebrücke" in Bornholmer Straße, which became famous on 9th November 1989 when the first people crossing the border were greeted with cheers and sparkling wine. The legendary "Oberbaumbrücke", the "East Side Gallery" or the remaining Wall segments in Niederkirchnerstraße are also worth a visit. Another interesting site is the "Parliament of Trees against War and Violence" by the artist Ben Wagin, whose work was integrated into the new buildings of the Bundestag on the Eastern bank of the river Spree shortly after the fall of the Wall.

The fall of the Wall in 1989 sparked a heated debate over what to do with the remnants. Most Berliners wanted to erase all evidence of the Wall and this terrible time as quickly as possible. Only a small

minority thought "beyond the day" (Willy Brandt) and fought to preserve authentic parts of the Wall and the border strip. They were mostly individuals, representatives of monument protection organisations and citizens' initiatives who prevented this important part of history being forgotten.

In March 1996, a competition entitled "Crossings" was launched to generate proposals for monuments at the former border crossing points, of which there were seven in 1961. Additionally, the project "Geschichtsmeile Berliner Mauer" (Berlin Wall History Mile) was established. It is a permanent exhibition in four languages (German, English, French and Russian), which consists of 30 plaques that provide information about the history of the division of the city, as well as the construction and fall of the Wall. The plaques contain photos and short texts to describe events that occurred at specific locations along the Wall.

The "Berlin Wall History Mile" continues on the outskirts of the Wall Trail with information boards. Historical photos and texts in German and English direct the attention of passers-by to certain places, which, due to their former usage, specific development or other special events, highlight in some way the different aspects of the city's former division. The steles - just like the signs "Berlin Wall Trail" - are 3.60 m tall, just like the Wall once was. Apart from the information boards, there are also steles and commemorative crosses for the killed fugitives in order to remind the public of their fates.

People talking about the Berlin Wall usually refer to the inner-city border strip between East and West Berlin. The Berlin Wall is, in fact, much longer, as it also includes the 120-kilometre long border between West Berlin and the surrounding Land Brandenburg, which can also be explored by bike. Far away from the hustle and bustle of the big city, this stretch winds through pleasant countryside and woods. For example, it takes cyclists past curiosities like the "Eiskeller" (ice cellar) in Spandau, an enclave which was surrounded by the Wall on three sides, as well as the border crossing at Staaken. Of particular historical interest is the

Glienicker Bridge, where Americans and Soviets once exchanged their spies. Of course, one must also not miss the biggest border crossing complex in Dreilinden (at the motorway crossing), which is now protected as a historic site.

Thanks to the positive media response, the Berlin Senate decided, on the occasion of the 40th anniversary of the construction of the Wall, to put all its remnants under monument protection and to develop the entire length of the route in a signposted and bicycle-friendly way. It is an attractive combination of history workshop and bicycle tourism, of recreation and culture. The inner-city section between Bernauer Straße and the Oberbaumbrücke is especially very informative and historically interesting, making it not just an ideal spot for cycling but also for a historical and political walk.

The "Berlin Wall Trail" has become part of Berlin's Tourism Programme and is the first project that connects city tourism with soft tourism. It has developed into a tourist highlight in the last years. Today, even some five-star hotels advertise the route and offer bikes and guides to their guests. In Berlin, it is possible to experience history by bike during the day and then enjoy the reunited city in the evening in concerts, the opera or in one of the many theatres.

But not just Berlin, but Germany as a whole was divided into East and West by a 1,400 km long death strip with 3,000 km of fences, vehicle traps, 830 watchtowers, floodlight systems, walls and bunker complexes. To keep the memory of the former border strip alive it is necessary to develop it for soft tourism. Additionally, it was intended to protect the flora and fauna through the establishment of a European Green Belt in the former death strip. In December 2004, the German Bundestag voted unanimously in favour of this. It was initiated by the Foundation for Environmental and Natural Protection in Germany (BUND), aiming at changing the death strip into a living space for around 5,000 different animal and plant species. It has today 150 nature reserves, numerous flora-fauna-habitat areas (FFH) and biosphere reserves.

But not only Berlin and Germany; Europe also was divided for

decades: the "Iron Curtain" ran from the Barents Sea at the Norwegian-Russian border down to the Black Sea at the Turkish-Bulgarian border. Today, it does not divide us anymore. It is a symbol of a common past in reunited Europe. This is another reason why, in the autumn of 2005, a big majority in the European Parliament from all the countries and all the groups voted in favour of the motion that I initiated to include the "Iron Curtain Trail" in its report concerning "New perspectives and new challenges for sustainable European tourism". It is also intended to help build and strengthen a common European identity. The trail includes countless monuments, museums and open-air facilities, which remind visitors of the division of Europe and how it was overcome by the Peaceful Revolutions in East and Central Europe. 20 countries are part of this project, 15 of which are today member states of the EU.

The route runs along the Western border of the former Warsaw-Pact states. It touches the Norwegian-Russian and the Finnish-Russian border and then passes the coastlines of Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Kaliningrad, Poland and the former GDR. The path then leads from the peninsula Priwall at Travemünde until the state-triangle between Saxony, Bavaria and the Czech Republic and follows *en route* the former inner-German border strip. It then leads over the elevations of the Bohemian Forest, past Mähren and the Slovakian capital Bratislava, where it passes the Danube river. After the Austrian-Hungarian border, the trail continues through Slovenia and Croatia. Between Romania and Serbia, the route mostly follows the course of the Danube, to then finally end at the Bulgarian Black Sea coast at the Northern tip of Turkey, after having crossed Bulgaria, North Macedonia and Greece.

Under the slogan "Unbuilding Wall", the "Iron Curtain Trail" and the "Berlin Wall Trail" in 2018 have been part on the Biennale in Venice. In 2019, the "Iron Curtain Trail" was certified by the Council of Europe as a "Cultural Route".

THE FALL OF THE BERLIN WALL.
ITS CAUSES AND CONSEQUENCES

Herbert Ammon

Historian and political publicist. In the 1980s, he was involved
in the peace movement. He is particularly known for the book
"The Left and the National Question", which he published
together with Peter Brandt.

Freie Universität Berlin, Germany
h_ammon@yahoo.com

Abstract. The fall of the Berlin Wall on November 9, 1989, resulted from a complex pattern of causes, including historical contingencies. One of these was Günter Schabowski's ill-phrased announcement of free travel for GDR citizens, another Mikhail Gorbachev's access to power in 1985 and his promise of "perestroika". At the core of the matter lies "the German question" as the key issue of controversies, in the early phase of the Cold War. Even after 1955, when the two post-war German states had been integrated into the military blocs, the German question remained on the diplomatic agenda. The erection of the Berlin Wall in 1961, however, signified that the "German problem" had been shelved. After the Cuban crisis in October 1962, when the two superpowers refrained from nuclear confrontation, they appeared to enter into an era of *détente*.

Facing up to these facts, West Berlin´s Mayor Willy Brandt and, foremost, his adviser Egon Bahr developed their concept of "Ostpolitik". Its long-term perspective was to change the *status quo* of German division by accepting the *status quo*, *i.e.* the consequences of WW II, the Oder-Neisse border to Poland, the reality of the blocs, and the East German state under Communist rule. It was based on the assumption a) that *détente* was an irreversible process and b) that the GDR, displaying economic stability at that time, while remaining an indispensable element in the Soviet bloc, would be disposed to forms of cooperation.

The dialectics of history proved otherwise. Geopolitical rivalries between the superpowers continued to exist. In 1979, the Soviet Union's military intervention in Afghanistan coincided with its opening another round in the arms race focussing on intermediate-range missiles in Central Europe. Both decisions propitiated the interior crisis of the Soviet Union, due to technological backwardness and military overburdening of its state-run economy. Gorbachev's attempts at reform proved ineffective, his proclamation of *glasnost* encouraged

dissident movements in Eastern Central Europe, *e.g.* the independent peace movement in the GDR, to resist their regimes. Gorbachev's renunciation of the "Brezhnev doctrine" motivated reform-minded governments in Poland and Hungary to test the limits of Soviet hegemony.

The decisive factor was the comprehensive crisis in the GDR: an unproductive economy based on external debts, a decrepit infrastructure, ecological damage, an oppressive dictatorship rejecting reform, dissident activists challenging the regime. All this, in the autumn of 1989, led to the mass exodus of East Germans fleeing across Hungary's open border to Austria. The upshot of this course of events was the collapse of the Berlin Wall.

Germany's reunification in 1990 entailed the creation of the European Union, an in-between of a confederation and a federal union of states. Its *raison d´être* is to a) provide a structure of peace in Europe b) to avert German hegemony on the Continent based on its power potential. Nonetheless, apprehensions concerning Germany's future role in Europe have not altogether vanished. With regard to its immigration policy, some observers speak of a new type of "moral hegemony". Last but not least, Merkel´s decision in 2015 admitting millions of migrants to Europe, tipped the scale in favour of Brexit.

I.

November 9, 1989, the day the Berlin Wall came down, will remain one of the great historical markers of the 20th century, completely altering the political landscape of Europe that had emerged from World War II and profoundly affecting Europe's fate in the present. Looking back on the events of 1989/1990 thirty years after the collapse of the Wall, we are taking for granted what back then to many observers of world politics had seemed inconceivable: a reunited Germany in the centre of a united Europe.

It may be noted that for all the public commemoration of this *annus mirabilis,* the tones of joy and jubilation in Germany are somewhat subdued. This may be in part due to the intellectual climate in a country that continues to fail in coming to terms with its painful historical burden. In fact, the ambivalence of predominantly West German intellectuals as to the history and

culture of their country accounts for the rejection of emotions suspected of "nationalism". They will point out that the joyful date of November 9, 1989 coincides with the sinister date of November 9, 1938 in Nazi Germany. They may recall that a few days after the Wall came down, the demands for German reunification first emerged in "the East" during the demonstrations in Plauen, Leipzig, Dresden and elsewhere. Emotions were carried by flag-waving, by the slogan „Deutschland einig Vaterland" (*Germany united fatherland* – the line taken from the original GDR anthem) and by the phrase „Wir sind ein Volk" *(We are one people)*. Recollections of this sort do not fit into the image and reality of a multi-ethnic society that Germany – like other West European countries – is in the process of becoming. These profound changes are taking place in parallel with the academic tendencies to "deconstruct" the concept (devalued as an "invention" or "narrative") of *nation* as the historical basis and political framework of democratic self-determination.

To be sure, the media are calling back to memory the dramatic course of events in the late summer and autumn of 1989, leading up to the climax at that November night 1989. Post-wall generations thus can get an idea of what happened back then: in the beginning, there was the press conference where Günter Schabowski (deceased in 2015, his name forgotten)*,* member of the SED Politbureau (an unfamiliar term to many today), responded to an Italian journalist´s question concerning free travel for GDR citizens in dubious grammar. The announcement on West Berlin radio and TV set a number of East Berliners to probing the promise. When TV anchorman Hanns Joachim Friedrich (1927-1995) in his introduction to the late evening news injected the interpretative phrase "...the gates in the Wall are wide open" *(...die Tore in der Mauer stehen weit offen),* he triggered the rush of thousands of East Berliners to the checkpoints. At Bornholmer Strasse, the border guard (*i.e.* Stasi / Staatssicherheit / "state security") officer Harald Jäger in view of the pressing mass of people decided to raise the barrier, just half an hour before midnight. The next morning the world was watching crowds dancing on the crescent-shaped wall barring the

Brandenburg Gate. Banners displayed the people's political wit, German flags hitherto primarily seen at sports events signalled their political will, young men smashing through the Wall with sledge-hammers.

That the Wall came down without a shot being fired, that Germany's reunification into a single state was achieved in peaceful agreement, they both make the events of 1989/1990 appear as historically exceptional, if not miraculous. We can ignore here the dispute promoted by some GDR veterans like Egon Krenz, Erich Honecker´s successor as the head of the party and state, by sympathizers of the party "Die Linke" and others insisting on the term "turn" ("*die Wende*") in order to downsize the term "revolution". In most features, the end of the GDR amounts to a revolution except for its nonviolent dialectics and its peaceful outcome. None of this was foreseeable, as we recall the ominous atmosphere during the mass demonstration of some 70 000 people in the dark streets of Leipzig on October 9, 1989. All things considered, the revolution in the GDR displays the historical pattern of remote and immediate causes, of deep-rooted and growing unrest, of an activist minority challenging the authorities, of power-wielders at odds with the situation, last but not least of contingencies. Among these, we may count the historical circumstances attached to the name of Mikhail Gorbachev.

II.

Recently, a dispute has arisen between the historian Ilko-Sascha Kowalczuk, a former GDR oppositionist, and the sociologist Detlef Pollack, a former non-activist student of theology at Leipzig. Kowalczuk argues that the dissident minority who ventured to set forth from the precincts of Leipzig´s Nikolaikirche and to enter the streets on September 4 with their banners deserve all the credit for triggering the mass protests in the weeks to come. He also sides with those who extol the role of Poland´s *Solidarnośź* in challenging the Communist regime there back in 1981 and in paving the way for the

breakdown of the Soviet empire. By proposing the term "exit revolution", his opponent Pollack insists on the decisive role of the long-time non-activist majority whose discontent erupted in the late summer and autumn of 1989, with masses of "ordinary" people fleeing from the GDR via Hungary and the West German embassies in Prague and Warsaw. In this view, the exodus of young men, women, and children leaving the GDR in rage and despair delegitimized the regime more visibly than the protesters, who gained their cutting-edge strength only when tens of thousands dared to join them in the streets.

Controversies of this sort may sharpen the view for the dramatic phase preceding the fall of the Wall in 1989, although they tend to curtail the full scope of the drama. To get to the core of events in 1989, a wider perspective is needed. It will encompass East-West relations after the Berlin Wall was raised, in August 1961, and after the Cuban crisis, in October 1962. In the post-war era until the late 1950s, the division of Germany was considered a key issue of the Cold War. The indicative date is the Geneva conference in 1959 when, for the last time, the Four Powers – admitting two separate delegations from the FRG and the GDR as "observers" - convened on the German question. Two years later, the Wall dividing Berlin and the refugees shot at the Wall signified to the world that the German question had been shelved. In fact, for quite a few members of the political elites in Western Europe, the division of Germany had its charm; for others, it preserved its features of a frozen conflict. On a theoretical – and practical - level, the two German states´ integration into the bloc structure under the hegemony of the USA respectively the Soviet Union served to maintain the balance of power in Europe. From the perspective of a country with strong national traditions like Poland, the arrangement came to be known as the "system of Yalta".

Confronted with the reality of the Wall, German hopes for "reunification" began to fade. In fact, patriotic sentiments among the younger generation in West Germany tended to rapidly weaken in the wake of the student revolt associated with the date "1968".

The student movement's radicalism was triggered June 2, 1967, when a student participating in a demonstration against the autocratic Shah Mohammad Reza Pahlavi of Iran, who was visiting West Berlin, was shot by a police officer. (Some forty years later, in 2009, Stasi files revealed that the killer had originally been a GDR Stasi agent.) The students' furore exploded in the Easter days of 1968 after a right-wing extremist's attempt to kill West Berlin's charismatic student leader Rudi Dutschke (1940-1979), a refugee from the East. Focussing on the war in Vietnam, the emotions of West German intellectuals (like elsewhere in Western Europe) were swayed by anti-imperialism meaning identification with revolutions in the Third World, by radical socialism and individual emancipation. In Dutschke´s speeches and writings – by no means based on sober analysis - revolutionary fervour directed against both US capitalism and Soviet oppression were merged with national aspirations. After recovering from cerebral injuries inflicted by the attempt on his life, he and some of his friends resumed contacts with dissidents in Eastern Europe. Thus, in the seventies, Dutschke came out as a standard-bearer of attacks on the division of Germany and Europe. A few months before his death on Christmas Eve 1979, he was one of the co-founders of the West German Greens who, at that time, put forth the German question in their (then) pacifist, ecological, and feminist platform.

Radical opposition to the *status quo* in Europe implied a critical approach to the piecemeal strategies pursued by the Social Democrats in the 1970s. In view of political realities embodied by the Wall, the concept had been worked out in West Berlin by Mayor Willy Brandt's adviser and friend Egon Bahr (1922-2015), often referred to as the "architect of Ostpolitik". It was based on several assumptions. First, faced with the possibility of mutual destruction, the two nuclear superpowers had entered into an era of détente, both sides respecting the existing bloc structure. This meant that Germany's partition was to persist for a prolonged period of time. To keep the idea of one German nation alive in the generation to come, it was essential to maintain and strengthen ties of family,

friendship and culture. Second, from his German point of interest, Bahr saw political chances in the approach promoted by President Kennedy that the acceptance of the *status quo* was the prerequisite for overcoming the *status quo*. Third, in the course of rapprochement, a comprehensive security system was to replace the military blocs. In this process, the two German states would develop a mutual interest in the reunification of the country. In some aspects, this concept fit in with the theory promulgated at that time in the United States that there was a long-term tendency of convergence of the opposing systems of Western capitalism and Eastern communism arising from the necessities and nonideological mechanisms of industrial societies.

Bahr first promoted his concept under the title of "Wandel durch Annäherung" (*change by approach*). While this idea was rejected by East German politicians and ideologues as another scheme of subversion, the Soviets and their allies were ready to respond to the initiatives taken by Federal Chancellor Brandt right after entering the office, in 1969. For the Soviets (and of course for the Poles), the German acceptance of the *status quo*, *i.e.* the recognition of the postwar territorial order (above all the Oder-Neisse border with Poland) held some promise. They were prepared, then, to accept certain elements of "Ostpolitik". The next three years (1970-1973), a series of treaties were concluded. The Moscow leadership under Leonid Brezhnev pressured the East Germans – by replacing the reluctant Walter Ulbricht as head of the party and the state by Erich Honecker - into negotiating with their West German counterparts. These negotiations resulted in a treaty establishing the "fundamental basis of relations" between the two states. The Soviets themselves signed a "Four-Power-Agreement" with their former allies that served to improve the situation in West Berlin in 1971. The document contained a formula stating that the four powers' ultimate sovereign rights in Germany were unaffected by the agreement. It made clear, that – in the absence of a peace treaty - the victors of World War II still had a say in German affairs.

"Ostpolitik" was based on a long-time perspective. Its merits are

out of a dispute. With Chancellor Willy Brandt as its anti-Nazi protagonist, it served to expel the spectre of German revanchism from the East European scenery, thus preparing the acceptance of a united Germany in the future. As to its short-term goals, it succeeded in maintaining and promoting contacts between Germans on either side of the dividing border. To be sure, visits from the other side still turned out to be a rather bothering affair, due to red tape, to a system of controls at the border marked by an ugly fence and surmounted by watchtowers, or German Shephard search dogs led by guards on the trains. Whereas for an increasing number of younger West Germans, the GDR comprising core territories of German history and culture thus came to be a remote *terra incognita,* a reverse self-perception prevailed in the East. The theory proclaimed by ideologues that there existed two separate German nations never really caught on in the GDR. By meeting with relatives and friends from the West, by listening to older family members with travel permits reporting their impressions in the West, last but not least by watching West German TV, people in the GDR, while widely accepting their state as a given fact, preserved the idea of belonging to the same nation as their cousins and nephews in the West. Also, personal contacts, Western radio and TV as well as travelling in the more liberal East European states like Poland and Hungary nourished doubts, discontent, and hopes for a different future.

The concept of promoting an irrevocable process of détente, arms control, and cooperation easing and replacing the conflict between the hegemonic powers and their bloc systems did not materialize to the degree expected by some of its proponents. In fact, the Soviet leadership showed little enthusiasm in weakening their position in Eastern Europe (as demonstrated once again in Prague, in 1968). On the other hand, the Soviets were interested in having the *status quo* accepted by the West in a conclusive form. The mutual agreement on the *status quo* was achieved at the Helsinki Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE), in 1975. However, the Final Act of CSCE in "Basket III" contained

one vital concession extracted from the eastern negotiators obligating the participants to the respect of civil rights. Although being open to interpretation, this formula proved helpful for East European dissidents as an argument in their protracted opposition to the repressive regimes in their countries. In East Germany, the authorities dealt with refractive dissidents by first jailing them for an indefinite period of time, then transferring them to the West – a mechanism based on informal accords with the Federal Republic. Some were granted exit visas they had applied for, others were expelled like protest singer poet Wolf Biermann, in 1976, followed by the oppositionist Robert Havemann's friend Jürgen Fuchs (1950-1999), in 1977, or peace activist Roland Jahn from Jena, in 1983. Others continued to take the risks of being shot or captured in escaping to the West.

It is misleading, then, to consider "Basket III" as the original and most effective key in bringing down the Wall and the Soviet empire. Despite the Helsinki accords, the Cold War continued in Third World regions, in geopolitical rivalry (*e.g.* Soviet military bases in Syria and Libya), in alliances with dictatorial regimes in Africa and Asia, as well as in interferences in civil wars. The upshot came with the Soviets' military intervention in Afghanistan on Christmas 1979. The Politbureau's decision to rescue the tattering Communist regime in Kabul threatened by traditionalist tribal forces proved to be a fatal mistake. The *mujaheddin* (of various fundamentalist Islamic backgrounds) instigated and equipped with arms by the US under President Jimmy Carter and his security adviser Zbigniev Brzezinzki as well as aided by the Islamist regimes of Pakistan and Saudi Arabia put up ferocious resistance. The Soviets found themselves bogged down in a guerrilla war that only ended in Spring 1988 during Gorbachev's *perestroika.*

III.
The dialectics of history turned against the Soviet regime when it entered into another round of the arms race with NATO. At the

core of the matter lays the idea of the military balance of power. Since the 1960s, the two superpowers – an appropriate term at that time – have concluded a number of treaties intended to reduce the dangers of the all-out nuclear war. Arms control was to comprise nuclear missile systems, limiting and balancing arsenals to thereby guarantee mutual security. In the late1970s, NATO analysts observed that the Soviet Union had been "modernizing" its intermediate-range missile system with devices named SS 20. From the Western perspective, the new Soviet missiles would have opened a "gap" in the pattern of security based on stages of nuclear deterrence. The dispute over missile deployment came to a head in 1979, coinciding with the Soviets' invasion in Afghanistan. The West responded with announcing the deployment of equivalent systems to be based primarily in West Germany.

By unhinging the accepted military pattern of security, Soviet political strategists may also have intended to loosen the ties between Western allies, above all by shaking West Germany's reliance on the US nuclear security shield. Whatever these intentions, the idea backfired in the wake of a massive peace movement in West Germany in the early 1980s. Inspired in part by genuine pacifism, in part by leftist partisan activism, in part by national sentiments ("No additional nuclear weapons on German soil!") the movement saw an unexpected recurrence of the "German question". For a short period of time, the Greens emerging as a new force made up of diverse splinter groups of the student movement allying themselves – thanks to Rudi Dutschke's efforts prior to his death - with national-neutralist elements, seemed to be its most vociferous standard-bearers. The "national-patriotic" wing of the Greens, however, was soon to be pushed aside by experienced politicos like Joschka Fischer, later on, Foreign Minister of the reunited country.

Political excitement grew when, in parallel to a mass demonstration in Bonn against the new weapons, an "Open Letter" inspired, in parts, by friends of mine in West Berlin and authorized by the prominent dissident Robert Havemann (1910-1982) was

publicized in October 1981. Bearing the names of signatories from both East and West, it was addressed to the Soviet leader Brezhnev on the eve of his state visit to Bonn. The text demanded the conclusion of peace treaties instead of relying on infertile schemes of nuclear military balance. It called for the withdrawal of foreign troops from Germany. To add to the excitement in the media and among the political class, the "Open Letter" ended with the phrase "it should be left to us, to the Germans ourselves, how to solve the national question". The "Havemann Letter" posited a clear challenge to the *status quo*. Its political significance lays in attracting attention to an outspoken group of dissidents in the GDR rejecting the regime's claim to peace and political sovereignty. At the date of Havemann's death, in April 1982, another "Appeal from Berlin" (even though receiving less resonance) was voiced by his pastor friend Rainer Eppelmann. The dissidents asserted to represent the "independent peace movement" in the East. A number of them held contacts with the opposition in the neighbouring countries, often dating back to their hopes and frustration during the "Prague Spring", in 1968. The opposition's basis became visible in many Protestant churches, young people wearing badges displaying the Biblical promise of "swords into ploughshares" (*Schwerter zu Pflugscharen*) and protesting against militarist education in schools.

At the state level of politics, East-West contacts followed the pattern of uneasy relations between the superpowers and their clients. When Chancellor Helmut Schmidt came to meet Erich Honecker in December 1981, the visit, whilst displaying the regime's repressive character, produced no positive results. At the very same time, Prime Minister General Wojciech Jaruzelski proclaimed martial law in Poland to preclude the dangers of Soviet (and possibly East German) intervention against *Solidarność* and its tendency to break away from the bloc.

Emotions calmed down after Helmut Kohl (CDU) succeeded Helmut Schmidt (SPD) as chancellor in 1982, due to the Liberals' (FDP) switch of coalition from the Social Democrats to the Christian Democrats. The peace movement, powerful for a short

moment, subsided when the "missile crisis" was over, NATO stationing US missiles in autumn 1983 without causing hostile Soviet reaction. Chancellor Kohl continued the pragmatic approach in dealing with the GDR. A spectacular deal with the GDR came into the open in Summer 1983, when the Bavarian Prime Minister Franz Josef Strauß cooperated with a dubious East German negotiator (a Stasi officer residing in a posh Bavarian resort) to grant a credit of a billion DM to the GDR. The money served to prevent the collapse of the GDR's badly indebted, technically outdated and unproductive economy. A year later, Strauß even steered his private plane to Leipzig to convey another credit. The positive idea behind these deals was to prevent an uprising in the GDR, which might have provoked the Soviets to suppress it with their tanks. Thus, on the governmental level, relations between the two states did not deteriorate. In September 1987, Helmut Kohl even invited Erich Honecker to a formal visit in Bonn, making it clear that he was maintaining the goal of German unity. Honecker did not openly object, yet insisted on the prevalence of peace. He also used the opportunity to see his sister in his mining home town in the Saarland.

Meanwhile, the Social Democrats in parliamentary opposition pursued a policy of their own. Protagonists of "Ostpolitik" believed that negotiating with SED functionaries on issues of peace and ideological "disarmament" could serve to improve relations between the two German states. In their written proclamations, the concept of transforming the *status quo* was abandoned in favour of speaking of the historically durable existence of the two states. Some upheld the idea of Germany's division as a prerequisite to peace in Europe, assisted by Protestant pastors who, ignoring historical facts, mystified the country's partition as resulting from historical guilt.

Even Egon Bahr, the architect of "Ostpolitik", seemed to have rescinded his long-time goal of restoring Germany's unity. In echoing pronouncements from the East, he repeatedly affirmed the existence of two separate German states as a stabilizing element in the bloc structure. In oppositional circles demanding civil rights and

political change in Eastern Central Europe, Bahr was to become the *bête noire*, viewed as the protagonist of immobility and the *status quo*. His negative popularity among dissidents was not helped by his well-known back-channel contacts with the Soviet diplomat Valentin Falin. Even for some weeks after the Wall came down, Bahr warned against demands for reunification. It is to his credit as a political strategist, though, that in 1988, when no one expected the Berlin Wall to collapse like the walls of Jericho, he presented a design of transcending the *status quo*. In a small book titled "Zum europäischen Frieden. Eine Antwort auf Gorbatschow" (*Concerning European Peace. An Answer to Gorbachev*), he had called for peace treaties to restore full sovereignty to the two German states. Though not expressed explicitly, the intention was to open the road for some form of reunification.

Meanwhile, in West German schools, teachers in politics classes focussed on "comparison of systems", overlooking the totalitarian features of a rigid dictatorship and elevating the GDR to a productive industrial country ranking tenth among the world's economies. Economic experts tended to overlook the obvious deficiencies of the state-run economy. These were exacerbated when, in the early 1980's, the Soviet Union, itself in economic troubles, reduced petrol exports to its "fraternal states" while raising the price to world market level. Without credits from the West to service its debts, then, the GDR would have faced bankruptcy years before. Its real economic status was revealed after Honecker's deposition in October 1989 in the *compte rendu* presented by Politbureau member Gerhard Schürer, head of the State Planning Commission.

Notwithstanding evident facts, as late as 1986, the influential liberal weekly "Die Zeit" presented an optimistic view of the East German scenery, ignoring the decay of the economy, its decrepit infrastructure, its outdated machinery, the severe ecological damages caused by sulphurous emissions from soft coal power plants, last but not least, the sad appearance of dilapidated inner cities. The GDR, proclaimed editor-in-chief Theo Sommer in a

comprehensive misperception of reality, was to be recognized as a modern, economically efficient state directed by well-trained technocrats in industry and agriculture. To cling to the idea of German reunification was considered a political nuisance as well as an absurdity. Like a good politician as many other West German ones, Oskar Lafontaine (SPD), reneged the idea of German unity. Cultivating a special relationship with his Saar compatriot Erich Honecker, he demanded to cancel the concept of citizenship in the Federal Republic hitherto based on German nationality. A constitutional change depriving East Germans of being entitled to citizenship in the Federal Republic of Germany would have changed their status of refugees from the East to that of asylum-seekers.

To be sure, there were quite a few journalists conscientiously reporting on the true state of East German affairs. They were observing the erosion of the regime from below. Peace and "green" activities in the churches - like pastor Eppelmann's blues masses at Gethsemane Church in East Berlin - attracted young people who, more often, had not been raised in atheist families. "Scientific socialism" revealed in the doctrines of Marxism-Leninism had long lost its intellectual charm except for true believers. The every-day aspects of "real socialism" (*Realsozialismus*) contradicted the utopian promise upheld by the ideologues. Imports of popular culture like rock und punk music served to evoke emotions against the regime's oppressiveness personified in the omnipresent Stasi and its octopus-like system of informers. When August 16, 1988, the British band Pink Floyd gave a concert near the Reichstag, sending their song "The Wall" via megawatt sound boxes across the Wall, thousands of people flocked to listen on the eastern side. The police feared a revolutionary outbreak when the crowds commenced shouting "The Wall must go down" (*"Die Mauer muss weg!"*). By 1989, the atmosphere in East German cities was charged with open rebellion.

All this went unnoticed by many contemporaries in the West. In the Federal Republic, delusion mixed with "Western" indifference to matters East continued to prevail among a great many – not among all - West German intellectuals, in contrast to ordinary

people who kept visiting the East. In the GDR, there were a number of dissidents like Edelbert Richter, teaching philosophy at church seminars in Naumburg and Erfurt, and his student Christian Dietrich, who voiced clear-cut opposition to the "German-German" *status quo*. East German activists were encouraged by friends like Jiři Dienstbier who, later on, after the "velvet revolution" in Prague ensuing the fall of the Wall, became Foreign Minister of Czechoslovakia, to speak out on the "German question". The division of Germany was guaranteeing Soviet hegemony and Communist rule in Eastern Europe. In the West, though, reflecting on the "German question" was considered as a futile exercise in nostalgia left to sentimentalists, the author of this text being one of them.

IV.
Despite its neglect by many West Germans, the "German question" continued to lie at the core of politics – meaning politics based on potential and interests, to a much lesser degree on morality – in Europe. Its key was held in Moscow's Kremlin. In the final analysis, then, German affairs – as well as things in eastern central Europe - depended on political strategies developed by the Soviet leadership.

The decisive changes came with Gorbachev's access to power, in March 1985 - in retrospect, one of history's fortuities. Gorbachev's career had been promoted by Yuri Andropov, long-term chairman of the KGB and head of the party from 1982 until his death, in 1984. Andropov had proven himself as an unrelenting hard-liner in assisting the Soviets' suppression of the Hungarian uprising in 1956 and in crushing the Prague Spring in 1968. During the arms race in the early 1980s, *i.e.* at another stage of the Cold War, he refused to seek a compromise with the US, relying on the Western (notably West German) peace movement to prevent the Americans from countering the Soviet SS 20 missiles with weapons of a similar category. Andropov's miscalculations in power politics came into the open when President Ronald Reagan called the bluff,

denouncing the Soviet Union as an "evil empire" and challenging it by announcing a new Strategic Defence Initiative (SDI). The superior system was to be based in space, made functioning by sophisticated electronics. SDI, it may be recalled, was to remain a concept on paper. It helped the West to win the Cold War.

The American President, detested by leftist liberals in the US and all over Europe, was counting on the inherent weakness of the Soviet system. While its state-centralized economy had fallen far behind the West in technology and productivity, the USSR was spending 70 per cent of its budget on the military, aside from pouring billions into its geopolitical efforts in Afghanistan, Cuba, Nicaragua, Syria, Libya, South Yemen, North Korea etc. At that point, Andropov and the Kremlin leadership came to realize that economic modernization was needed to keep up in the global power game. One may hypothetically ask which course history might have taken with Andropov's staying longer at the head of the Soviet regime. Very likely, he would have followed the Chinese model put into practice in 1979 by Deng Xiaoping, who succeeded in achieving a modernized economy by preserving a dictatorial system. After fifteen months, in February 1984, before he could have successfully applied new strategies for the Russian Empire, Andropov died of kidney failure. When his successor, Konstantin Chernenko, died only one year later, Mikhail Gorbachev ascended to the party's head position of General Secretary.

Among Gorbachev's advisers, we find Alexander Yakovlev (1923-2005) and Vyacheslav Dashichev (1925-2016). Yakovlev, from 1983 to 1990 was head of the Institute of World Economy and International Relations of the USSR Academy of Sciences. Perhaps already somewhat disenchanted by Marxist-Leninist dogmas, he got to know the US as a former Fulbright student at Columbia University (1958/1959). Serving as Soviet ambassador to Canada in the 1970s, he struck up an amicable relationship with liberal Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau. Although Yakovlev's career as a reformer seems to be not so clear-cut, he is known for being the architect of *glasnost* and *perestroika.* Liberalization, then, was to end the

authoritarian system within and to alter relations with the East European countries. When the Brezhnev doctrine proclaiming Soviet hegemony in its Warsaw Pact bloc was revoked, it became clear that the Soviet Union was departing from its previous course and would no longer intervene in its Eastern European client states.

Historian Dashichev, himself a war veteran, now head of the Foreign Policy Department at the Institute of World Socialist Systems at the USSR Academy of Sciences, had come to critically assess Stalin's role in WW II and Soviet Post-War policies. Acting as Gorbachev's adviser on foreign policy, he inspired "new thinking" by approaching the German question. The concept of a "Common Europe Home" made essential a new design for Germany in Europe's centre. Also, reformers knew that West Germany's economy was needed for salvaging the Soviet Union from economic breakdown. In the summer of 1986, the pitiful state of Soviet technological standards had been exposed dramatically by the melt-down in the nuclear power plant at Chernobyl.

In October 1986, at their spectacular summit meeting in Reykyavik, Gorbachev had come to accords with President Reagan to end the arms race. Nonetheless, he was still hesitating to take up the German problem. There was no direct response when President Reagan, at the peak of his visit to Berlin, June 12, 1987, exclaimed "Mr Gorbachev, tear down this wall!" It was only two years later, during his visit to West Germany in the summer of 1989, when Gorbachev and his wife Raissa were cheered by crowds shouting "Gorbi, Gorbi", that the Russian leader indicated a change of policy. At a banquet in Bonn, when Chancellor Kohl broached the theme of German unity, Gorbachev responded by speaking of a solution in the future, thereby accepting the topic.

Gorbachev's iniatives opened political leeway for reform-minded Communists as well as for oppositionists in Hungary and Poland. In the GDR, Gorbachev's "new thinking" fostered hopes among the long-frustrated people and encouraged the dissidents. On the other side, the SED leadership refused to read the signs of the time, missing its last chance of restabilising their power by reform.

Instead, up to its very end, the regime's repression was not alleviated. What is more, party ideologue and top functionary Kurt Hager did not refrain from making offending remarks. Egon Krenz, as a member of the Politbureau in charge of affairs of youth and education, also well-known for his role in faking local elections in May, caused an outrage throughout the country, when he commented on the bloody finale of the "Chinese Spring" on Peking's Tiananmen Square (June 4, 1989) as "having restored order". A few weeks later, June 27, Austria's Foreign Minister Alois Mock and his Hungarian colleague Gyula Horn in joint symbolic action cut the barbed wire separating their countries. The Iron Curtain was being removed. When Hungary proceed to in fact opening its border September 10, the mass exodus from the GDR to the West set in.

There is irony in some historical dates. In September 1989, President François Mitterrand was about to conclude the two-hundred-year anniversary of the French Revolution with celebrations at Valmy, site of an inconclusive battle on September 20, 1792, between the revolutionary army and the armies of the old feudal German (Holy Roman) Empire. In September 1989, there was another revolution going on in Central Europe. Gorbachev had been invited to East Berlin to participate in the GDR 's 40-year anniversary October 7, 1989. When he was standing on the stage next to Honecker and close to Jaruzelski to watch the military parade, the regime's celebrations were disturbed by young demonstrators shouting "Gorbachev". The visitor from Moscow had come to lecture his hosts: "Life will punish him who is coming too late". When, on October 17, Egon Krenz, Günter Schabowski, and hated Stasi chief Erich Mielke staged a coup to save the regime by deposing Honecker in the Politbureau, they did come too late.

For good reasons, protagonists of the peaceful revolution in the GDR refer to Leipzig as its focus and to October 9 as its crucial date. As to its revolutionary character, it is worth noting that, at a nearby NVA (*National People's Army*) training school for non-commissioned officers, soldiers refused to be shipped to the scene

in arms. Yet there were other forces preparing for violence. The authorities, with lists of leading dissidents, had set up camps to arrest protesters as well as emergency wards storing blood bottles at hospitals. In that night, for whatever reasons, the security forces refrained from stopping the huge march. There is doubt concerning Egon Krenz's recent claims of having himself given orders not to shoot. The massive protest in Leipzig (preceded by a similarly peaceful protest in Plauen) triggered demonstrations in numerous other cities. November 4, about a million people assembled on East Berlin's Alexanderplatz to voice their demands. When Schabowski (who, later on, was ready to deplore his own political role and ideological delusions) and Markus Wolf, in a sort of gambit just recently retired from the top of GDR espionage and now re-emerging on the political scene, attempted to convince the crowds of their good intentions, they were booed down from the stage. The latter-day reformers' last attempt to handle the situation by granting free travel failed November 9 at Schabowski's press conference. In that night, the Berlin Wall came down.

V.
The fall of the Wall, in irresistible dynamics as it were, ushered in Germany's reunification. Recognizing the window of opportunity, Chancellor Helmut Kohl took the initiative on November 28. Having intentionally abstained from consulting with West Germany's allies, he presented a blueprint for achieving Germany's unity in a sequence of steps: close cooperation, confederation, unification. The GDR's new government had no choice but to give in to Kohl's strategy. In vain, the SED leadership tried to save the situation by changing the party's name into PDS (Party of Democratic Socialism) and directing the people's wrath against the Stasi, its very own instrument of power and oppression. Returning from a visit to Moscow in January 1990, Prime Minister Hans Modrow, considered as a reformer, took up the Leipzig rallying cry "Deutschland einig Vaterland".

Under pressure from all sides, Modrow's interim government accepted demands to reschedule free elections for the *Volkskammer* to an earlier date, March 18, 1990. On that day, political groups representing a number of dissidents favouring a slower pace or even advocating to preserve the GDR as a state, were marginalized by an alliance led by the CDU. Due above all to SPD chairman Oskar Lafontaine who had ostentatiously exhibited his indifference to German unity, the vote for the Social Democrats was much smaller than expected. Willy Brandt, who had hoped for victory at the polls in the former heartlands of Social Democracy, was deeply disappointed, feeling personally offended by Lafontaine. Nonetheless, Willy Brandt's name will be recorded in the annals of German reunification. He had stood next to Kohl during an emotional scene at the Schoeneberg town hall (his former West Berlin office seat) staged the day after the dramatic night of November 9. Just a few days afterwards, Willy Brandt, the grand old man of European democratic socialism, declared that "now that which belongs together is growing together" (*"Jetzt wächst zusammen, was zusammengehört"*). Throughout the crucial period from November 1989 to October 3, 1990, date of country's formal reunification, Kohl could rely on Brandt's support, as well as on Social Democrats like Helmut Schmidt.

The new GDR government formed in March was based on a coalition of Christian Democrats and Social Democrats. In the following months, the East German governments worked in parallel and cooperation with the Federal Government. Disputes arose about the mode of reunification, some deputies pleading for a joint constitutional assembly as stipulated in Article 146 in the West German constitution (*Grundgesetz*). In view of time running out for a prolonged process, the *Volkskammer* on August 23 decided to accede to the Federal Republic *via* Article 23, in its then wording open to such interpretation. *De facto* unity had been achieved July 1st, the day the West German DM was introduced, the East German currency *(Mark)* was tumbling in value. The negative aspects of this politically motivated move of setting an exchange rate of 1:1 became

apparent in the early nineties when, in the East, numerous privatized firms faced with unforeseen debts proved unable to compete on the market. They went into bankruptcy, innumerable people losing their jobs.

On the international scene, the cry for German unity was channelled into diplomacy. The German question was not to be left to the Germans themselves. In the final analysis, its solution depended on the four victorious powers of WW II. We may recall that not all of West Germany's allies were happy about consequences arising from the collapse of the Wall. Britain's Conservative Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher, while voicing her sympathy for the East Germans' longing for liberty, bluntly declared this had nothing to do with the idea of reuniting Germany. This was not to happen in her lifetime. In March 1990, when the inevitable was taking shape, she convened a meeting with scholars from Great Britain and the US, who tried to diffuse her apprehensions. In December 1989, Francois Mitterrand had flown to Kyiv to meet and persuade Gorbachev to avert German predominance in Europe by committing the Soviet Union to the *status quo* and by maintaining support for the new East German government. Overlooking Ukrainian flags being waved in Kyiv, Mitterrand failed to recognize the situation Gorbachev was caught up in. With Soviet power rapidly depleting, the economy in dire straits, and secessionist tendencies growing in Georgia, in the Baltic region, in Ukraine, and in Belarus, he had little choice but letting German things take their course. Aside from Gorbachev's consent to reunification, during the entire process, the Germans could rely on the unambiguous support of the United States under President George H.W. Bush.

Up to the early phase of the Two-Plus-Four negotiations, in May, Gorbachev upheld the concept of German neutrality as the key to European security. In fact, for a moment, this idea was also voiced by West German Foreign Minister Hans-Dietrich Genscher, who had become a friend with Soviet Foreign Minister Eduard Shevardnadze (later on second President of Georgia). A neutral Germany would have meant the end of the pact systems, of both

NATO and the Warsaw Pact. Helmut Kohl, opposing neutralization himself, knew that such a scheme was unacceptable to the Americans. For them (as in the eyes of others), it was essential, in the words of US Secretary of State Jimmy Baker, to keep "the Germans on the leash".

In February 1990, Genscher came out proclaiming the formula Two-Plus-Four (meaning negotiations between the two German states and the Four Powers). Talks began in May. In July, during a cordial meeting with Kohl in his Caucasian home region, Gorbachev too was ready to accept the concept of leaving united Germany in NATO. As a Western concession to the USSR, it was agreed in the Two-Plus-Four Treaty signed in Moscow September 12, 1990, that along with unilateral Soviet withdrawal and limiting German armed forces to 370 000, NATO would not station troops (other than Germans) on former GDR territory. Nor were nuclear weapons to be stationed there.

Serving as a substitute of a peace treaty, the *Treaty on the Final Settlement with Respect to Germany* was to come into effect October 3, 2019. On that day, the two post-war German states, separately established in 1949, were reunited into one single state.

VI.

There were immediate and long-term consequences of Germany's reunification in the year 1990. On the national level, there was soon to be seen in the East a reversal of great expectations into disappointment. Integration into the Western capitalist market system via privatization went along with incidents of fraud and inequity. Many people, faced with unemployment, seeing themselves deprived of their hopes, turned their frustration into political radicalism. For some thirty years, after repeatedly changing its party labels (today "Die Linke"/ The Left) the ex-communist PDS, having itself illegally shipped some billions to foreign banks, has been profiting from discontent. In this field, "Die Linke" is

competing with the AfD (*Alternative für Deutschland*) on the other side of the political spectrum.

Radical nationalist sentiments shot up soon after reunification, manifesting itself in murderous neo-Nazi attacks on foreigners and asylum-seekers. Extreme right-wing parties like the NPD appeared on the scene. Causes of these phenomena are manifold. Aside from nationalist sentiments surviving and existing undiluted by the Party's antifascist proclamations even in the ranks of the SED, the regime's atheism needs to be identified as one seedbed of that unsavoury fruit.

The rise of the rightist AfD in recent years can in part be seen against this background. Its success, though, cannot simply be interpreted in terms of right-wing extremism. To be sure, the AfD – like its counterpart on the left - is carried by populist emotions and appeals. To a large degree, these sentiments stem from the East Germans' experiences ensuing the country's unification they had yearned for. After jubilance for participating in Western wealth and liberties, there came the shock of economic collapse and unemployment.

Many people were forced to find jobs in often far distant places in the West. Over the years, up to three million (out of less than seventeen million in GDR) left their homes in the East for the West. They were there confronted with different mentalities and the complexities of an immigrant society. The "remainers" were inclined to cultivate resentments against the Western "take-over", apparent in politics, firms, universities – and Western "green" ideology. The estrangement of West and East Germans had encompassed two, perhaps three generations, living in two different societies. In the West, younger generations had been raised with their eyes to Western Europe and a lack of national sentiments. Detaching themselves from the idea of the nation-state and of German reunification, intellectuals proclaimed the concept of a post-national democracy. When the Wall fell, after a short phase of joyful national unity, the Western post-national sentiments, quite often arising from real – or imagined - shame about their nation's

history again began to prevail. In a sort of educational project, these sentiments were imported in the East. Many West Germans displayed little regard for living conditions in the East by condescendingly speaking of their compatriots as "the Ossis" (*the guys from the East*).

As to the AfD strongholds in the Eastern *Bundesländer* (Federal states), the very fact that it is gathering votes from all corners calls for differentiated explanation. First, party affiliation in the eastern regions is weak, except in a specific Catholic section in Thuringia and among the minority of Protestant church-goers in an atheist society. In fact, for many years many AfD members and voters used to be conservative adherents of the CDU. Secondly, people in the East preserved traditions of local and national consciousness rooted in history, rejecting the Western concept of multiculturalism in a multi-ethnic society. Third, due to their experience with an authoritarian dictatorship, they are sensitive *vis-a-vis* pressures from above, even in their milder democratic forms of telling people what to think and feel (to wit: this is not meant as an excuse for primitive sentiments and behaviour). Last but not least, the AfD's ascent is to be ascribed to German policies in the era of Chancellor Angela Merkel, herself a remarkable example of an Eastern conformist's political success in the West.

After bringing about the downfall of Kohl, her long-time promoter, as CDU chairman in 1999, Merkel for some years presented herself as a vociferous opponent of multiculturalism. When she reversed her stance on immigration policies – vacillating from opening the gates in 2015 and trying to close them in costly deals with Turkey's President Erdogan –, she met with opposition throughout Germany (and elsewhere). Not only in the Eastern part of Germany voters switched their political loyalties to the right. Today we even find AfD sympathizers among some former GDR oppositionists (known as *Bürgerrechtler*), disenchanted with the Greens, the SPD, and the CDU under the leadership of Merkel.

VII.

Germany's reunification in 1990 upset the entire political scenery of Europe. One of its first consequences - even though not its primary and only cause - was the collapse of the Soviet Union, according to Vladimir Putin "the greatest geopolitical catastrophe of the twentieth century". In Moscow, Gorbachev's political leniency towards war-time enemy Germany, including the abandonment of the Soviet glacis in Eastern Europe by withdrawing all troops, provoked opposition, culminating in plans to oust him by a military coup. When the conspiracy failed, with soldiers dismounting from their tanks in the streets of Moscow, August 19-21, 1991, the Soviet Union, heir to the Czarist Russian Empire, fell apart. The three Baltic states, which had declared their sovereignty the year before, now formally proclaimed their independence. Five months before, in April 1991, Georgia had declared its independence. Yet Georgia, regarded by many Russians as their crown jewel in the Caucasus, soon entered into civil strife. The Soviet Union, disrupted by ancient antagonisms dating back to the nineteenth century, was formally dissolved in the Declaration of Alma Ata, December 21, 1991.

Instead of national revival hoped for by many patriots, Russia under President Boris Yeltsin, a hero of the failed putsch, sank into agony. The Yeltsin era was marked by a total collapse of the economy. Radical liberal market doctrines were applied by former Communists, the "big bang" causing poverty, despair, coinciding with corruption and crime at an unprecedented scale. It was only under the authoritarian rule of Putin, basing his power on his KGB apparatus and on an economy of state-controlled monopolies exporting Russian minerals, that, at the expense of civil liberties, the country was recovering from the economic disaster.

Russia, by its name of Russian Federation *(Rossiskaya Federatsiya),* continued to be a multi-ethnic empire. When, on November 1, 1991, air force general Dshokhar Dudayev proclaimed independence for the small Caucasus region of Chechenya, this declaration was not recognized by Gorbachev. Three years later, Yeltsin decided to intervene against the rebellious and war-like

secessionists. The Chechen war – soon in its second round initiating Putin's ascent to power - culminated in bloody horrors and entailing the entry of terrorist Islamism into the Caucasian theatre.

If in some of these developments there seems to be a cogent causality with the fall of the Wall, the pattern of conflict leading back to it does become apparent in various other cases. It is open to dispute if the ethnic disintegration of Yugoslavia ushering in the Balkan wars in the nineties can be seen as a direct and inevitable consequence of Germany's reunification. Another case in point is Ukraine. When the protracted low-key war between Russia and Ukraine in the latter's separatist regions near the Crimea (re-annexed by Russia in 2014) erupted in 2013, it was preceded by a power struggle in Kyiv, intermeshed with nationalist emotions and cries for democracy. At its core lay Russian efforts to bloc "Western" influence and Ukrainian tendencies of joining both the European Union and NATO.

In the 1990s, under the weak leadership of Yeltsin, Russia had seen NATO's expansion to Eastern Europe. Yeltsin's successor, Putin, while promoting Russia's resurgence as a world power (based once more on military strength), rejected the West's argument of providing security for the Baltic states and Poland. At the Munich Security Conference in 2007, he openly challenged the West by accusing it of having violated the accords on military disengagement agreed upon in the Two-Plus-Four talks. As against this background, it is worth recalling that Gorbachev too, whilst conceding that there exists no written text to confirm Putin's claim, is maintaining the idea of a mutual understanding during these talks on the issue of NATO's future role in Europe. Horst Teltschik, Kohl's leading adviser and negotiator with the Soviets, brings back to mind that the Two-Plus-Four Treaty was concluded with the Soviet Union still existing as a political entity, thereby inferring that NATO's expansion had not been in anybody's view at that time.

In the past years, Gorbachev, while deploring the state of international affairs, has repeatedly come out in support for Putin and defending Russia's position in the world. To be sure, Putin's

neo-imperial ambitions and his violent methods cannot be overlooked. Nonetheless, whatever the merit of hypothetical dispute, it may be argued that a system of collective security in Europe in the wake of Two-Plus-Four might have served peace better in Europe and elsewhere. Instead, we see the reemergence of East-West tensions resembling the Cold War. We observe traditional power politics in Eastern Europe and in some same regions of the globe like Syria and Venezuela, accompanied by another arms race.

VIII.

The most striking consequence of German reunification, signifying Germany's reestablishment as Europe's central power, was the creation of the European Union, inaugurated by the Treaty of Maastricht in 1992. As mentioned above, in the turbulent weeks of November and December 1989, Mitterrand had exerted pressure on Kohl to slow down the train toward unity. Kohl gained Mitterrand's consent to the course of German events during a meeting in Bordeaux, assuring the French president of his (Kohl's) commitment to the concept of European integration. He was ready to sacrifice (West) Germany's most powerful political instrument, *i.e.* the sovereignty of the *Bundesbank* (Federal Bank) (labelled as "Germany's nuclear bomb" by Mitterrand's adviser Jacques Attali) as well the DM as Europe's key currency. Born and raised in Rhineland-Palatinate, bearing painful childhood memories of the war, Helmut Kohl was devoted to the idea of a peacefully united Europe, considering it as an essential part of his German patriotism. Indeed, suspicions about his sincerity (as expressed by Margaret Thatcher) were unfounded. Meantime, somewhat different charges of hegemony are being voiced with regard to Germany's export-oriented economy profiting from a "weak" Euro.

European integration was promoted by a series of treaties ensuing Maastricht. After failing to create and proclaim a European constitution resembling the historical model of the United States, as

a sort of substitute the Treaty of Lisbon was signed in 2007. The concept of "an ever-closer union" is based on two motives: The first is a moral one: devotion to peace in Europe, arising from the horrors of war in the twentieth century. The second is its political *raison d' être*: to prevent future antagonisms among Europeans a) by integrating Germany's power potential into joint structures, thereby neutralizing Germany's predominance feared by its neighbours and no longer coveted by the Germans themselves b) by basing Europe's future on a durable, inseparable alliance of France and Germany.

The process of an integrated Europe dates back to the 1950s, starting with the Treaties of Rome,1957. In the wake of EU integration marked by Maastricht, Europe's nation-states have progressively ceded political sovereignty to a political system *sui generis*, an in-between of a confederation and federal states. The relationship between (limited) national sovereignty and the EU superstructure in many aspects seems to escape clear definition. An ever-growing bureaucracy in Brussels appears to function as a *de facto* central government. On the continent so far, aversion to "Brussels" and criticism of the loss of sovereignty is voiced only by elements labelled "populists" and in countries like Hungary under Prime Minister Viktor Orbán.

The concept of unifying Europe into an "ever closer union" promoted on the Continent never caught on in England. The Brexit movement is rooted in historical sentiments, a "populist" feeling of losing democratic sovereignty, last but not least in reservations about Germany's role in Europe. Unfounded though such suspicions may be, they gained momentum in view of Chancellor Merkel's fateful decision to open borders to refugees in 2015. Her action most likely tipped the scale in perceptions and emotions in Britain. Brexit, then, which has become a historical fact thanks to Boris Johnson's landslide victory December 12, 2019, can be seen as a remote repercussion of Germany's reunification in 1990.

Germany, like other West European countries, due to a growing immigrant population of non-European background as well as due

to its immigrant policies, is faced with an unprecedented change of its social, political, and cultural foundations. Against the background of Orbán's accusations levelled at Western secularism, on the one hand, Islamist tendencies on the other, Europe as a whole is called upon to reflect on its cultural moorings. In a specific manner, this task needs to be taken up by Germany. In many ways, present-day Germany, with its religious traditions among ethnic Germans eroding, is marked by its culture of historical guilt (not likely to be shared by generations of immigrants). Traditions rooted in religion are dissipating. In the country's memorial culture, the commemoration of Nazi barbarism is overshadowing the jubilant scenes of the fall of the Wall, November 9, 1989.

On the political level, Germany remains to be confronted with defining its role as the most powerful country in the centre of Europe. Suspicions as to exerting hegemony by itself or in close coalition with France may be unfounded. Nonetheless, German relations with Russia are warily eyed by its eastern neighbours. In the wake of the "refugee crisis" of 2015, charges were raised by some critics, that Germany was assuming a stance of moral hegemony in Europe. After Brexit, the question of mitigating centralized power in Brussels or further tightening the European Union will be brought up again. We may conclude, then, that thirty years after the fall of the Wall, questions concerning Germany's future role in Europe remain to exist.

Difference and Dominance between East and West: A Plea for a Nationwide Reappraisal of the German Unification and Transformation

Ingrid Miethe

Professor, Justus Liebig University,
Giessen, Germany
ingrid.miethe@erziehung.uni-giessen.de

Abstract. There are now thirty years since the fall of the Berlin Wall and the German unification. A whole generation has since then grown up in Germany, who knows the period of division only from history books. The subject of German division should be over and done with by now – should it not? The current developments in Germany would indicate otherwise. Among these developments, the success of the party *Alternative für Deutschland* (AfD) in state elections has reminded us that significant differences persist between Eastern and Western Germany. This current finding is only an outward manifestation, however, of the dissatisfaction with the process of unification that still persists on the part of many East Germans. For a long time, little was heard on the topic in the public sphere, but it is still current and must be addressed publicly lest further potential social conflicts develop from it.

The thesis of the present article is that the current differences between East and West Germans[1] can no longer be explained merely by differences in socialization before 1989, but are also the manifestation of a West German culture of dominance arising in the course of the German unification and the ensuing process of transformation. This culture of dominance is based, as we will show in detail in the following, on a combination of economic, political and cultural dimensions. To examine this complex, I will draw on Rommelspacher's (1995) concept of *dominance culture*.

Keywords: difference, dominance, Germany, unification

THE CONCEPT OF DOMINANCE CULTURE

The concept of *dominance culture* (Rommelspacher 1998, 2002) was originally developed in the context of women's racism and

migration studies and builds theoretically on various sociological approaches to relations between different marginalized groups (e.g. Elias, Scotson 1990; Hall 1992) in modern societies (Baumann 1992). Drawing on migration and racism studies, the concept goes beyond sociological analysis to expose in greater detail the psychological mechanisms that determine how and why members of different social groups in structural power relations communicate with one another as they do.

The concept is based on the assumption of a modern society that identifies itself as a meritocracy of equals, promising potentially equal opportunity to all. This promise of equality cannot be fulfilled in reality, however; rather, a democratic society continuously produces and reproduces social inequality. The "claim of equality while reproducing inequality is a central contradiction in the modern Western[2] world" (Rommelspacher 1998: 35; see also Foroutan 2019: 28 ff.). Since real inequality is not a central part of the self-definition of modern societies, power relations tend to be obscured. "The classic model of repression, which makes a relatively clear distinction between the dominant and the oppressed", Rommelspacher (1998: 23) writes, "progressively gives way in the course of the modern period to a structure in which power is located in the social agencies and in the normative orientations of the individuals. The seat of power is less clearly discernible; the relations of power become unclear and invisible".

Open hierarchies of power are supplanted by subtle dominances, which are broadly distributed in society, but which affect different social groups in different ways. In contrast to authoritarian rule, which is based "primarily on repression, on commands and prohibitions", dominance can count on "broad acceptance" because it is "mediated by the social structures and the internalized norms, so that it reproduces political, social and economic hierarchies in a more inconspicuous way" (Rommelspacher 1998: 26).

The establishment of such a social hierarchy takes place subtly and is "not even intentional on the part of many members of the majority" (Rommelspacher 2002: 18). Those who belong to a

"majority" are not fixed but can vary with different social situations. East Germans for example, whilst members of the majority culture in respect of their legal position (in contrast to immigrants), are at the same time in a marginalized position compared with West Germans (see below) in respect of their representation in the country's elite positions or their representations in the media. When East Germans attack immigrants in East Germany, naturally those East Germans are in the dominant position, just as West Germans in East Germany can experience stigmatization as "*Besser-Wessis*" ["Western know-it-alls"], and find themselves in a non-dominant position. At the same time, the fact of being East or West German is not the only relevant category: categories such as age, gender, ability, race and ethnicity interact in complex ways. For example, people of colour find themselves in a marginalized position in the group of East Germans, but can, at the same time, belong to a dominant group in the group of people of colour by virtue of their gender or sexual orientation. Thus, very different dimensions of power exist in a given person and between social groups, and the individual dimensions can relativize or reinforce one another (Rommelspacher 1998: 28). "The fact that individuals are located in a mesh of different dominances implies that everyone is privileged in certain regards, and discriminated against in other regards – although in very different degrees" (ibid. 35).

Such interdependencies between "dimensions of social relations of power, authority and normativity" are also described in terms of intersectionality. Characteristically, this concept observes only such categories as "gender, social milieu, migration background, nation, ethnicity, race, sexual orientation, ability, generation, etc."[3]. The dimension of East-West differences is usually not to be found in such concepts. East-West is an "et cetera", that is, a dimension which may possibly be relevant but is not central to this discourse. Although the concept of intersectionality has thus contributed little to an explanation of East-West dynamics up to now, its fundamental conception of the interdependence of individual categories is also at the root of the concept of *dominance culture*.

When we describe East Germans as members of the non-dominant group in relation to West Germans as a dominant group, this means:

1. this is not the only relevant dimension or a permanent disposition, and East Germans can certainly be in a dominant role in relation to other groups, such as immigrants; and
2. statements are being made, not about individual persons and their personal experiences, but about structures and social groups – such statements necessarily implying analytical abstractions and generalizations.

The concept of *dominance culture* combines economic, political and cultural dimensions, and exposes how economic and/or political marginalizations provoke specific cultural and/or psychological responses. There are two dimensions to be examined here: Rommelspacher (2002: 15) calls them the "horizontal axis of difference and the vertical axis of social inequality". The horizontal axis refers to cultural distances caused by different values or influences. The vertical axis includes factors of structural inequality in society, such as income, wealth, and professional status. The two interact and must be considered together.

In this model, different groups such as Saxons and Bavarians are not simply "different" in a horizontal plane. Rather, their difference is always inscribed, at the same time, with the vertical dimension of power, which is manifested in economic and political differences. Hence, groups of people are not merely different yet equal; their difference entails a dimension of power which privileges one side over the other.

Rommelspacher (2000: 15 f., 67 ff.) herself has applied this concept to the German-German situation by noting that dominance can be observed "*in statu nascendi*" in German unification: "When the Wall fell", she writes, "expectations of equality were at first activated by references to national unity, cultural community and social solidarity between the 'brothers and sisters' in East and West. With time, however, more and more differences were seen, which

resulted from the different histories, but increasingly brought with them asymmetric relational experiences as the new dominant normality was substantially determined by West Germans". This concept was also used in explaining the differences between the East and West German women's movements to show why the unification did not result in an all-German "sisterhood", but rather in West German dominance and mutual exclusion (Miethe 2002, 2005). Rommelspacher does not examine the dynamics of East/West German relations in-depth, however. The present essay does so in an attempt to demonstrate what vertical differences continue to exist between Eastern and Western Germany, and what effects they have on the horizontal plane.

ECONOMIC INEQUALITY

On the economic level, we can observe that the standard of living in East Germany has risen in comparison with the period before 1989. Incomes and pensions have also risen. The accumulation of assets, especially in the form of homeownership, has increased. The economic situation is thus on the whole significantly better than before 1989.

But if we compare it, not with the time before 1989, but with the current situation in the West German states, the case looks different: although unemployment in the East has declined, it is still higher than in the West (2017: 7.6% in the East, 5.3% in the West; BMWi 2017: 48). Furthermore, the reduction in the unemployment rate in the East correlates with a massive westward migration of the East German population. Thus, 1.74 million people migrated from East to West Germany in the period from the end of the GDR to 2006 (Kubis/Schneider 2008). These persons, then, cease to figure in the East German unemployment statistics. At the same time, the problem ensures that the East loses mainly its young workers with better than average qualifications (Schneider 2005). This has consequences for the East German economy, and also for social

cohesion (*e.g.*, older parents remain in the East whilst their children live in the West).

Incomes in the East have increased, but those increases are concentrated in the first five years after unification: after that, incomes gradually stabilized at about 75% (Destatis 2015: 69) or 83% (BMWi 2018: 50) of the Western level. At the same time, working hours are longer than in West Germany (Ludwig 2015: 35). In other words, people in the East work more for less money. This situation is a far cry from the traditional labour union demand for equal pay for equal work. Pensions too have yet to attain the Western level (BMWi 2018: 49). Accordingly, the average income of East German households is only 83% of West German households (Ludwig 2015: 14)[4].

Moreover, the focus on the difference in income describes only the "tip of the iceberg". A look at the distribution of assets shows an exponentially greater difference. "The economic and social problems expressed in the accumulation of wealth were grossly underestimated from the beginning, that is, in the negotiations on the currency union in spring of 1990 […] and systematically undervalued as a defining factor in the equalization of living conditions of the people in East and West" (Busch 2015: 51). Under the socialist economy, citizens of the GDR had had fewer opportunities to accumulate wealth than West Germans. Although assets (mainly real property) have increased since the end of the GDR, the gap between the two halves of the country has remained the same (Grabka 2014: 962). The average net worth attained in East Germany is less than the half the Western figure (ibid. 959), and income from assets in East Germany is only half as great as in the West (Destatis 2015: 79). Of the 500 wealthiest families in Germany, not one lives in the new states (Busch 2015: 59).

"Large fortunes", writes Grabka (2014: 959), "bring with them economic and political power, and can be used to attain or maintain a high social status, or to secure advantages for children. In this way, they serve to form and reproduce elites". In addition, they can be inherited by the next generation. The German "golden spoon

generation" (van Laak 2016) is primarily West German. The "polarization of wealth" between East and West, according to Ahbe (2005: 270), is "a self-reproducing structure". At this point, if not before, it becomes clear that the difference between East and West will be carried forward into the next generation, and that this difference runs counter to the society's self-image as a meritocracy.

In view of the complexity and speed of the process of German unification, it was inevitable that some decisions were taken, which had unintended consequences. This is true of all actors involved. The problem, furthermore, is less the fact that social inequality *exists* (and persists) between East and West than the fact that it is accompanied by an idea of merit. From this point of view, the inferior situation of the East Germans is explained – mainly in the public media discourse (see below) – by a lack of productivity and ambition, and not by a fundamental structural disadvantage. The pan-German myth of a meritocracy obstructs the view of the social reality: that is, of a society in which different social groups start out with different conditions. This is true not only in regard to immigrants (see *e.g.* Foroutan et al. 2019) but also in regard to East Germans.

UNEQUAL ACCESS TO ELITE POSITIONS

East Germans are also marginalized in regard to access to elite positions. The "Potsdam elites study" of the mid-1990s found that "East Germans are underrepresented among the elite, measured by the proportions of East and West Germans in the population" (Bürklin, Rebenstorf et al. 1997: 65). East Germans were represented commensurately with their proportion of the population only in the field of politics. In business, they held only 0.4% of elite positions; in the trade associations, 8.1%; in research, 7.3%; in the military and in the judiciary, 0%. In all sectors, the proportion of East Germans among the elites was 11.6%, while they made up about 20% of the total population. This indicates that the

opportunities for East Germans to attain elite positions were about half as great as those of West Germans.

This finding is often qualified by the remark that a substitution was necessary because of the ideological disqualification of GDR elites and that only the West German elites possessed the specialist knowledge (especially in law and administration) that was required for the reorganization of East Germany. In the meantime, however, a new generation has reached the age at which it might take its place among the elites in many sectors (Kollmorgen 2017: 61). Yet a current study shows that even today, East Germans are not proportionately represented in leadership positions. In some cases, instead of equalization, a retrograde development can be observed; in other words, the proportion of East Germans among the elites has become even smaller.

This is also the case in the new states themselves. Although East Germans there make up about 87% of the population, only 23% of the elites are East German. Nationwide, only 1.7% of the top positions are held by East Germans. Only the federal government itself reflects the proportion of the East German population (cf. Bluhm, Jacobs 2016: 6). Even in the field of politics, in which East Germans did comparatively well in the Potsdam elites study, their standing deteriorated: in the five East German state governments, there are now fewer East German politicians than just a few years ago. The proportion of West German state secretaries (just below the ministerial level) increased from 26% to 46%, and only three of the 60 state secretaries in the federal government are East German (cf. Bluhm, Jacobs 2016: 6). At East German colleges and universities, the percentage of East German rectors has been halved. At the moment, no president or rector of a German university is from East Germany (CHE 2018)[5]. The proportion of East Germans has also declined in business, in leadership and personnel functions in research institutes, among presiding judges of the highest courts, in the media and in the military (cf. Bluhm, Jacobs 2016: 6).

Although there are methodological differences in the definitions of elites or of East Germans, the basic findings of the various studies

on elites are not significantly different; all confirm the underrepresentation of East Germans at state and federal levels (cf. Gebauer et al. 2017: 18). Kollmorgen (2017: 58) says pointedly: "The higher the job classification, the less probable that it is filled by East Germans". Even if "the West German dominance may have been unavoidable at first, nothing was done to counteract its perpetuation" (Köpping 2018: 105).

The lack of representation of East Germans among Germany's elites has a symbolic significance and is indeed perceived as a problem among East Germans. Köpping (2018: 183) refers in this regard to a "thorn of humiliation in the side of many East Germans". The low acceptance of the West German institutions transferred to East Germany (Gebauer et al. 2017: 22; Vogel 2017: 52) may also be caused in part by this situation. The situation may also have consequences for the following generation in view of the dearth of positive East German role models. If you want to succeed in unified Germany, the subtext of this reality says to the upcoming generation, you have to become West German. Being East German, and publicly identifying as such, is not conducive to an eminent career (cf. Engler, Hensel 2018: 77).

WEST GERMAN HEGEMONIAL MEDIA DISCOURSE AND ITS EFFECTS

Inequality, devaluation and stigmatization are not causally connected with a person's economic situation or position in society as a whole but are mediated by specific social discourses. Discourses in the Foucauldian sense define what is sayable in the society: what can be said by whom, in what form, and what cannot. "In every society", writes Foucault (1981: 11), "the production of discourse is at once controlled, selected, organized and redistributed". In this way, dominant interpretations prevail in negotiations of conflict in the society in which questions of power play an important part, and these interpretations influence the society in turn. The inclusion or exclusion of certain population groups is a part of this process. Such

exclusions can be quite unrelated to a person's economic status; in other words, even financially well-situated persons can be stigmatized if they are discernible as members of a stigmatized or marginalized group.

In unified Germany, hegemonial mass media discourse dominated by West Germans can be documented early on[6]. This has been repeatedly shown in analyses of the principal print media[7] of unified Germany (Ahbe et al. 2006; Kollmorgen et al. 2011; Pates, Schochow 2013). The findings of these studies are unambiguous: West Germany and the West Germans are the positive norm, and East Germany and the East Germans deviate from it. In other words, rather than being different but equal, the East Germans are "different in the wrong way" (Pates 2013: 15). "The hegemonial mass media discourse on East Germany and the German unification", write Kollmorgen and Hans (2011: 131), "established in the early 1990s had a logic of discursive subordination of the East Germans and East Germany, which was intensified beginning in the mid-1990s and partially broken and revised only from about 2005". The East Germans, Ahbe too writes (2004: 21), "are attributed those properties that the West Germans – in their own self-image – have succeeded in casting off: authoritarianism and obedient irresponsibility, xenophobia, racism and indifference towards National Socialism". The fundamental logic of these depictions is that individuals are equated with a system: the West Germans come from a democratic system, *ergo* they are democratic; the East Germans come from a totalitarian system, ergo they are totalitarian. The discourse ignores individual spheres and strategies of action that people can develop even under totalitarian conditions.

This "contrast to 'normal' Germans" illustrates that "there's something wrong with the 'Ossis'" (ibid. 9). The terms "Ossi" and "Wessi" are thus "asymmetric, such that 'Ossi' plays the part of the 'marked' term, a term which has the function of explaining an individual's actions by his 'nature', designating them as abnormal in contrast to the unmarked opposite term 'Wessi'" (ibid.). Although this hegemonial discourse has been somewhat disrupted in recent

years (Kollmorgen, Hans 2011: 136), the texts in Pates (2013) demonstrate that a positive image of East Germans was portrayed mainly when the purpose was to impose unpopular neoliberal reforms. Little has changed in the fundamental logic of the characterizations: "East Germans are portrayed as decidedly abnormal in constant comparison with West Germans" (ibid. 15). In this way, "social differences are naturalized" by being "represented as natural results of a group's specific properties" (ibid. 17 f.). All of the social inequalities described here become the results of the East Germans' wrong actions and wrong thinking – and thus social conflicts are personalized as specific to the group. The dominance of this kind is not limited to the media discourse, however, but permeates the everyday lives of East Germans, not least because the media discourse has strong echoes in day-to-day life. Petra Köpping (2018) has emphatically pointed out this circumstance in her book *Integriert doch erst mal uns!* ["First integrate us!"]. She describes the experiences – mainly situated in the 1990s – of "unresolved humiliation, insults and injustices" that continue to affect the East Germans today, "regardless of whether they succeeded in making their way after 1990 or not" (ibid. 9). All criticism of the Western system or the process of German unification was quickly disqualified as that of "whining Ossis", "losers of the transition" or "GDR nostalgia" (ibid. 69). Everything that preceded 1989 "became a footnote, ancient history, ballast" (ibid. 70). Another line of criticism cites socialization in the GDR to derive a specific collectivistic structure of social behaviour from it.

Characteristically, or frighteningly, the numerous autobiographical novels by young East German authors[8] associate the basic fact of growing up under the conditions which devalue their own East German background with the desire to leave those experiences behind them. At the same time, this experience seems to shape a multi-generational East German identity: Jana Hensel (*1976) and Wolfgang Engler (*1952) are unanimous in describing their experience of "Ossi-bashing" and their perception of "cultural marginalization" (Engler, Hensel 2018: 31-35). The East German

identity narrative, according to Jana Hensel, "remains the deficient, the subordinate, the marginalized one, and often simply that which is completely overlooked. In any case, it is one which is far from being included in a unified German identity narrative" (ibid. 57).

In theory, the democratic principle of equality is applicable equally to all social groups – to West and East Germans just as much as to immigrants and their descendants. When newly arrived groups demand equality, however, "competition" (Foroutan et al. 2019: 42) inevitably results. "Participation in power", Rommelspacher (1998: 33) writes, "means not just privilege, but also the struggle to maintain privileges. In this struggle, the participants in power must assert their claims both towards the competitors and towards the victims of discrimination and must maintain at least the appearance of legitimacy. And ultimately, they must also justify that claim to themselves. This is only possible if they personally meet certain expectations and reject competing motives". Thus, Rommelspacher describes the psychological mechanisms that members of dominant and non-dominant groups develop in order to realize their respective interests – namely, the preservation of privileges and participation in power. The ensuing actions and decisions are not premeditated; rather, these mechanisms are deeply internalized, subtle, and usually not intentional on the part of the people involved. Rommelspacher describes several such mechanisms. Because these are useful for understanding the relationship between East and West, I will present them briefly here.

Denial of Inequality and Conservation of Privilege

The self-image of modern societies, Rommelspacher (1998: 30) writes, involves a "denial of inequality". This results from the interest, whether conscious or not, of the dominant group or groups

in preserving their own dominance. No special measures are required; the conservation of privilege is "reproduced primarily by the maintenance of *normality* and not by conscious (…) intentional action." (Rommelspacher 1998: 32; emphasis in the original).

Very simple examples may suffice to illustrate this. One such example is the birth year books made by the publishing house Wartenberg. These books are widely distributed in Germany and are sold not only in bookshops but also in gift shops and the like. Titled *Wir vom Jahrgang XXXX* ["We who were born in the year XXXX"], these books compile the influential events from the childhood and adolescence of a specific cohort. Originally, none of these birth-year books so much mentioned the diverging life reality and experience of those who grew up in the East. The publisher has recently expanded the series, and now offers the books with a subtitle, "Born in the GDR". The GDR is thus a special circumstance calling for special mention. The original series does not bear any subtitle such as "Born in West Germany". The simple "we" of the title refers to West Germans. This example illustrates that the "maintenance of normality" is the maintenance of the West Germans' day-to-day reality – even 30 years after the German unification.

There is no need to change anything about the society; newly arriving social groups such as immigrants or East Germans must integrate themselves inconspicuously in the existing social order. It is tacitly assumed that the upper tiers are already occupied by the dominant groups, and the lower tiers are reserved for the new arrivals. As a rule, it is left to the non-dominant groups to point out their lack of social representation, their economically inferior situation, and their unequal opportunities. Their doing so disturbs the social *status quo*, in which the members of the dominant groups are privileged.

A mechanism that can develop here is the denial of real social inequality by members of the dominant groups. Such a denial serves to preserve their privileges. This mechanism is difficult to be observed since the members of dominant groups are usually not conscious of their own privileges. To them, the social *status quo* is

simply "normal". Because the "acceptance of their own role by members of dominant groups" is difficult, Rommelspacher (1998: 185) writes that they have a "denied identity".

The denial of their privilege over East Germans seems to be very strong among West Germans. In a current study, Foroutan et al. (2019) have examined East and West Germans' attitudes towards each other and towards Muslim immigrants. In regard to West Germans' perception of East Germans, they found that West Germans "hardly take the East Germans' feeling of deprivation seriously" (Foroutan et al. 2019: 22). The structural discrimination of East Germans described above is hardly acknowledged by West Germans. While almost half of East Germans (49.1%) agree with the statement that "East Germans must make greater efforts than West Germans to obtain equal rewards", that opinion is shared by less than a third of West Germans (29.6%). East Germans' limited access to elite positions is perceived by more than a third (37.3%) of East Germans, but only by less than a fifth of West Germans (18.6%).

Foroutan et al. (2019: 37) summarize their findings thus: "West Germans do not recognize the situation of East Germans to a comparable degree. Thus, they ignore the wounds of the Reunification". Interestingly, the deprivation of Muslims is recognized by both East and West Germans to an almost equal degree. Such a finding permits the inference that West Germans are much less conscious of the structural discrimination of East Germans than of that of Muslim immigrants. The shared language and the centuries of shared cultural background apparently obscure their sight of the structural inequalities which have formed over 45 years of divided history and 30 years of unification under a dominance culture. Another identifiable pattern is the denial or trivialization of the persistent inequality between East and West. This can occur by means of an exclusive focus on the progress of incomes to the exclusion of wealth, for example (cf. Busch 2015). But it may also occur through an excessive emphasis on regional differences. As gratifying as it may be to observe that a region such

as Saxony, in the East, is viewed as comparable with the Ruhr area in the West, it is problematic that fundamental disparities between East and West are thus obscured. Without a doubt, there do exist regional differences, North-South differences, and typical problems of metropolitan areas in contrast to rural ones. These lines of contrast are often oblique to the persistent disparity between East and West. Such comparisons, however, focus only on *one* individual factor, such as economic growth. Yet East-West differences are determined by a cumulation of the dimensions described above. Since the unification, East Germans have made the negative experiences of non-representation among elites; of finding their issues underrepresented or negatively distorted in the unified German media discourse; of stigmatization and devaluation whose existence is at the same time denied; of working longer while attaining lower incomes and wealth. Precisely this *cumulation of disadvantages* – although of course not all of the factors mentioned must coincide in every case – must be taken into account in order to perceive and grasp the inequality between East and West as a structural and multi-generational problem. As described above, there is a real, quantifiable social inequality between East and West Germans. The economic discrimination of East Germans and their lack of representation among the elites are not subjective feelings, but findings supported by empirical data. This inequality is largely denied and ignored by West Germans, however, and reinterpreted as an unjustified *subjective feeling* on the part of East Germans. "In the West", writes Richter (2018: 38), "the stereotype of the ungrateful, malcontent Ossi has taken root" (see also the findings of Foroutan et al. 2919: 37).

Displacement and Reversal of the Problem

Another mechanism of imposing dominance described by Rommelspacher (1998: 176 f.) is the displacement and reversal of a problem. In *problem displacement*, the focus is placed not on the real problems – in this case, economic and cultural discrimination – but

on their consequences. In other words, critical analysis is brought to bear not on the problems in the society, such as mass unemployment resulting from drastic reorganization, a comprehensive transformation affecting all areas of life, and a hegemonic discourse of devaluation of the East, but on an allegedly inadequate response on the part of those affected by such changes. An illustrative example is the "post-traumatic embitterment disorder" (PTED), which psychotherapists have diagnosed in East Germans (Linden 2003). This disorder is caused in otherwise healthy subjects by a traumatizing experience: the East German transition. The problem is seen not in massive processes of transformation such as people have rarely been forced to undergo, nor in a lack of appreciation and respect in unified Germany, but in the deficient ability of the East Germans to cope. East Germans are seen to exhibit "abnormal behaviour" (ibid. 196) – but not a word is said about any "abnormality" of the social transformation with its consequences and upheavals.

Problem reversal goes a step further. "It not only shifts the problems onto the weaker party but, at the same time, holds that party responsible for the problems. The existing hierarchies of power are replaced by an opposite hierarchy of responsibility" (Rommelspacher 1998: 177). Thus, minorities are held responsible for the fact that the majority has problems. This perspective continues to dominate the perception of East Germans and East Germany today. "The East" and "the East Germans" are the problem to be solved – not the West German economic system, mistakes made in the unification, or the process of transformation. In general, only East Germany is talked about, while West Germany is not under discussion. The West German "problems which would call for a joint assessment and analysis mutate under West German discursive hegemony into inexhaustible evidence of the backwardness of the East" (Engler, Hensel 2018: 134).

When behaviour occurs in East Germany that would, without a doubt, merit criticism, such as xenophobic or racist violence, no causes are sought, no narrow definition of the circle of persons

involved is sought; rather, the East Germans are generalized as an "enraged mob" which, oscillating "between self-pity and barbarity", "tends towards acts of racist and xenophobic violence" (Bittermann 1993). Meanwhile, the xenophobic and racist violence which, in fact, occurs in West Germany too is not used to derive general traits of West Germans. Right-wing extremism is "thus no longer a fundamental social problem", but is "located primarily in the East" (Pates 2013: 18).

This displacement of the problem to East Germany goes hand in hand with a trivialization of the extent of racism and xenophobia, and although xenophobia can be documented to a greater degree in the East than in West Germany, it does exist in the West as well (cf. Zick, Küpper 2016: 94 ff.). Thus, the East must serve as the scapegoat for current problems. East Germans' appreciation of their own East German roots and influences is no more welcome ("ostalgia") than criticism of the Western system ("whining"). The East is the problem, once and for all – the West may have a problem with the East, but is in no way a part of the problem itself (for a critical view, see Köpping 2018: 69 ff.; Engler, Hensel 2018: 29).

Internalization of Dominance and Discrimination

The "denied identity" of the dominant group corresponds with a "rejected identity" on the part of the marginalized group (Rommelspacher 1998: 184). Thus, the "negotiation of identities and positions of power" is very difficult, since "the opposite party is difficult to pin down" (ibid.). "Rejected identity" means that the dominant groups declare the cultural influences and experiences of the non-dominant groups to be irrelevant. This was clearly visible in the process of German unification, which was not taken as an opportunity for reforms necessary in a united Germany, but as an application of the West German system (with few exceptions) to East Germany. East German models or proposals from the civil rights movements of autumn of 1989 were dismissed, unexamined, as unsuitable by definition for a unified Germany. This

marginalization of the GDR heritage is reflected in the history curriculum as well, in which the GDR is insufficiently included (Arnswald 2004). The personal stories and life experiences of East Germans were also massively devalued after 1990 (cf. Köpping (2018).

In such circumstances, it is not easy for members of socially stigmatized groups to accept and assert their own group membership since it is "often enough associated with social discrimination" (Rommelspacher 1998: 181). A typical strategy for coping with this situation is assimilation. This refers to the rejection of one's own stigmatized group and the internalization of the values and norms of the dominant group. This may not even be seen as a problem since democratic values are certainly more worthy of emulation than those of a dictatorship. The problem here, however, is that life in the GDR cannot be reduced to the experience of dictatorship: even under conditions of totalitarianism, people develop strategies of autonomous action, and there were in fact "limits to the dictatorship" (Bessel, Jessen 1996). An identity problem for people of East German backgrounds results when precisely these experiences are considered irrelevant and have no place in a unified Germany. East Germans, who identify with these origins and experiences, risk being stigmatized and devalued. The price of assimilation is the abandonment of one's original background and identity.

Examples can be found in recent East German literature and in public proclamations. Jana Hensel, for example, writes about her childhood and youth in the GDR: "Perhaps later, when I tell my children about our youth, I will simply pretend it began at the age of 22; perhaps I will summarily erase those first unsure, ugly years from our lives" (Hensel 2002: 60). What Hensel describes here is the anticipated denial of her GDR identity, since her experience is that experiences of the GDR do not fit in the unified German discourse under West German hegemony. The danger of being misunderstood and negatively interpreted or exoticized is too great.

The denial of one's identity inevitably leads to individualization

of the problem, since identification with the group results in social stigmatization. "To be openly East German, to bear prominent witness to the paradoxical experiences that are one's heritage from that country, required courage. To deny that experience, to keep silent about it", Engler writes, "was more promising for one's career" (Engler, Hensel 2018: 77).

Thus, if East Germans publicly cease to see East-West problems, this need does not imply that the problems do not exist. It is just as likely that they have learned – not least out of self-defence – to keep quiet about such issues in public (cf. Miethe, Ely 2016). This silence about one's background, history and identity eventually has the effect that the succeeding generation can hardly grasp its origins. The fact that young people who knew the GDR only as children or adolescents have joined together in an initiative called "Third Generation East" (Hacker et al. 2012) is an indication of the necessity of finding a space in which they can talk about their influences. This initiative also shows, however, that it is possible to do so in a democratic Germany.

CONCLUSION

In sum, we find that the differences which are still to be found today between East and West Germans are not explainable simply by their socialization before 1989. Rather, those differences result primarily from experiences in the process of German unification, the process of transformation, and the current situation in Germany. It is important here to change our perspective – both in the academic discourse and in public discussion.

There are no easy solutions, since some of the problems described here, such as the enormous disparity in wealth, can hardly be solved politically – at least, not by means that are legal in a democracy. The media too will hardly accept instructions as to how they should write about different population groups. We might make the demand, however, that a minimum of political correctness

must be observed in reporting on East Germans. Other problems, such as the underrepresentation of East Germans among elites, for example, could be solved. This would require taking the problem seriously in the first place and forming a political will to change it.

But that would depend in turn on perceiving the relations of dominance between East and West, and defining them as a problem of *all Germans* – not just the *Ossis'* problem. The developments after 1989 are shared German history, which in East Germany has been strongly influenced by West German elites. The mistakes and the unintended consequences in this process must be addressed as much as the successes and dealt with by East and West jointly. In this light, the history of the process of German unification and the subsequent transformation of East Germany is not finished, but more topical than ever, and its appraisal should be considered a project of all Germany.

NOTES

1. It is often rightly pointed out that the assignment to one of these two categories is not a simple matter. In the present article, I follow Bluhm and Jacobs (2015: 4) who, with reference to Kollmorgen (2015: 20), call those persons "East German" who grew up in the GDR up to 1990, and who spent most of their lives there (regardless of their present domicile), and those persons born in the GDR or the new states after 1975, whose environment ensured an "East German" socialization.

2. Rommelspacher's use of the term "Western" does not refer to an East-West difference, but to the Eurocentric perspective, which is shared by the Eastern part of Europe. The line of conflict opened here between Western (Eurocentric) countries and the global South is oblique to the present East-West topic, and cannot be further examined in this article. For clarity, I will prefer here the terms "dominant" and "non-dominant" and that of "modern society" in order to avoid misunderstandings and false equivalences with the global discourse.

3. From the self-concept page of a German web portal on intersectionality, "Portal Intersektionalität", http://portal-intersektionalitaet.de/konzept/ (accessed 27 October 2019).

4. These findings are sometimes qualified with the argument that the cost of living is also lower in the East than in the West. However, prices have by

now largely equalized in East and West (Vortmann et al. 2013).

5. http://www.che.de/downloads/CHECK_Universitaetsleitung_in_Deutsc hland.pdf.

6. A distinction between Eastern and Western media in this connection is not relevant. The publishing world of the GDR succumbed to a massive process of contraction after 1989 (cf. Links 2016), and the East German newspaper market was rapidly divided up among the West German publishers (cf. Bahrmann 2005). The few small publishers under East German management play only a marginal role in the unified German discourse.

7. The studies cited in the following mainly analyzed periodicals such as *Frankfurter Allgmeine Zeitung* (*FAZ*), *Die Welt*, *Süddeutsche Zeitung* (*SZ*), *BZ*, *Der Spiegel*, *Stern*, *Die Zeit*, and television news programs and political magazine formats in the public networks ARD and ZDF (cf. Kollmorgen, Hans 2011: 136).

8. Autobiographical novels tend to be written at an older age. The fact that remarkably many young East Germans engage with their biographical experience of the post-unification period in particular is an indication of the topicality and relevance of the subject.

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THE COLD WAR AS A VISUAL CONFLICT: PHOTOGRAPHIC REPRESENTATIONS OF THE BERLIN WALL

Cyril Buffet

PhD, historian of international relations. He has written and edited volumes on Germany (*Histoire de Berlin*, Fayard, Paris, 1993; *Le Jour où le Mur est tombé*, Larousse, Paris, 2009), myths in world politics (with Beatrice Heuser, *Haunted by History*, Berghahn, Oxford, 1998) and on the history of film (*Défunte Defa*, Corlet, Paris, 2007; *Cinema in the Cold War. Political Projections*, Routledge, Abingdon, 2016).

Cy.Buffet@gmail.com

Abstract. This article deals with the iconology of the Berlin Wall from its construction, in August 1961, to its fall, in November 1989. The Berlin Wall was the symbol of the Cold War. It was the most photographed and filmed motif of that period. In this regard, the West and the East gave each other a battle of images: some of them became world-famous. They included photographs that proclaimed the Wall to be an "antifascist rampart" on one side and a "Wall of Shame" on the other side. These photographs formed binary couples: freedom *vs.* peace, concrete and barbed wire *vs.* human flesh, victims *vs.* martyrs.

Keywords: Berlin Wall, Cold War, GDR, iconography, propaganda, memorials

The German philosopher Walter Benjamin considered that "history is broken down into images"[1]. History produces pictures – paintings, and more recently, photos, and the pictures in turn influence history, influence our collective historical memory[2]. Pictures of the past determine our image of the past. Some pictures have the power to crystallize interpretations of an event in our head, to shape its perception and to fix it in the collective memory. During the 20th century, the city of Berlin was extremely iconogenic: photos captured the enthusiasm at the outbreak of war in 1914 and, thereafter, the proclamation of the Republic and the Spartakist uprising 1919, the hyperinflation of 1923 where people carted

around wheelbarrows full of banknotes, later SA troops marching through the Brandenburg Gate, the burning Reichstag 1933, the Russian flag being planted at the top of the Parliament in 1945, haggard refugees among the ruins, the Dakotas of the Airlift of 1948-49, demonstrators throwing stones at Soviet tanks in 1953, Benno Ohnesorg killed by a policeman 1967 when students protested against the visit of the Iranian Shah, squatters of Kreuzberg in the 1980s, Ronald Reagan's appeal to "Mr Gorbachev" in 1987 to "bring down this wall" and above all the Wall itself.

Berlin was at the heart of the Cold War in Europe. The divided city was the cause of two major crises, the Soviet Blockade in 1948-49 and the Wall crisis in 1961[3]. This was where the two superpowers learnt not to go too far, learnt to minimize the risk of a major conflict, learnt to prevent a fatal escalation that could have led to a nuclear war.

For the East, building the Wall was the less dangerous solution to the emigration problem because it achieved the main goal of interrupting the exodus without challenging the occupation rights of the Western powers in West Berlin. Between the creation of the GDR (or the German Democratic Republic, German abbreviation DDR) in October 1949 and the building of the Wall in August 1961, 2.7 million people fled the GDR, most of them taking the exit provided by West Berlin. The two halves of the city were fully joined until August 1961. The refugees who fled the GDR were above all young people whose education had been financed by the State, engineers, skilled workers, teachers, managers, medical staff, etc. This meant a huge loss for the East German economy and society[4]. For the communist regime, it was an existential necessity to check the flow of fugitives, to block the escape route of West Berlin. Moreover, this exodus of population greatly damaged the GDR's international reputation and destroyed its claim to have realized the "actually existing socialism"[5].

For the West, the Wall confirmed its propaganda regarding the totalitarian nature of the Communist system, but it did not

undermine the viability and sustainability of West Berlin. Both sides were, in fact, relieved when the Wall went up. As US President John F. Kennedy put it: "It's not a nice solution, but a wall is a hell of a lot better than a war"[6].

The Berlin Wall was and still is the iconic symbol of the Cold War, although it was built well over a decade after its beginning[7]. First, it marked the visual reality of the East-West conflict. It embodied in brutal concrete and barbed wire the metaphorical "Iron Curtain" described by Churchill in 1946. It ended up symbolizing the Communist system itself. Secondly, it became so popular because, for the first time in history, a wall divided a city down the middle, not just separating off a small part of it as in a ghetto, Beijing's secret city or the Vatican. It was the most photographed and filmed motif of that period. Henceforth, everything was duplicated if not triplicated: town halls, universities, operas, theatres, picture galleries, transport networks, airports, etc. Thirdly, the Wall appeared to be the ultimate inhumane construction as it imprisoned a whole population, depriving the East Germans of their basic freedom of movement: some would risk their life to regain it, even if that meant never returning to their families in East Germany.

The Berlin Wall, the supreme symbol of the Cold War, was the sensational media event of its time. From its construction, in August 1961, to its fall, in November 1989, the Wall was the focus of lavish photographic attention[8]. Yet here as with other major episodes of the twentieth century (such as the Spanish Civil War, or the end of the Second World War, or the Vietnam War), the same few pictures are always used by the media. This limited selection is explained by the particular emotions transported by these photos and their emblematic value, which rooted them in our collective memory[9].

1.1. The Bernauer Strasse: Focus of Media Attention

On 15th August 1961, two days after the inter-sector borders of Berlin were closed by East German security forces, the young East-German NCO Conrad Schumann decided to desert and flee from East Berlin to the West, as the separating structures were still incomplete in some places such as the Bernauer Strasse,

Late August 1961. East German guard Conrad Schumann jumps to freedom in West Berlin. From the booklet "A City Torn Apart: Building of the Berlin Wall". For more information, visit CIA's Historical Collections webpage.

where barbed wire had been used at ground level to create a temporary barrier. Located in the French Sector, this street became famous as it lays right on the border between the two Berlins: the houses on the Street belonged to the East but the pavement belonged to the West, which caused dramatic scenes such as inhabitants jumping from windows or from the roofs of houses onto tarpaulins held by firefighters. Journalists were drawn to this curious street. Thus it was that the young newspaper intern Peter Leibing from Hamburg with his camera managed to capture the very moment when Conrad Schumann leapt across the barbed wire, casting aside his Russian gun, a gesture that looked like a refusal to take part in the Eastern military operation. Published the very next day on the front cover on the West German popular daily newspaper *Bild*, the picture was adopted by the press everywhere in

the world, voted the best photo of the year under the title "Leap into Freedom".

The photo of the Bernauer Strasse made history. For the West, it symbolized the irrepressible desire for individual liberty and the condemnation of communist dictatorships that imprisoned the population. This image became the media icon of the Wall, even if, paradoxically, the Wall itself was not captured in the shot. The picture is still being reproduced over and over on posters, postcards, stamps, T-shirts, mugs and other souvenirs.

In the East, the picture was of course suppressed. The communist regime could obviously not let people believe that their guards were deserting their posts to flee to the enemy and that the border was not airtight. So in reaction, a week after Schumann's flight, the head of the GDR, Walter Ulbricht, ordered, all fugitives to be stopped and arrested by all means, including, if necessary, the use of firearms. The first fugitive was killed on 24 August[10].

1.2. Living Rampart

The GDR's leadership did not want to lose the battle of images for public opinion. They promoted another picture, the photograph of four defiant militiamen standing in front of the Brandenburg Gate. This photo was shot on 14 August 1961 by the photographer Peter

From the booklet "A City Torn Apart: Building of the Berlin Wall". For more information, visit the CIA's Historical Collections.

Heinz Jung who worked for the official press agency of the GDR. But the photo was not published until a couple of weeks later, in order to counterbalance the colossal global impact of the "Leap into Freedom".

The four East German militiamen in front of the Brandenburg Gate on the 14th August, 1961:

https://www.bild.bundesarchiv.de/dba/de/search/?query=Bild+183-1987-0704-057: Bild 183-85458-0001

The picture of the four militiamen was used to create a Socialist icon of the building of the Wall. It was spread so widely and popularized so effectively throughout the Eastern Bloc that many historians mistakenly believed it to have been the only photo of this event that circulated in the East. There were others, although they did not reach the same fame as this one in the GDR. The main organ of the East German Communist Party, *Neues Deutschland*, published this photo six times in 25 years. It also featured on a stamp celebrating the 20th birthday of the "fighting units of the working class", with a close-up of the four militiamen.

These "fighting units" belong to a paramilitary force of 210 000 who supported the army and the police. They were civilians equipped with guns and kaki clothes. In August 1961, their mission consisted of ensuring the security of the inter-sector borderline[11].

The photo of these four militiamen holds a clear message: the completion of the border is a popular and purely *defensive* measure – in tune with the claim that the Wall had to be erected to protect East Germany against an invasion from West Germany and the other NATO powers. The photo incarnates the justification given by the regime for the erection of the Wall: it was presented as an "anti-fascist rampart", that at once guarantees peace and protects "the State of workers and peasants" from an alleged Western plan to attack and invade the GDR[12].

By drawing on working-class militiamen, the GDR tried to demonstrate that this mission had the support of the people, even suggesting that it originated with the people. This is why the GDR

gave such prominence to this picture of a foursome which, in turn, corresponds to East-German ideology where the community is more important than the individual. The picture underlines that these paramilitary men create a united front, a human wall, or a "living rampart" as *Neues Deutschland* put it[13]. Photographed slightly from below, at an angle elevating and almost glorifying them, the four men seem resolute, looking sternly at something outside of the frame, tightly clutching their guns; but they do not seem menacing nor bellicose. They exude both determination and serenity, aware of the gravity of their duties. In direct contrast to the deserter Schumann, these soldiers do their duty, defending their country. These two images form an immediate dialectic: one shows the fleeing soldier pursuing his individual liberty, whilst the other shows the community embodied by the militiamen who stand firm on the front line between East and West. They are there to protect Berlin, symbolized by the Brandenburg Gate, against "imperialist aggression".

The four soldiers are also perfectly identifiable and they were known to be party members. The East German propaganda would use not only this image but also summon the four men regularly to be shown off at public events for propaganda purposes. Thus, in July 1987, on the occasion of the 750th anniversary of Berlin, a massive parade would be organized in East Berlin to illustrate the history of the city with 300 floats with living images. One depicted the closing of the border: adopting the same posture as 26 years ago, the very same four men posed in front of a little white wall with a Brandenburg Gate of cardboard.

For the 750 years of Berlin, the four militiamen act out the closing of the border, 4th July 1987:

https://www.bild.bundesarchiv.de/dba/de/search/?query=Bild+ 183-1987-0704-057: Bild 183-1987-0704-057)

Yet West Berlin had anticipated this. A month earlier, West Berlin also celebrated this anniversary. The mayor invited US President, Ronald Reagan, who asked Conrad Schumann, the young NCO

who had attained world fame with his famous leap of 1961, to sit next to him on the grandstand.

During the 28 years of its existence, the visit of the "Wall of Shame", as it was called on the Western side, and of the "anti-fascist rampart", as it was known in the GDR, formed part of all visits of foreign officials or delegations and was greatly exploited by the propaganda apparatus. For example, in 1963, US President John F. Kennedy travelled to West Berlin, where he pronounced his famous words "Ich bin ein Berliner", after walking along the Wall at the Brandenburg Gate. But five months earlier, his Soviet counterpart, Nikita Khrushchev, had already inspected the Wall, congratulating the GDR leader Walter Ulbricht for taking back control of the Berlin frontier[14].

PAIR NUMBER TWO

2.1. The GDR as a Big Concentration Camp

The iconographic competition between East and West also concerned itself with the victims of the Wall. Here, too, the West eventually won. Even though he was not the first victim of the Wall[15], the tragic death of Peter Fechter caused such a shock in public opinion that it even acquired an allegorical dimension.

The dead body of Peter Fechter, at the bottom of the Wall (17th August 1962):

http://ghdi.ghi-dc.org/sub_image.cfm?image_id=611
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Body_of_Peter_Fechter_lying_next_to_Berlin_Wall.jpg.

This 18-year old bricklayer apprentice was shot on 17 August 1962 as he tried to climb the Wall close to Checkpoint Charlie, the most famous border control point between the two halves of Berlin. Hearing two gun-shots, the West German journalist Wolfgang Bera of the *Bild* newspaper (the offices of which were located only a hundred yards away) rushed to the scene of action, climbed the Wall

on the Western side and saw the body of Peter Fechter lying on the ground at its foot on the Eastern side. Badly hurt, the fugitive lays agonizing in the no man's land for nearly an hour, with no-one daring to help him. With many people congregated on the Western side and hearing him call out for help and groan, Fechter eventually died in great pain. Eventually, some East German guards came to carry him away, whilst hundreds of angry Berliners, grouped on the Western side, shouted "murderers!"[16].

With his Leica M2, Wolfgang Bera also captured the moment when the body of Fechter was taken away by the guards. The photograph evokes Christian iconography, the descent of the body of Christ from the cross. It was published immediately on the front page of the big daily paper *Berliner Morgenpost*, to be quickly republished by the world press including the American magazines *Time* and *Life*.

Peter Fechter being carried off by East German guards:

https://iconicphotos.wordpress.com/2009/05/10/peter-fetcher/

This image gave great symbolism to Fechter's fate; not only does he represent all the victims of the Wall, past and future, but the image also denounced the barbarism of the East German State, prepared to kill its own citizens. From then onwards, the GDR would be compared to an extended concentration camp surrounded by barbed wire and watched by armed guards, which establishes an exaggerated correlation between the Nazi dictatorship and the communist dictatorship[17]. The image also illustrates the East Germans' desire for freedom at all costs. Close to the spot where Peter Fechter fell, a cross would soon be erected, later to be replaced by a stele inscribed with words spoken by his sister: "all he wanted is freedom"[18].

Willy Brandt, Mayor of West Berlin, and the US commandant Polk laid a wreath in front of Fechter's cross, on the occasion of the first anniversary of his death:

https://www.memorial-caen.fr/10EVENT/ombre_tex22.html

With the crosses on the Bernauer Strasse, Fechter's memorial would

become the principal commemorative monument dedicated to the victims of the Wall. On the anniversary day of his death, an official ceremony would be held in the subsequent years with the participation of all-important visitors and delegations visiting West Berlin at the time, to place commemorative wreaths near the place of his death.

2.2. Western Killers

The East also had its martyrs: guards killed on duty. Their deaths would often be evoked but were rarely captured on pictures. GDR propaganda avoided showing their bodies, preferring to pay tribute to the individuals who had sacrificed themselves for the community. This honour was bestowed selectively: the Communist regime would abstain from evoking sentries killed by deserters as this might weaken the border guards' morale. Among the 18 guards killed during the years of the Wall, ten were killed by deserters.

The GDR turned the guards killed by fugitives, Western policemen or soldiers into heroes[19]. The East glorifies them as brave defenders of the Socialist State, provoked and attacked by warmongers. A true cult was dedicated to these men who had streets named after them, as well as barracks, schools, factories, collective farms, cultural centres, clubs or holiday camps. In the same way as for the victims of the Wall in the West, the places where these East German border guards were shot became sites of pilgrimage, spaces for contemplation, with regular wreath-laying and visits of foreign delegations, but especially of Communist Young Pioneers and school children, to whom the guards were upheld as exemplary models of faith, loyalty and sacrifice.

The year 1962 saw a particularly high number of fatalities as five guards died within a few months. In May, Peter Göring was killed by a West Berliner policeman, after having fired 44 bullets at a young boy who tried to get over the Wall[20]. Three days before the Peter Fechter shooting, another guard, Rudi Arnstadt, was killed by a Federal guard at the border between the two States, which explains

the East German guards' hesitation to approach Fechter while he still lays agonizing.

But it was mainly the homicide of Reinhold Huhn, the "loyal son of his people", on 18 June 1962, that encapsulated the martyrology of the border guards of the GDR. The 20-year-old corporal was killed in Berlin by a smuggler who had already helped a number of people flee to the West and, on this occasion, tried to hide the escape of his own family. The East German propaganda exploited this event immediately as it triggered enormous public emotion. Huhn's funeral became an official ceremony. A Berlin school was called after him along with five streets in East German towns, including the one on which he was killed. A commemorative bronze plaque and a stele were put up to mark the exact spot where he had died[21].

People of Berlin paid tribute to Reinhold Huhn, an East German guard killed in action:

https://www.bild.bundesarchiv.de/dba/de/search/?query=Bild+183-C1113-0020-002

Then, in 1973, the latter was replaced by a massive memorial dedicated to the "fallen soldiers of the GDR, who died at the Berlin border". The location of this memorial was chosen specially for two reasons. First, it was close to the cross that honours Peter Fechter. Secondly, it was located opposite of a spectacular new building on the Western side of the Wall that belonged to the fiercely anti-Communist West German press magnate Axel Springer. He was the owner of the daily papers *Bild* and *Morgenpost*, which had published the photos of Schumann and Fechter.

On the occasion of the 25th Anniversary of the erection of the "anti-fascist rampart", young communists of the Reinhold – Huhn School from Berlin – Mitte, stand in front of the memorial for the guards who fell to defend the "worker's and peasant's State":

https://www Bundesarchiv_Bild_183-1986-0813-27%2C_Berlin%2C_Pioniere_vor_einer_Ge denkstätte.jpg

CONCLUSION

Well before the fall of the Wall, the GDR had lost the battle for its visual commemoration. The picture of the four militiamen in front of the Brandenburg Gate and the laying of flowers at the monument to the dead guards marked East German consciousness only superficially, to the point of being forgotten soon after the end of the Cold War. By contrast, the pictures of Schumann's leap to freedom and the death-throes of Fechter marked the collective imagination of the world, to the point of becoming an integral part of the UNESCO's "Memory of the World Register"[22].

The fall of the Wall, on 9th November 1989, meant the end of the division of a city, a country and a continent. It marked also the fusion of two images of the Wall: on the one hand, the East Germans pouring across the border at the checkpoint at Bornholmer Strasse and the West Berliners climbing onto the Wall at the Brandenburg Gate. These photos, and more frequently – given the advance of technology – film clips, have been broadcast again many times since in TV and other documentaries, including those commemorating the thirtieth anniversary of the end of the Cold War. A new set of images would supersede the icons of the Cold War.

(Translated by Eleonore Heuser)

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THE BERLIN WALL AS A HETEROTOPIAN SITE. REFLECTIONS ON THE TOPOLOGY OF THE WALL AS A TOURIST LANDMARK

Iiris Konttinen
University of Helsinki, Finland
iiris83@icloud.com

Abstract. The Dutch architect Rem Koolhaas visited Berlin in the summer of 1971. Since then, he famously proclaimed that his encounter with the Berlin Wall at that time was his very first psychological confrontation with the powerful side of architecture. The Berlin Wall seemed to invert all of his expectations and perceptions of reality (Boyer 2008, 65). This powerful encounter made him affirm a well-known maxim: "Where there is nothing, everything is possible; where there is architecture, nothing (else) is possible" (Boyer 2008, 65, Koolhaas 1995).

Keywords: heterotopia, Michel Foucault, street art, Edward Soja, Berlin Wall, transgression, Cold War, Hilde Heynen, Christine Boyer

The Berlin Wall was taken down on November 9, 1989, when the border between East and West Berlin was reopened and the wall itself was finally dismantled. The Wall was erected during the Cold War, following the so-called Berlin Crisis. It began to escalate when, on November 10, 1958, Soviet Premier Nikita Khrushchev delivered a speech in which he demanded that the Western powers of the United States, Great Britain and France pull their forces out of West Berlin within six months. This ultimatum sparked a three-year crisis over the future of the city and culminated, in 1961, with the building of the Wall.

In 2014, when celebrating the 25th anniversary of taking it down, the city inaugurated the *Lichtgrenze*, a light installation in remembrance of the route of the original Wall. Many exhibits of its history were also installed in central Berlin. According to *Der Spiegel*,

at least 136 people died in attempts to surmount the Wall. They were either shot by border guards, ripped to shreds by landmines or they drowned in the Spree River (Wiegrefe 2009).

At the beginning of the 21st century, for the first time, more than half of all humans live in urban regions. This situation calls for an in-depth analysis of the different aspects of urban space and architecture. Recently, interest in different theoretical approaches towards the aesthetics and philosophy of space has been on the rise. Perhaps it is in relation to this situation and the renaissance of these issues that we should also acknowledge the value of the maxim of Koolhaas, as well as his encounter with the Berlin Wall. If the maxim of Koolhaas is applicable to all architecture, what are the consequences of this notion?

I think this phrase is strongly echoing the ethos of Michel Foucault's lecture "Of Other Spaces" ("*Des Espaces Autres*"), which he held for French students of architecture on March 14, 1967. It was Ionel Schein who had asked for Foucault to give a brief talk on his philosophy of space for the students, after hearing Foucault's radio program of 7th December 1966, illustrating briefly the concept of "heterotopias" (Dehaene & De Cauter 2008, 13). Foucault had written the lecture during his stay in Sidi-Bou-Saïd, Tunisia, where he had fled from France to escape the commotion stirred by the publication of "*Les Mots et Les Choses*", in 1966 (Dehaene & De Cauter 2008, 13).

Foucault's fragmentary reflections on heterotopias present an interesting approach and provide multiple points of departure for the analysis of architecture and space. They remained unknown to most until his death because he authorized the publication of the essay "Of Other Spaces" only shortly before that. In an interview, Foucault was asked whether space was central to the analysis of power, and he answered:

> Yes. Space is fundamental in any form of communal life; space is fundamental in any exercise of power. To make a parenthetical remark, I recall being invited, in 1966, by a group of architects to do a study of space, of something that I called at that time 'heterotopias', those singular spaces to be found in

some given social spaces whose functions are different or even the opposite of others. (Soja 1989, 19)

Foucault discussed the heterotopias first in a radio program entitled "*Les Hétérotopies*", in winter 1966. In this talk, Foucault begins by describing spaces that are, essentially, utopian by nature, such as the attic or the garden in children's play (Boyer 2008, 53). In another radio broadcast entitled "*Le Corps Utopique*", in winter 1966, he goes on to discuss similar spaces that adults define among themselves (Boyer 2008, 53). According to Foucault, this kind of spaces are heterotopian, as they have a double function – they make the surrounding space normal and keep it normal whilst they are operating on the area of "the imaginary" (Boyer 2008, 54). As he concludes, the most essential aspect of this kind of spaces is that they are contestations of all other spaces – they are real, existent spaces that, in fact, show reality to be illusionary by nature (Boyer 2008, 54).

Foucault has adopted the term heterotopia from medical terminology. In that context, a heterotopia means a kind of tissue appearing in an abnormal place, when it does not affect the functions of an organism (11 Sohn 2008, 41-42). For Foucault, heterotopias are, essentially, "effectively realized utopias in which the real emplacements are simultaneously represented, contested and inverted".

In the second radio program dealing with heterotopias, Foucault discusses the motivations behind creating such spaces, and concludes that, perhaps, this is because we need to "escape" to a "non-place" outside of all places, where we can dream of "a bodiless body". Here, he references Proust, who every morning woke up to face the reality that he cannot escape his body; it will always be there (Boyer 2008, 54-55.).

Whereas Koolhaas famously proclaimed that "emptiness of the metropolis is not empty", in *Imagining Nothingness* Foucault wished to point out that we live inside "a set of relations" not in "a void" (Boyer 2008, 65, Foucault 2008/1967, 16). For Foucault, there is no

universal form of a heterotopian space, even though heterotopias, according to him, are present in every culture. However, he does mention a heterotopia *par excellence*, that is, the ship.

The ship, Foucault says "is given over to the infinity of the sea", "a floating piece of space", "a place without a place that exists by itself, that is self-enclosed" (Foucault 2008/1967, 22). He concludes the lecture "Of Other Spaces" with the remark that "In civilizations without boats, dreams dry up, espionage replaces adventure, and the police the pirates". This is a direct reference to the totalitarian society, where no dreams may flourish.

As Hilde Heynen noted, the "built environment accommodates and frames social transformations" and, as such, "it is both active and passive" (Heynen 2008, 314-315). This is also the way Foucault views the formation of the subject in relation to space.

Koolhaas had enrolled in the School of Architecture in London, 1968, where he presented a thesis titled "The Berlin Wall as Architecture". He was acutely aware that architects, in the words of M. Christine Boyer, "bathed in an illusion of imagery and tyrannical mystification that appeared to be more real than lived-in reality", and that "it was necessary to redeem architecture from this torture of realism" (Boyer 2008, 69). The importance of re-imagining and re-interpreting present-day reality is also highlighted in Foucault's concluding remark.

Echoing Foucault's wish, I suggest we need "heterotopology" ("*hétérotopologie*") in order to reveal certain aspects of space, place and various sites; especially so, when we are dealing with any hegemonic discourse. I suggest we need to consider a heterotopia as a site with potential for either supporting this discourse, or as a site with potential for a different, resistant and subversive discourse, or in certain cases, both.

According to Heynen, whereas various heterotopias – and here Foucault might mention the houses for the elderly, the prison, or the mental hospital – can certainly be "sites of hegemonic violence and oppression", they may also "harbour the potentials for

resistance and subversion". I propose that the historic Berlin Wall, essentially, was a site of both these binary opposites.

I propose that instead of that we need a new maxim, instead of the original by Koolhaas "where there is nothing, everything is possible", where there is architecture, *heterotopian resistance and subversion are possible, at any given site of hegemonic violence and oppression.* In conjunction with this remark, I suggest recognising the concept of a heterotopian space as deeply ambivalent in nature.

Finally, I suggest that illegal, uncommissioned street art is a form of such transgressive, resistant discourse, and may create a heterotopian space or a heterotopian site, that is potentially subversive. The Berlin Wall was decorated with street art during the 1980s, and I think here it is evident that these images made this site a landmark of a heterotopian nature on the Western side even before the Wall was taken down.

Reflecting on the Wall, I suggest that illegal street art is generating a heterotopian space because it usually appears in an urban, public space contesting and interrogating the *genus loci* of the space in question. Simultaneously, street art also builds upon and reflects upon its surroundings, much like the mirror, which, according to Foucault, is yet another example of a heterotopia (Foucault 2008/1967, 17).

According to Foucault "the mirror functions as a heterotopia in the respect that it renders this place that I occupy at the moment when I look at myself in the looking glass at once absolutely real, connected with all the space that surrounds it, and absolutely unreal". In Foucault's view, heterotopias are capable of juxtaposing several spatial elements (Foucault 2008/1967, 19). Here, I think street art certainly functions in a heterotopian way.

For Foucault, the heterotopian spaces always have a critical function in relation to the rest of the space (Foucault 2008/1967, 21). I think illegal street art is heterotopian, as it attempts to create a space for art in the middle of the city, and so it has a critical function in relation to the rest of the space, often defined by the

lack of street art. Illegal street art potentially creates, in my opinion, a space for an aesthetic experience resisting the hegemony.

Now, a bit over a fourth of a century has passed since dismantling the Berlin Wall, significant parts of it still remain in place in the form of the *Mauerpark*, the *East Side Gallery* and several other sites. The topology of the original Wall as a heterotopian site of totalitarian terror and death has since been transformed into the topology of a remarkable tourist landmark in Berlin.

Reflecting more on the potential of street art in contesting the discourse of the hegemony in public space is beyond the scope of this presentation. However, I believe street art is needed to create a more diverse discourse in public space. Also, I believe that legal or commissioned street art, or street art presented in a gallery or a museum space, may not be able to generate a heterotopia as such.

In Foucault's view, whereas the 19th century seemed to be preoccupied with history and time, the 20th century, for him, seemed more concerned with space. Whereas Edward Soja, for example, has described Foucault's account of the heterotopia as "frustratingly incomplete, inconsistent" and "incoherent" (Soja 1996, 162) I think reflecting on the case of the Berlin Wall as well as other heterotopias may shed some light on this topic.

Foucault never returned to the subject, although he, in Soja's words, "persistently explored what he called 'the fatal intersection of time with space' from the first to the last of his writings" (Soja 1989, 19). Foucault's heterotopia is more of a demonstrative than a declarative concept, but should not be overlooked for that very reason. The flexibility of the notion of the heterotopia makes it, in my opinion, a very viable theoretical apparatus.

With the fall of the Berlin Wall, the dissolution of the Soviet Union, the end of the Cold War, and the geopolitical changes not only the "end of history" but also the "end of the utopian age" was announced. However, I think it is still worthwhile to critically reconsider the relevance of the notion of *heterotopia* in relation to architecture and space as well as street art. I conclude with this remark by Foucault: "Critique doesn't have to be the premise of a

deduction that concludes, 'this then is what needs to be done'. It should be an instrument for those who fight, those who resist and refuse what is" (Foucault 2000, 236).

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IN SEARCH FOR THE POST-COLD WAR *MODUS VIVENDI* IN POST-SOVIET EASTERN EUROPE

Tsotne Tchanturia

Lecturer at the University of Georgia, Tbilisi, Georgia;
Associated researcher at the Cold War History Research Centre,
Budapest, Hungary;
PhD candidate at the International Relations Multidisciplinary
Doctoral School at Corvinus University of Budapest, Hungary.

tsotnetchanturia@gmail.com

Abstract. The end of the 20th century was marked by a rather unexpected opening as the long-enduring Cold War came to the end and the Soviet Union collapsed, allowing fifteen new republics to appear on the political scene. Beyond the optimistic expectations of democratization and the expansion of free-market capitalism through the newly independent republics, the collapse of the Soviet Union created serious challenges for the international community in terms of international law, politics, economy, and security. One problematic challenge, which remains an open issue today, is the painful process of disintegration of the multi-ethnic Soviet federal state. By evaluating the current state of affairs of the non-NATO member, Kremlin disloyal post-Soviet states located on the western frontier of the Russian Federation, we can see that they have become a "bone of contention" between the West and Russia. By presenting brand new evidence from the Gorbachev period, once top-secret meetings of the CPSU Politburo and other Soviet governmental institutions, this article critically evaluates issues such as Gorbachev's grand compromises in Central and Eastern Europe and the Russian problem in Ukraine and probable risks of its further aggravation, and tries to draw recommendations for solving current territorial problems in the region.

Keywords: the Soviet Union, disintegration, East-Central Europe, Gorbachev, post-Soviet states, post-Cold War *modus vivendi*, Russian problem, Ukraine

GORBACHEV'S BREST-LITOVSK GAME

The Berlin Wall was both a symbolic and tangible confirmation of the East-West division. However, if its fall in 1989 indicated the end

of these tensions and the liberation of the Central and Eastern Europe from the Soviet dominance, it also appeared to be a bell ringer for the challenging process of disintegration of the multi-national Soviet federal state. To this extent, British PM Margaret Thatcher's sceptical expectations concerning the negative effects of German unification on Gorbachev's *Perestroika*, and warnings on the risk of opening a Pandora's Box of border claims through central Europe, appeared to be essentially justified (Haftendorn 2010, 343). Moscow's generous concessions in Central and Eastern Europe, which were dictated by political gridlock, embittered Gorbachev's domestic adversaries, leading the country to the edge of a *coup d'état* in August 1991. Although unsuccessful, this practically ended all efforts of reformation of the Soviet Union by revealing the political instability of Gorbachev's regime. On the other hand, whereas central Europe, excluding the Yugoslav territories, more or less survived the dangers of Pandora's Box of territorial claims, the former Soviet republics bore this problematic inheritance.

The British Prime Minister was not the only one to foresee the probable negative effects of the fall of the Berlin Wall on the stability of the Soviet Union. In early December 1989, while meeting with the Federal Republic of Germany's Foreign Minister Genscher, Gorbachev referred to Kohl's ten-point plan as a *diktat*, as he was aware of how the unification of Germany would catalyze the escalation of the Soviet crisis in Eastern Europe. As Haftendorn argues, the key to Gorbachev's concession giving up Soviet control of the GDR most probably lays in Moscow's financial problems, as Gorbachev had expected the pleased FRG to finance the modernization of the Soviet economy (Haftendorn 2010, 345). Another serious dispute between Gorbachev and the West was over the membership of a unified Germany in NATO. During a meeting with US Secretary of State Baker on 18-19 May 1990 in Moscow, Gorbachev commented that unified German membership in NATO was impossible, as this would inflame his domestic foes and kill *Perestroika*. As it appeared, however, Gorbachev was trying to raise the price of his gridlock dictated concession, which he

essentially achieved, as the Americans promised to sign a bilateral grain and trade agreement with the Soviet Union and additionally speed up the ongoing Strategic Arms Reduction Talks (Haftendorn 2010, 348-349). On the other hand, Gorbachev was promised economic aid from Bonn at an overall sum of DM 12 billion and an interest-free loan of DM 3 billion, which allowed the Soviet leader to make the concession while saving face (Haftendorn 2010, 350).

It is not a coincidence that as early as August 1989, western scholars were able to draw historical parallels between the Brest-Litovsk Treaty and Gorbachev's assent for grand compromises in Eastern Europe. As Aron put it, Eastern Europe was a financial burden that the Soviet Union was no longer able to afford, setting the conditions for Gorbachev's grand compromise – besides the annual 11 to 15 billion USD normally spent to keep the region afloat, he wrote, an additional 26 billion USD was needed annually to maintain over half a million Soviet troops in the region (Aron 1989, 13).

In his landmark survey of 20th-century international history, Keylor shares this same opinion, arguing that the Soviet satellites in Central and Eastern Europe were a financial burden for Kremlin and that getting rid of them would have allowed Gorbachev to mobilize all available resources for the success of *Perestroika* (Keylor 2015, 651). Accordingly, the situation as put by Békés was a "life-or-death fight for the survival of the Soviet Union". It should be noted that Békés was first to coin the term *Brest-Litovsk syndrome*, indicating the state when Kremlin, for the first time since the Russian Civil War, "found itself in a situation, in which its own survival was at stake", and chose to compromise its periphery for the sake of saving the imperial "centre" (Békés 2002, 245).

According to this theory, Lenin's motivation for accepting the signature of the Brest-Litovsk Treaty in 1918 was to stop the further invasion of the Central Powers by formally compromising the western and south-western territories of Soviet Russia, maintaining control of which was too costly for Kremlin, which created favourable conditions for achieving Bolshevik success in the

Russian Civil War. On the other hand, Gorbachev's motivation for ending the Brezhnev Doctrine in the Soviet Bloc (risking the collapse of Kremlin's strategically important yet too costly satellite system in Central and Eastern Europe), was achieving stable relations with the West by settling all international political disputes, which would allow him to mobilize foreign and domestic resources for the successful implementation of *Perestroika* and the reformation of the Soviet Union, without which the future existence of the whole Soviet state seemed impossible.

Gorbachev's Brest-Litovsk game started as early as the spring of 1985. In an interview with the Spanish daily "El País," on 26 October 1990, during a visit to Madrid, Gorbachev admitted that Kremlin had announced the non-interventionist policy in the internal affairs of Central and Eastern Europe five years prior (Gorbachev 2013, 305). The credibility of this comment can be easily confirmed by looking at Gorbachev's televised interviews and addresses in 1985. In an interview with Pravda on 7 April 1985, Gorbachev noted that while building Kremlin's foreign policy, it was inadmissible to violate the sovereign rights of other states and essential to consider their state interests (Gorbachev 2008a, 169). In this interview, Gorbachev presented himself as a supporter of the Millian concept on the margins of liberty, basically declaring that Kremlin's sovereignty ends where the sovereignty of other states begins. In an address to the people of France through the French television "TF1" on 30 September 1985, Gorbachev shared this same opinion, declaring that the main basis for the construction of Kremlin's foreign affairs should be the respect for the sovereign rights of other states (Gorbachev 2008b, 541).

By analysing Gorbachev's spoken language, we can see that he was even literally comparing the situation in the Soviet Union to the "Brest Peace". At a Politburo meeting on 2 January 1990, Gorbachev noted that, in 1918, Kremlin had needed to make such principled decisions that were unimaginable even for Lenin's inner circle, but had created the "Brest Peace" settlement. Therefore, we should not panic and act accordingly, he said (Gorbachev 2010b,

63). On 26 January 1990, during an inner circle meeting concerning the German question in Kremlin, Gorbachev admitted that the situation of the Soviet Union was the "Brest peace number two. If we do not cope with it, half of our country will be taken away from us again", he said (Gorbachev 2010b, 192). In an address in the Odesa military district on 17 August 1990, Gorbachev declared that Kremlin's politics in Eastern Europe resulted in the strengthening of Soviet security. We would have otherwise appeared at the edge of military conflict with NATO, he said (Gorbachev 2012, 379). By looking at these comments, it is not difficult to understand Gorbachev's motivations behind his generous compromises in Central and Eastern Europe.

As we discovered from Politburo archival documents, the story went even further. On 6 September 1991, when Kremlin decided finally to recognize the political independence of the Baltic Republics given their specific historical foundations, Yelstin commented that the decision was supposed to solve Kremlin's international problems (Gorbachev 2018, 104). Accordingly, regardless of Gorbachev's acknowledgement to Margaret Thatcher that Russia could not so simply give up the Baltic region, as it had been trying to gain access to the sea for centuries (Gorbachev 2015, 120), Kremlin decided to give up its *de facto* and *de jure* control of the Baltic region once the integrity of the imperial "centre" came under threat. Furthermore, if we take Cohen's argument for granted, even as a small number as seven republics grouped around Russia (except the Baltic and Transcaucasian republics and Moldova) would have been adequate to form a new reformed Soviet state – "Union of Soviet Sovereign Republics", as the "remaining eight […] republics constituted more than 90 per cent of the old Union's territory, population and resources" (Cohen 2009, 37). If we apply this argument to the *Brest-Litovsk syndrome* theory, we can argue that Gorbachev would have been ready to compromise not only Central and Eastern Europe and the Baltic region to save the Soviet imperial "centre," but the South Caucasus and Moldova too. Furthermore, we can see that the argument of the four republic-based new Union

was also popular among the Soviet political elite. As Cohen notes, "according to a non-Russian leader who participated in the abolition of the Soviet state" (most probably he means Nazarbayev), a new Union could have consisted of four republics (Cohen 2009, 37).

We believe that what essentially appeared to be fateful for the Soviet state was not the failure of its foreign policy, nor the failure of the Novo-Ogarevo negotiations, but the exposure of internal instability by the August coup. As Thatcher and Gorbachev foresaw, German unification and membership in NATO inflamed Gorbachev's internal foes in Kremlin, achieving the paroxysm during the August coup that assured the reformist forces in Kremlin and supporters abroad of the instability within Gorbachev's regime, eventually shifting their *de facto* support to Yeltsin's persona and finally resulting in the signing of the Belovezha Accords and the collapse of the Soviet Union. Eventually, as Békés notes, if Lenin had proven to be right when compromising the Western frontiers of Soviet Russia to save the imperial "centre," while adopting the same strategy, Gorbachev was overtaken by history (Békés 2002, 245).

IN SEARCH FOR THE POST-COLD WAR *MODUS VIVENDI*

Analysing the events of the end of the 1980s from this angle gives us an understanding of how the fall of the Berlin Wall, undoubtedly a victorious achievement for both the German nation and European security, triggered brand new challenges yet again *inter alia* for European security, this time more Eastwards, in its eastern neighbourhood. Every global opening in world history creates its own chaos of conflicts of interest, and the fall of the Berlin Wall was no exception. What the European continent experiences now in several spots of its eastern neighbourhood (more precisely in Ukraine, Moldova, Georgia, and Azerbaijan), is the inexistence of the post-Cold War *modus vivendi* in the region, what really turns the

respected states in this region into a bone of contention between the West and Russia (in addition, we should also consider the growing influence of China).

The collapse of Soviet hegemony in Europe, a remarkable symbol of which was the fall of the Berlin Wall, shifted the Cold War affairs eastward to the Western frontiers of the former Soviet territory. And even if the Cold War formally ended at least as late as December 1991, factually in many ways it proceeds on a rather smaller, regionally localized scale in military, political, economic and propagandistic dimensions.

This new post-Cold War Russia-West competition over obtaining influence on the territory of six post-Soviet states of the European Eastern Partnership is most visible when looking at the current state of affairs in Georgia and Ukraine. Both are countries that suffered, and still do, of military conflicts with the Russian Federation, and which have withdrawn their memberships from the CIS because of these conflicts. Classical elements of Cold War affairs can be observed here, such as the blended elements of hybrid warfare (such as political warfare, conventional warfare, irregular warfare, and cyber warfare), even the classical geopolitical borderization strategies, manipulation of state and non-state actors (such as political parties, NGOs, mass media, the Church, Business sector), etc. The classical element of the Cold War missing so far is a missile crisis, however analysing the state of affairs in the region, we are not convinced that the realization of this scenario is impossible.

The new post-Cold War competition in the region is defined on the one hand by the Russian Federation's ambitions and efforts to establish a new chain of post-Soviet Kremlin satellite states on its Western frontiers, in order to redraw the new post-Cold War red lines or at least to halt the post-Cold War Eastern enlargement of NATO. On the other hand, the ambitions of some of the states on Russia's Western frontier, willing to integrate to the European Union and NATO, along with the support in many ways of their aspirations from the western institutions and states, primarily

NATO and the EU, as well as the USA, establishes the current state of affairs in the region.

Russian ties, and accordingly the Russian leverage to manipulate the situation in the region, are tremendous: there is huge economic dependence on the Russian market, Russian language still dominates as the first spoken foreign language in the region, and there is a reasonable amount of political, religious, and cultural groups and entities with considerable legitimacy that singlehandedly see the further development of the region only along the lines of Kremlin. However, the most efficient Russian tools to take control of the situation in the region are the ethnic Russian minorities and other Kremlin-loyal ethnic minorities in these respective states. It should, therefore, be noted that this circumstance is not artificially created, as long as we do not consider the traditional Soviet system of hierarchically inter-dependent nationalities to be artificial. The collapse of the Soviet Union left up to 66 million citizens beyond the borders of their traditional homelands, and this was a logical and natural consequence of the collapse of the multi-ethnic federal state. To this extent, the Russian question became one of the problematic cornerstones of the disintegration of the Soviet Union. It was, therefore, not surprising that, as was narrated by President George Bush Senior in his memoirs, during an official dinner with the King of Spain Juan Carlos on 29 October 1991 in Madrid, Gorbachev referred to this circumstance as a "Russian problem" (Loginov 2007, 362). Due to the breadth of this issue, in this article we will be mainly concentrated on the most relevant part of it – the Russian problem in Ukraine and its possible effects on the integrity of the Ukrainian state.

SOME NOTEWORTHY CASES OF THE RUSSIAN PROBLEM IN THE FORMER SOVIET SPACE

The Russian problem has been a critical cornerstone of the disintegration of the Soviet Union since the late 1980s. In many

ways, Kremlin has attempted to use the Russian national minority populations as an indirect tool of manipulating the political climate in neighbouring countries. Besides the famous cases of Ukraine (which will be discussed in more detail below) and Moldova, which resulted in tremendous conflicts and crises, there is the iconic case of Lithuania, which illustrates an ideal example of Kremlin's indirect and direct territorial blackmailing strategy. Luckily for Lithuania, these efforts by Kremlin turned out to be unsuccessful.

What happened is the following: once the Lithuanian Union republic decided to secede, at least three different parties – Belarusians, Russians, and Poles – activated territorial claims to Lithuania. Belarusians demanded the return of five south-eastern Lithuanian districts granted to Lithuania from Belarus in 1940 by Stalin – this demand was officially posed by the Belarussian government as well, although it was later recalled. The population of the Kaliningrad Oblast demanded the return of Klaipeda, and the Poles residing in Vilnius asked Kremlin to take the areas of their residence under its control. This threat was to be realized if Lithuania continued the process of secession. Gorbachev spoke about these issues while meeting with President Bush in Novo-Ogarevo on 31st July 1991 (Gorbachev 2017, 184). It is technically problematic to accuse Kremlin of making up of these territorial claims, however considering Moscow's behaviour in Vilnius during the events of January 1991, and elsewhere (in disloyal neighbouring countries), during the Gorbachev period and afterwards, it is not difficult to identify the traditional "handwriting" of Kremlin.

Besides the Lithuanian case, there is also a rather understudied case of the Russian problem in Kazakhstan. On 26th August 1991, Pavel Voshanov, the press secretary of the president of the RSFSR, stated at a briefing with journalists that Russia supported the self-determination of every republic; however, it also reserved the right to raise the issue of reconsidering borders. In response to the question from journalists on whether Voshanov could name the countries whose borders might be reconsidered, he mentioned Crimea, Donbass, and North Kazakhstan. These comments

triggered sharp reactions in Kyiv and Alma-Ata. The sharp reactions were handled by drawing up communicates between Russia and Ukraine and between Russia and Kazakhstan. The Russia-Ukraine communique was drawn up on 28th August and the Russia-Kazakhstan on 29th August. Vice President Rutskoy paid visits to Kyiv and Alma-Ata. The communicates *inter alia* touched upon the mutual respect of territorial integrity (Gorbachev 2017, 600-603).

Concerning the above-mentioned incident, in his conversation with German Foreign Affairs Minister Genscher on 9th September 1991, Gorbachev stated that Kazakhstan and Ukraine were frightened by Yeltsin's statement on reconsidering borders (Gorbachev 2018, 145). He mentioned that if the situation moved towards separation in Ukraine and Kazakhstan, it could end up in tremendous conflict (Gorbachev 2018, 140-141). Gorbachev also commented on this incident in a conversation with President Bush on 29th October 1991, during the meeting in Madrid. The statement aggravated separatist tendencies in Ukraine and talks on imperial claims have again been restored, noted Gorbachev. It has forced Nazarbayev to make a statement condemning any kind of territorial claims, noted Gorbachev further (Loginov 2007, 356).

This episode in Russo-Kazakh relations, what we metaphorically like to refer to as a demonstration of Russia's clutches, depicts the Russian Federation's leverage over the political climate in neighbouring Kazakhstan. If the Kazakh government were to attempt to pursue, or somehow imitate, the "Ukrainian way" of disloyalty to Kremlin, it should be no wonder that the frozen issue of the Russian problem would be activated there. Accordingly, it is not surprising that the position of the Kazakh government concerning Crimea reflects the interests of Moscow.

THE RUSSIAN PROBLEM IN UKRAINE

In studying the topic of current territorial conflicts in the former Soviet republics, we find it crucial to focus on the basic aspect of these problems during the Gorbachev era. It was the time of the

"end of the Soviet Union" when multiple ethnic conflicts surfaced, and to this extent, this exact period of Soviet history is abundant with data that compose the cornerstone of the current state of affairs in the region. Accordingly, we are assured that if one is willing to conduct comprehensive research on the current territorial conflicts in the former Soviet republics, a complete picture of the developments could not be constructed without delving deep into the 1985-1991 Soviet nationality politics. This whole process of historical investigation into the Soviet past is somehow like the conduction of anatomical pathological research on the Soviet body, the important findings of which might cure the modern-day diseases of the former Soviet republics.

Since its transfer to Ukraine in 1954, Crimea had more or less remained under the radar until as late as July 1987, when the first demonstrations by Crimean Tatars were held at the Red Square in Moscow. The first such demonstration was held on 6th July 1987 with the participation of 120 delegates. The demonstration's motto was "Bring Crimean Tatars back to their Homeland! Democracy and Openness to Crimean Tatars!". At the Politburo meeting held on 9th July 1987, Lukianov noted that 350,000 people stood behind this demand (Loginov 2007, 18).

It is interesting to have a closer look at the opinions concerning the status of Crimea presented at the abovementioned Politburo meeting. Solomontsev recalled the moment Khrushchev handed Crimea over to Ukraine, noting that this decision was not received with great admiration in Russia. Sevastopol is certainly a city of Russia's glory, he said. He suggested referring to the decree signed by Lenin to return Crimea to Russia. Do we try to follow Lenin's path in our lives? Then we must bring this decree as evidence and no one will remain annoyed, Solomontsev stated. In response, Gorbachev noted that it would be correct from both historical and political standpoints to return Crimea to Russia (Gorbachev 2008c, 593-594), but Ukraine would oppose the move (Loginov 2007, 19). Vorotnikov suggested the postponement of this subject for the time being. It would be too much trouble to experience another

"Ukrainian problem", he said. Yakovlev offered to uphold a 15 to 20-years transitional period for resettlement from Uzbekistan to Crimea. Gromyko stated that there was not much to worry about it, saying, let us leave this problem to be settled by life and history. In final remarks, Gorbachev noted that if Crimea were to be returned to Russia, it would trigger additional unneeded challenges, as it would weaken Slavic unity in the "Socialist Empire". He suggested the establishment of normal living conditions for Crimean Tatars in Uzbekistan and, additionally, a delay in the process of their resettlement back to Crimea (Loginov 2007, 20). At the Politburo meeting on 6th August 1987, Gorbachev commented that the idea of turning Crimea into a Russian "federal district" was worth attention, but it could not be fulfilled suddenly, without the support of the people's will (Gorbachev 2008c, 367-368).

As we can see from the above-cited excerpts from Politburo meetings, even Gorbachev was considering the idea of returning the Crimean Peninsula back to its historical Russian homeland, however, considering Kremlin's options at that time, he chose, as was stated by Gromyko, to leave the problem for settlement by life and history.

By examining the Politburo documents, we can understand that Crimea and Donbass were demanding that Moscow review the internal borders of Ukraine - Chebrikov discussed this issue at a meeting on 27th April 1989 (Gorbachev 2010a, 559). Kharkiv's population immediately raised the same separation demands when, on 6th June 1989, Ukraine adopted a new law diminishing the status of Russian to the language of intra-national communication, noted Gorbachev on the issue at a Politburo meeting on 4th October 1989 (Loginov 2007, 96). As far as the issue of separatist aspirations of Kharkiv's population is concerned, it worth recalling a comment from Gorbachev in an interview with the Belarusian "People's Newspaper" on 28th November 1991, in which he reminded the public that Kharkov (in the case we use the Russian toponym) was joined to Ukraine by the Bolsheviks in order to gain a majority in the Rada (Loginov 2007, 412).

At a meeting with the participants of the XXIst Congress of Komsomol on 10th April 1990, Gorbachev stated that when public movements had raised the issue of language in Ukraine, a collection of signatures had started in Crimea to request the return of Crimea to Russia. Half a million signatures were collected, he said; the same happened in Donbass where 11 million Russians were residing (Gorbachev 2011, 212).

During a visit to Sweden, in conversation with Swedish PM Ingvar Karlsson on 6th June 1991, Gorbachev noted that it would be sufficient in Ukraine to pressure the Russian speaking population for disagreements to simultaneously arise in several places. Gorbachev said that in Crimea, where there are many Russians, two-thirds of the population had voted for autonomy and that the situation was quite acute in Donbass. If the developments were to carry on the same way, Ukraine might remain with nothing but Galicia, he noted (Gorbachev 2015, 204).

While talking with President Bush in Novo-Ogarevo on 31st July 1991, Gorbachev noted that when Ukraine began talks on independence, Crimea had announced that it would prefer to join Russia. Moreover, stated Gorbachev, it was recalled at the Donetsk Basin that after the revolution, the Donetsk-Krivoy Rog Soviet Republic had been founded there. People considered it possible to raise the subject of renewing the Soviet Republic, he said (Gorbachev 2017, 184).

We can discover from the official documents that, besides Crimea, Donbass, and Kharkiv, the Odessa and Nikolaev (currently Mikolaev) Oblasts also have a history of separatism from Kiev. Following Ukraine's declaration of independence, a delegation of the Donbass Strike Committee arrived in Moscow on 25th August 1991 to state that if Kyiv were to tolerate separatist moods, then Donbass would go on a total strike; Odessa and Nikolaev joined their demands shortly thereafter (Gorbachev 2018, 556).

In an interview with a Ukrainian TV Company on 8th December 1991, Gorbachev declared that the violation of national minorities' rights would begin in Ukraine if it were to separate from the Soviet

Union. "I greatly desire to retain Ukraine in the way it is right now, but I am sure, if it steps forward for separation, then the processes generating there, will be… The situation of Yugoslavia has plunged me in thought" (Loginov 2007, 429).

From the above-presented excerpts of the archival documents, we can understand that the populations of Crimea, Donbass, Kharkiv, Odessa, and Mikolaev were in many ways expressing their discontent for Ukrainian separatism from Kremlin, and most of them were demanding the joining of their territories to Russia as early as the late 1980s and early 1990s. Accordingly, it is not a coincidence that almost 30 years later, the Crimean peninsula would be annexed by the Russian Federation, the Russian satellite Donetsk and Lugansk self-declared separatist republics would take off in the Donbass region and groups of separatists would attempt to establish a Krakiv People's Republic. Most probably, it was neither a coincidence that as early as December 1991, Gorbachev was considering realistic the risk of the realization of the Yugoslav scenario in Ukraine. By reviewing the above-presented information, we can definitely see that unsurprisingly, Russia's traditional geopolitics have not changed so far.

Ethnic composition and the ratio of Russians to Ukrainians in the regions of Ukraine also shed light on the current state of affairs in the country. According to the most recent 2001 population census, the currently problematic regions of Crimea, Lugansk, and Donetsk demonstrate the highest ratios of Russian ethnic populations. In Crimea, ethnic Russians compose 58% of the local population, whereas Ukrainians make up only 24%. In Lugansk, the ethnic-Russian population composes 39%, whereas the Ukrainian – 58%. 38 to 57 is the ratio in Donetsk. The next Ukrainian region with the highest share of ethnic Russian population is Kharkiv (26 to 71), and subsequently Zaporizhzhia (25 to 71) and Odessa (21 to 63). The Russian-Ukrainian ratio in the Mikolaev region composes 14 to 82, which is similar to the composition of Kherson. Only the Dnipropetrovsk region has a higher ratio of ethnic-Russian to Ukrainian population (18 to 79) than the latter two (State Statistics

Committee of Ukraine 2003-2004).

Taking into consideration all above-presented data, we can suppose that if Russo-Ukrainian relations do not achieve a functional *modus vivendi*, the successful settlement of which is being attempted by the Normandy Four, it will not be surprising if, aiming to put more pressure on Kiev, Moscow intensifies its hybrid warfare in the regions of Kharkiv, Odessa, and elsewhere with comparably significant shares of ethnic-Russian populations. Most problematic to this extent could be the Kharkiv region as, recalling the above-presented comment from Gorbachev, it was within the composition of Russia for centuries and was joined to Ukraine by the Bolsheviks only in order to gain a majority in the Rada.

CONCLUSION

Considering the current state of affairs in Ukraine and in other Kremlin disloyal post-Soviet states on the European Eastern Partnership territory, we are assured that the pragmatic position of these "states of contention" is essentially important for achieving a credible post-Cold War *modus vivendi* in the region. Taking into account the real options these states have today and analysing historically proven efficient strategies and methods of solving similar problems, we are convinced that the most credible example they can follow is the path of Willy Brand's *Ostpolitik*. As far as the current position of these respective states towards their problematic regions is concerned, it is somehow identical to the *Hallstein Doctrine*. Total non-recognition of the adversary party is indeed a principled position, however, the question is whether these states are ready to bear the price of this position, as these territorial disputes put a great burden on their economic and social development. To this extent, we argue that the only credible way out should be to imitate Willy Brandt's *Ostpolitik*, rather than what appeared to be a doctrine of Walter Hallstein.

We are therefore assured that the only path to genuine

independence, and the restoration or maintenance of the principles of individual liberty and free institutions in the region, rest largely, as was mentioned in the Economic Cooperation Act of 1948, "upon the establishment of sound economic conditions, stable international economic relationships and the achievement […] of a healthy economy" (Hitchcock 2010, 158). On the other hand, the establishment of long-lasting economic stability is almost impossible under the conditions of active or "frozen" conflicts in the region. It is therefore clear that some kind of stable *modus vivendi* must be achieved for the disputed territories between all interested parties, which will make way for a real economic recovery in the region.

The governments in official Kyiv, Tbilisi, and elsewhere in the region, and their respective populations, should understand that if they desire to pursue the "European way" of development, they should arm themselves with pragmatic policies and, to some extent, get ready to recognize the interests of breakaway entities and the Russian Federation. To this end, Willy Brand's *Ostpolitik* and Lenin's grand compromise in Brest-Litovsk are not that different, as both leaders pragmatically recognized the existence of a problem and, by wanting or not wanting it, made significant compromises that allowed their respective states to move forward.

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