

Cold separation of a capital

Business



A wall divides a whole city in the middle of Europe. It went into history as a symbol of the cold war and the separation of Germany. The wall was built in the beginning of the 60s to stop the emigration flow from East Germany. The main question at the time was: can a wall stop people from fleeing a communist country and entering towards a desired destination? In 1961 the communist leadership of east Germany decided to stop massive emigration by building a highly guarded and dangerous wall through the middle of Berlin (“ Berlin Wall”).

The whole world was shocked and the wall remained a symbol for the division of West and East Berlin. To understand the cause and the effect of the Berlin Wall it is important to step back in history and understand the historical context better. The construction of the Berlin Wall was the desperate attempt to separate two societies and economic models that emerged after World War II on German soil. While in West Germany the capitalist model with an individualist society developed, East developed in a whole opposite direction, in my opinion. Through the dominance of the USSR (Union of the Socialist Soviet Republics), a communist societal model with economy developed.

In East Germany many people suffered low prosperity, suppression by the state and restriction of freedoms. Entirely opposite to that the West German economy boomed and allowed people to enjoy their wealth through trips, cars, and consumables. However that situation got even more serious in the years to come. During the entire 1950s the situation acerbated and the contradictions became more and more evident. This led to a massive exodus of East Germans who sought their luck in the promised land of West

Germany. At its peak (1960) around 400 East Germans per day crossed the open borders to West Berlin (“Berlin”).

Many of them were very well educated, such as engineers, doctors, and scientists, which led to a huge “brain drain.” That was the moment when East German leadership decided to build a 201 kilometer long wall separating East and West Berlin (“Berlin”). To secure the much longer border to West Germany a concrete wall of 1000 kilometers of length was built (“Berlin”). This is similar to the wall that separates until present North and South Korea and their different political systems. It goes without saying that the construction of the wall created huge repercussions.

At first the entire Western and Eastern world including their citizens had a negative reaction to the wall. Family bonds were cut, traffic and trade flows were interrupted and many people in East Germany tried to escape their country by forcefully overcoming the wall. At least, 235 people died when trying to overcome the highly secured and well guarded wall (“Berlin”). Of course, the previous outflow of East Germans was stopped and the demographic situation in East Germany stabilized. According to the East German propaganda the wall was called “Anti-fascist protection rampart.” In order to avoid the impression that the wall is actually directed against East Germans.

Two American Presidents held historic speeches next to the Berlin Wall in marking the absurd situation and calling for a destruction of the wall. The first speech was given by John F. Kennedy in 1963: “While the wall is the most obvious and vivid demonstration of the failures of the Communist

system — for all the world to see — we take no satisfaction in it; for it is, as your Mayor has said, an offense not only against history but an offense against humanity, separating families, dividing husbands and wives and brothers and sisters, and dividing a people who wish to be joined together” (John Kennedy). The speech had a very strong impact and was quoted very often especially because Kennedy used a German quote. The second speech was made by President Ronald Reagan in 1987.

Where he addressed directly the leader of the USSR by stating, “ Mr Gorbachev, tear down this wall!”(Ronald Reagan). This speech is considered to reflect the signs for the collapse of the eastern block, which materialized a few years later. With the success of the peaceful revolution in East Germany in 1989 the Berlin wall became obsolete and was destroyed. Overall, the construction of the wall allowed to build a huge “ prison” for sixteen million East Germans and stop the mass emigration the entire concept failed in the long run. Not only the population of East Germanybut also other Eastern European countries were so frustrated, demotivated and angry about their living conditions and perspectives that they revolted against it.

The desire for freedom is stronger than the strongest walls, meaning that the concept for the Berlin Wall failed.