

OVERCOMING THE IRON CURTAIN

Visions of the End of the Cold War in Europe, 1945-1989

Frédéric Bozo & Marie-Pierre Rey (Paris)

organized by Frédéric Bozo (University of Paris III – *Sorbonne Nouvelle*) and Marie-Pierre Rey (University of Paris I – *Panthéon Sorbonne*) in cooperation with Bundeskanzler Willy Brandt Stiftung, CIMA Florence/Rome, London School of Economics, Cold War Studies Centre, The Johns Hopkins University, Paul H. Nitze School of Advanced International Studies (SAIS), Bologna Center.

Location: Paris.

Date: June 12-14, 2008.

Deadline for Proposals: September 15, 2007.

Proposals should include a title, a one page outline and a one page CV of the author with a list of major books and articles. Following the acceptance of the proposals (before the end of October), authors will receive editorial guidelines (e.g. format of the papers). In order for the papers to be available to conference participants beforehand, authors will be asked to submit their draft papers by June 1, 2008.

The conference organizers intend to publish a selection of the papers as an edited volume. In order for the publication to proceed swiftly, the deadline for the submission of final drafts of the selected papers will be September 15, 2008.

Participants will receive reimbursement for their transportation on the basis of economy fare as well as accommodation during their stay in Paris for up to three nights.

Proposals should be emailed or sent by regular mail to Prof. Marie-Pierre Rey, Université de Paris I – *Panthéon Sorbonne, Centre de recherches en histoire des Slaves*; 1 rue Victor Cousin, 75005 Paris, France; E-mail: Marie-Pierre.Rey@univ-paris1.fr

The end of the Cold War and, in particular, the events of 1989-1991 – from the fall of the Berlin Wall to the disintegration of the USSR – have been at the forefront of historical research for the past fifteen years, and they are likely to continue to be the main focus of the historiography of the Cold War in the future. Among the reasons which explain the infatuation aroused by this period, the unpredictability of the events in question ranks high. There is indeed a consensus among historians that the unfolding of these events had hardly been foreseen by contemporaries, including key political actors who were mostly taken by surprise by the rapidity as well as the pacific character of the »revolutions« of 1989 and their sequel.

And yet the end of the Cold War has been a constant and recurrent theme throughout the Cold War itself. Ever since its inception, statesmen, diplomats, politicians, academics, and others reflected about ways of ending the East-West conflict and its consequences. To be sure, as the Cold War settled in, the East-West status quo increasingly came to be seen by most contemporaries as long lasting. Yet, the situation was, arguably, never considered as irreversible in the long term: even at times when the established order appeared to have become all but perennial, the need to overcome it and the way to do so were more or less openly discussed. It is surprising, therefore, that recent historiography has not systematically sought to explore and investigate the visions of the end of the Cold War before the end of the Cold War, as we intend to do.

The objective of the conference is therefore to bring to the fore the reflections, programmes and strategies which, throughout the period, have aimed at calling into question the bipolar system and at replacing it by alternative logics, approaches or concepts. These visions may be associated with individuals, whatever their role or function (say, a Kennan, a de Gaulle, a Brandt, a Reagan or a Gorbachev); of organized groups (e.g. political parties like the French RPF in the late 1940's, or the German SPD and Eurocommunists in the 1970's); or of civil society (as witnessed for example by the posture of Soviet or East European dissidents in the 1980's). Alternatively, they may have been connected with certain processes (the European integration process, the CSCE) or certain events (e.g. the Euromissile crisis and the peace movement). Depending on the period and context, they may have constituted actual, thoroughly conceived programmes, more blurred, utopian aspirations aiming at the reconciliation between the two halves of divided Europe, or even simply the belief that the cold war had already, in effect, come to an end (for instance after Stalin's death or at the height of détente).

Such an effort can be of interest for several reasons. Although the most outstanding visions of the end of the Cold War – especially those of prominent actors – have caught the attention of historians, we hope the conference will bring to the fore previously neglected aspects, approaches or representatives of the problem and thus enhance our general knowledge of the overall phenomenon. Moreover, while specific visions of the end of the Cold War have been treated on their own merits and in their particular contexts, the effort will make it possible to apprehend them as a whole, thus allowing for a more systematic questioning of the very notion of »anticipating« the end of the Cold War throughout the period (e.g. by allowing typologies). Finally, the effort is likely to reveal a lot about the nature, the structure and the multiple perceptions of the Cold War itself. Because they were elaborated in particular contexts and, in fact, in opposition to these situations, the various visions of the end of the Cold War can be treated as yardsticks which make it possible to better appreciate these same contexts or situations and, therefore, to better analyse the dynamics of the conflict and the dialectics between status quo and change throughout the period – thus further contributing to the understanding of its end.

The organisers invite papers dealing with all aspects of the foregoing problematic over the whole period, and, in particular, focusing on visions of the end of the Cold War expressed by prominent individuals (statesmen, politicians, diplomats etc.), by governments, or organizations, including political parties or emanating from the civil society (e.g. dissidents, intellectuals or religious groups).

