Tribute to the long watch

Dedicating the Berlin Wall Monument

Vernon A. Walters and Robert M. Gates

The following remarks were made on 18 December 1992 by former Deputy Director of Central Intelligence Walters and then Director of Central Intelligence Gates at the ceremony dedicating the CIA's Berlin Wall Monument.

Remarks by Ambassador Walters

Director Gates, former directors of the Agency, distinguished guests, directors of other agencies—it is a very moving moment for me to be here to see this piece of the Berlin Wall being set up. I also see here General Haddock, who was the Staff Commandant who accompanied me on the first day after the wall came down, both first in the helicopter around the wall and then to the Glienicke Bridge, which had a certain emotional appeal to it because we got back some people there whom we never expected to see alive again. It is always a moving thing for me to come out here.

I spent four years of my life here, and when I left part of my heart stayed here. I have always watched with fascinated interest everything that pertains to this Agency. I always remember what President Kennedy said in 1961, "Your work is not easy. Your failures are trumpeted to the world and your successes are passed over in silence." And that is a very true thing. It requires a special kind of dedication to work here, and it is particularly appropriate that this piece of the wall be erected on the grounds of this Agency, which for 45 years successfully manned the watch on the battlements of freedom.

It was a very emotional experience when I went with Ray Haddock to the wall in the morning of the 10th of November. I had fought against the German Army; I had been blown up by the German Army. I got a lump in my throat the size of a golf ball when I realized that the long war which had gone on all of my adult life was over, and that freedom had won. Now I am not so sure it is over.

What is done here is indispensable to the survival not just of the United States but of human freedom. And really the great service which this Agency rendered to the world—and the US Government—is the idea of what it was we had to arm against. We were not like the Soviet Union, led into expenditures beyond what we could bear. During the 1980s, we spent $300 billion a year, a sum almost the size of the budget of the German Federal Republic, the third-largest economy in the world, and we have a debt of $3 trillion. That is a lot. In fact, it is half of one year's Gross National Product. In France, the national debt is equivalent to two years' Gross National Product. And, while we know the facts, we were not always right. I cannot help using the word "we" because I had the honor for four years of being part of that. We may have been wrong on this, that, or the other—which is trumpeted to the world. But the world is unaware of the many times that we were right.

I am happy to be here, to see this piece of the wall which stood for 28 years. I think it is just as well they did not bring you the part on which they painted a copy of the photograph of Gorbachev kissing Honecker on the lips. I understand that only happened to secretaries general of fraternal Communist parties. But this is enough to remind people of the success of the long watch.

We were surprised tactically, never strategically. I must say that when I came here and I realized what was being done, I was astounded. In the armed forces you get something in return for what you do. Here, you do not. You have to be content with the satisfaction of knowing that you have served the United States, and you have served the cause of human freedom. I often say to the people who are hostile to us, "What chance do you think human freedom would have had to survive if there had been no United States in 1945? Or, if there had been a United States without the Central Intelligence Agency in 1947?" The answer is, of course, almost none.

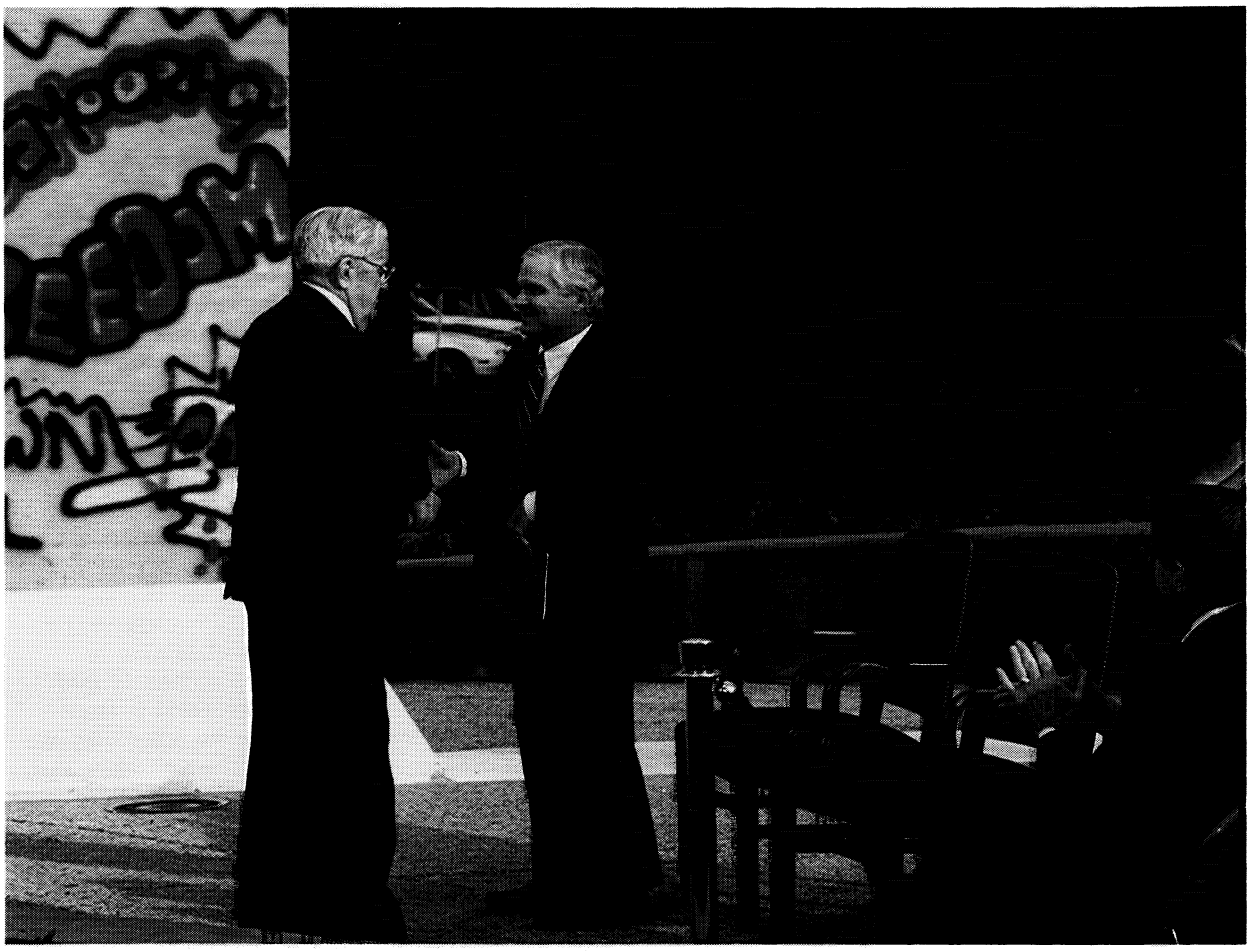
So, I would just like to take this opportunity of coming back here to thank Director Gates, previous directors, other superiors of mine like the Secretary of the Army, and FBI Director Sessions for manning the battlements of the besieged citadel that never fell. It never fell because of you. Thank you.

Remarks by DCI Gates

I want to welcome all of you this afternoon to this ceremony dedicating our Berlin Wall Monument. Over 30 years ago—in August 1961—the first strands of barbed wire and the first barricades were positioned along the Soviet Sector in the city of Berlin. Buildings next to the east side of the border were evacuated—their windows and doorways bricked up. Guard dogs and watchtowers appeared. A strip of territory was cleared and became a "no-man's land"—with land mines and more barbed wire. And a wall of concrete—6 feet high—was quickly erected along the 27-mile border.

All of these measures were taken by the Communists, not to prepare for an enemy attack from the West, but to prevent the mass migration of East German citizens to freedom, to the West.

No other symbol so clearly represented the battleline drawn between East and West, between democracy and Communism, between freedom and totalitarianism, than the Berlin Wall.



Former DDCI Walters and DCI Gates

The wall was an ugly scar across the face of Berlin. And for nearly three decades, it stood as a silent, but constant, reminder of the failure of Communism—its total rejection of freedom, its blatant disregard for the individual. The wall was erected as a desperate act—those who could not be swayed by theory would be held by force.

But the true dimensions of the wall cannot be measured by its height or by its length, but by its toll on the citizens of Berlin. For over 28 long years they faced the wall—day in and day out—separated from family and friends—husbands from wives, brothers from sisters, citizens from their fellow countrymen. All Berliners knew the pain of separation, and all wanted desperately to be reunited in peace and freedom. Over the years, their hope, their will, and their determination never wavered—nor did America's resolve in facing the challenge posed by the Berlin Wall.

Of all the leaders who traveled to Berlin, perhaps President Kennedy best expressed the hopes of the West, when he said:

> "You live in a defended island of freedom . . . Lift up your eyes beyond the dangers of today, to the hopes of tomorrow, beyond the freedom merely of this city of Berlin, or your country of Germany, to the advance of freedom everywhere, beyond the wall to the day of peace with justice, beyond yourselves and ourselves to all mankind."

Twenty-five years later the political climate had been transformed, and another American President traveled to the city of Berlin. President Reagan realized that dramatic change was possible, and, in an impassioned speech at the foot of the Brandenberg Gate, he demanded of Soviet President Gorbachev, "Tear down this wall!"

But, ultimately, it was not the Soviet Government which leveled the wall, it was the citizens of Berlin themselves—ordinary people, taking into their own hands hammers and chisels—battering the wall—each reclaiming the unity and freedom for their country that had been denied for so long.

Today, we are fortunate—with the assistance of General Haddock, Ambassador Walters, our Fine Arts Commission, and the Directorates of Operations and Administration—to have a portion of the Berlin Wall here at our headquarters building. This monument that we dedicate today stands for many things, but most of all it is a permanent reminder of the power of a single and truly revolutionary idea—freedom.

Our Fine Arts Commission took great pains to find the right location for this monument. Its north-south orientation mirrors the wall's placement along Potsdammer Platz in Berlin. The west side of the wall is covered with original graffiti that reflects the color, hope, and optimism of the West itself. It stands in stark contrast to the east side of this wall, which is whitewashed and devoid of color and life. This monument is also placed in the middle of a main thoroughfare leading to our building—and so it must be confronted by our people daily, just as it was for nearly three decades by the citizens of Berlin.

But for all of us here today, these three slabs of concrete and steel hold a special meaning. Just as the Berlin Wall was being erected, we were moving into the headquarters building that stands behind us. And over the next 28 years, much of the work that took place here was devoted to breaking down the barriers to freedom created by the Cold War. In Berlin itself, we worked to bring down those barriers, and the names of those who worked there, took risks there, fought for freedom there include some of the most familiar names of CIA's history, people such as Dick Helms, Bill Harvey, Bill Graver, and Dave Murphy.

America's intelligence services were well suited to meet the demands of a Cold War, where military force was too harsh, and polite diplomacy was too mild. We helped our leaders to navigate through these uncharted waters; we told them of the prospects for war and the potential for peace.

During those Cold War years, our view had to be global in scope. And through our actions, we countered the Communist threat worldwide—not only in Germany, but also in Korea, Taiwan, Vietnam, Angola, Afghanistan—anywhere across the globe where free people were faced with the tyranny of Communism.

I do not intend to let this opportunity pass without insisting with pride that American intelligence played a critical role in preventing World War III and in the triumph of the West over Communism.

In the 40 years of the Cold War, as the two superpowers sat with their fingers on the nuclear trigger, there was no nuclear or global conflagration in large part because US intelligence accurately told American leaders—and indeed the world at large—what was happening militarily on the other side. We watched their planes, their ships, their missiles, their armies; we knew where they were, their state of alert, and what they were doing. This played a critical role in preventing a mistake or miscalculation that could have incinerated the world. By the same token, US intelligence provided nearly all of the information that made arms control agreements and associated lessening of tensions possible, from the Limited Test Ban Treaty of 1993 to START II this year.

During the long decades of the Cold War, one of the reasons that "containment" worked was that, while military forces trained and exercised and glowered at one another, US intelligence was in the trenches and at war—from Italy and France out of World War II to Afghanistan in the 1980s. Containment worked not just because the Soviet system was fundamentally flawed, but also because Soviet aggression and subversion were resisted—and that resistance was usually organized or supported by American intelligence.

Though the Cold War is over, and the threat from Communism has all but evaporated, American intelligence still has—and must maintain—a global view.

In earlier years, we were concerned that underdevelopment and unstable countries would be susceptible to Communist influence. Today, many of these same countries are still unstable, threatened by fanatics, or facing humanitarian crises that not only endanger their sovereignty, but also challenge regional stability.

So, in many ways, this monument represents a tremendous success—and a tremendous challenge.

We must remember that those who conceived America's policies to contain Soviet Communism, and those from CIA who helped implement them, had the conviction, the faith that Communism was doomed. In his farewell address on January 15, 1953, President Truman said:

> "As the free world grows stronger, more united, more attractive to men on both sides of the Iron Curtain—and as the Soviet hopes for easy expansion are blocked—then there will have to come a time of change in the Soviet world. Nobody can say for sure when that is going to be, or exactly how it will come about, whether by revolution, or trouble in the satellites, or by a change inside the Kremlin. Whether the Communist rulers shift their policies of their own free will—or whether change comes about in some other way—I have not a doubt in the world that a change will occur. I have a deep and abiding faith in the destiny of free men. With patience and courage, we shall someday move into a new era."

Thirty-six years later, the wall came down, and we are moving into the new era President Truman believed would come.

Our work is not over. There are other walls to tear down—the wall built by tyrants who would deny others their freedom, the wall that imprisons those addicted to illegal drugs, the wall of fear created by the terrorist, and the wall of defiance, built by those who seek weapons of mass destruction.

These are the walls that the democracies now seek to tear down. And with strong intelligence, and effective cooperation at home and abroad, these walls too will come down.