



## Origins of The Cold War

*The Cold War on a local level*

### **Christian Bailey:**

I think if we try and visualise the Cold War, we often still think of grand global meetings and events but the Cold War no doubt had an impact at a local level. As part of this module, we've been looking at Berlin throughout the 20th century and seeing how things played out on the streets of Berlin. I wondered what potential there is for viewing the Cold War at a more local, regional level perhaps along a social history line or even along the lines of the history of everyday life.

### **Professor Anne Deighton:**

Yes I think that in the same way that our thinking about the Cold War has extended from thinking about what the Superpowers were saying to each other, down to what European powers were saying to each other and to the super powers, we have to look into societies, we have to see what is going on within individual communities, regions as well as national states during the Cold War period. And there is a lot of new and exciting research on exactly that. Now some of it is how communities deal with each other inspite of the Cold War, so we're finding new work on how religious groups for example; protestant groups, catholic groups are trying to bind communities together across Cold War barriers and there is very interesting work, for example, if we talk about the bombing of Dresden in the Second World War and the way Coventry city in the UK tried to reach out to make common cause across the Iron Curtain and that was at considerable political capital expenditure because you had to get through the bureaucracies between West and East. That's one very interesting example.

But for countries bordering each other, they have to have communications across borders. It was almost impossible not to communicate at all across the Iron Curtain and this operated at many levels. For example, during the 50s and 60s there were many thousands of people who came to Britain from the Soviet Union. When I saw this in the archives, the listings from the British Council Archives, it was fascinating that we're not dealing with a mere handful of people but a lot of traffic between West and East, East and West. And so at many levels we find communities which don't ignore the Cold War but try to become closer in spite of it. And when you studied Berlin, you will know that the reuniting of families, even if temporarily across East-West borders was absolutely essential to the project – and is a very interesting idea. The other one is formal culture. There is an increasing amount of work in how we used culture to fight the Cold War as propaganda and how we used culture to explain ourselves to ourselves. That is to explain what Britain was like in the 50s and 60s through the medium of mass

movies. For the French, it is explained through the medium of French cinema which is very important - the notion of France in a Cold War society. And of course for the Germans, whether the Germans were going to listen entirely in the West to the voice of the American, radio and American jazz, which they didn't like much to listen to. Or whether they had a German culture that crossed borders between East and West Germany and which remained in place and intact even through the Cold War.

And the superpowers were very keen to encourage a cultural Cold War and it's here we find another institution which we haven't talked about, which is very important and that is the intelligence agencies. Because there was a lot of money that was put in secretly in the United States, into cultural activities that promote the West, to promote Western arts. And by the same token, the Soviets are very interested in bringing over their top musicians, ballet dancers, set designers to the West to show how good Soviet/Russian culture was and they performed this both for their own peoples and Eastern Europeans, but also in the West. So you have these layers of Cold War that go right beneath state-to-state diplomacy which is the bit, in fact, that affected most people because most people don't go to international conferences, they hear concerts, they go to the cinema, they hear music, they see ballets and if it comes from the other - from the communist side in the West or from the Western side in the Soviet Union, this is of huge importance. The cultural Cold War and the way it was followed through, is one of the most stimulating and innovative areas of Cold War politics.

**Christian Bailey:**

Thank you that's a great overview of the cultural dimensions of the Cold War. I'd like to wrap up now and I'd like to make three points by way of conclusion. When we think of Europe in the Cold War, we shouldn't just think of Eastern and Western Europe as monoliths. The borders between East and West and within the blocs were porous. They were porous in terms of politics and clearly in terms of culture. The second point I'd like to make is that as we often think of the Cold War from the outside in, from seeing how foreign policy affects domestic policy, there's at least as much scope to look the other way round - to look from the inside out and see how the domestic affected the international. Finally I think that the major takeaway message from this discussion is that while the Cold War may have come to an end, historiographical debates about the Cold War are far from over. I'd just like to finish by thanking Anne Deighton.

**Professor Anne Deighton:**

Pleasure's all mine.