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### Source Exploration: Adenauer's Bundestag Speech

Source: Condemnation of the Wall by the West German Government (August 18, 1961), Konrad Adenauer, Bundestag speech of August 18, 1961, *Deutscher Bundestag*, [https://ghdi.ghi-dc.org/sub\\_document.cfm?document\\_id=825](https://ghdi.ghi-dc.org/sub_document.cfm?document_id=825)

### Background Information

Konrad Adenauer(1876-1967) is a significant German political figure who served as mayor of Cologne and president of the Prussian State Council before becoming the Chancellor of the Federal Republic of Germany.<sup>1</sup> As a member of the Christian Democratic Union, or CDU for short, he was a strong supporter of capitalism and the free market. His speech given on August 18th, 1961 opposed the construction of the Berlin Wall and claimed that it was not only a tragedy but a violation of Eastern German's rights from the "Ulbricht regime."<sup>2</sup> According to GHDI, the original document is kept in the 'File of Berlin Affairs' and additionally published on the website [www.Centre Virtuel de la Connaissance sur l'Europe](http://www.Centre Virtuel de la Connaissance sur l'Europe). Due to Adenauer's public Image being greatly tainted after a scandal known as the 'Spiegel affair' saw five West German journalists arrested in an unjustified manner, he resigned his chancellorship and died roughly 5 years later in 1967.

### Narrative

The second half of the twentieth century was globally dominated by the presence of the Cold War. Fears of a conflict astronomically larger than the Second World War loomed in people's minds, and the uncertainty of what was to come brought tensions between Communist and Capitalist society to an all-time high. Furthermore, the possibility of nuclear warfare was now a reality. However, few events topped the importance of the creation of the Berlin Wall.

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<sup>1</sup> "Konrad Adenauer." *Wikipedia*, Wikimedia Foundation, 7 Feb. 2020, [en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Konrad\\_Adenauer](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Konrad_Adenauer).

<sup>2</sup> "Condemnation of the Wall by the West German Government." *Ghdi.ghi-Dc.org. 18 Aug. 1961*. [ghdi.ghi-dc.org/sub\\_document.cfm?document\\_id=825](https://ghdi.ghi-dc.org/sub_document.cfm?document_id=825).

Becoming an iconic symbol of the Cold War, the Berlin Wall closed the East off from the West. It separated families, destroyed connections, and forced many nations like the United States to take sides in a very controversial conflict. Only five days after the initial construction of the wall, Konrad Adenauer was one of the first to give his take on an international scale on this event.

Konrad Adenauer was an experienced politician, serving in politics since 1906.<sup>3</sup> According to the Wikipedia page dedicated to Adenauer's life, the creation of the Berlin wall made Adenauer and his government look “weak” because the matter could have potentially been settled, never leading to such a catastrophic event. According to DW.com, Adenauer was late on the scene and did not make an official appearance in Berlin until about ten days later. Willy Brandt, the mayor of Berlin during the construction of the wall, was said to take a much more direct approach, immediately condemning the wall and wasting no time to take action against this tyrannical event.<sup>4</sup> It is important to note that on the Wikipedia page titled “Berlin Wall Crisis of 1961” Konrad Adenauer’s name is only mentioned once, and his speech on the 18th, not at all.

The source(Adenauer Speech) was created out of necessity. Being the leader of the Chancellor, the people of West Germany expected an explanation as to why the barrier was constructed seemingly overnight. As previously mentioned, the walls separated families, towns, and businesses. Chronic Der Mauer, a German website that lists events by month from the creation of the wall to its destruction, mentions Adenauer “denounces the sealing-off measures as a brutal violation of human rights and the Four-Power status of Berlin.”<sup>5</sup> He delivers this speech to an audience in the Parliament of the Federal Republic of Germany. Adenauer wrote a great speech and touches on many key points of the conflict between East and West. He calls for the ‘free world’ to help in the conflict, and claims the free world will help bring an end to the wall. He blames the USSR for the disruption, and says the East German government has removed East

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<sup>3</sup> “Konrad Adenauer.” *Wikipedia*, Wikimedia Foundation, 7 Feb. 2020, [en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Konrad\\_Adenauer](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Konrad_Adenauer).

<sup>4</sup> Deutsche Welle (www.dw.com. “How Did West Germany Respond to the Building of the Berlin Wall? | DW | 04.11.2014.” *DW.COM*, 2014, [www.dw.com/en/how-did-west-germany-respond-to-the-building-of-the-berlin-wall/a-18035420](https://www.dw.com/en/how-did-west-germany-respond-to-the-building-of-the-berlin-wall/a-18035420).

<sup>5</sup> Bundeszentrale für politische Bildung. “Chronicle of the Berlin Wall 1961 "Chronicle of the Wall.” *Chronik-Der-Mauer.de*, Chronik der Mauer, 2024, [www.chronik-der-mauer.de/en/chronicle/\\_year1961/\\_month11/?moc=1](https://www.chronik-der-mauer.de/en/chronicle/_year1961/_month11/?moc=1).

Germany's "right to self determination."<sup>6</sup> The violation of the 'Four Powers Agreement' is mentioned as one of the main reasons the wall should not have been constructed, and Adenauer believes a diplomatic situation can be reached, that it is not yet too late for change. He ends his speech by saying to the East, "Do not give up hope for a better future for yourselves and your children."

The articles I selected for my sources all seem to have the same general description and sense of the general event. The difference comes in terms of the details. One of the most stark contrasts between sources comes from the two Wikipedia pages utilized for this assignment. Adenauer's condemnation of the wall is mentioned on his personal page, but on the "Berlin Wall Crisis of 1961" site, his name is mentioned only once at the very end of the article, with no reference to his speech. Another resounding agreement between all sources is the disagreements in policy between John Kennedy and Konrad Adenauer. In the Sheboygan press, it states there is a "sharp disagreement" between the two. Most importantly, a few sources, like his personal Wikipedia page, do not mention the speech source directly but do mention the same events and information surrounding the construction of the wall.

I find this source very important for understanding the Western world's interpretation of the Berlin Wall after its initial construction. My grandfather has always told me one of the most memorable moments of his life was the destruction of the Berlin Wall. He said communism was not only a threat felt in Germany but across the world. Viewing this source helps me to understand his beliefs, and why the Berlin Wall is an iconic image of the Cold War.

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<sup>6</sup> "Condemnation of the Wall by the West German Government." *Ghdi.ghi-Dc.org*, 18 Aug. 1961, [ghdi.ghi-dc.org/sub\\_document.cfm?document\\_id=825](http://ghdi.ghi-dc.org/sub_document.cfm?document_id=825).

### Chronological Annotated Bibliography

1. "U.S. And Britain Protest the Closing of the Border between East and West Berlin." *The Age*, 15 Aug. 1961, p. 1,  
[www.newspapers.com/article/the-age-us-and-britain-protest-the-clo/34867076/](http://www.newspapers.com/article/the-age-us-and-britain-protest-the-clo/34867076/).  
 -This section of a newspaper posted by "The Age" in Melbourne, Australia details international protests against the Berlin Wall. Konrad Adenauer is mentioned in a small paragraph, stating, "The necessary countermeasures will be taken in association with our allies". Statements from American and British officials are also recorded. This article is important for understanding the events leading up to his speech on the 18th since it was written three days beforehand. The article being published in an Australian newspaper demonstrates the international significance the Berlin Wall had.
2. "Peaceful Solution Of Berlin Crisis Sought By Adenauer." *North County Times*, Escondido California, 18 August 1961, — California Digital Newspaper Collection. *Ucr.edu*, 2024,  
[cdnc.ucr.edu/?a=d&d=NCT19610818.1.1&e=-----en--20--1--txt-txIN-----](http://cdnc.ucr.edu/?a=d&d=NCT19610818.1.1&e=-----en--20--1--txt-txIN-----).  
 -Published on the day of Adenauer's Speech, this newspaper from California details Adenauer's call for peace at the Berlin Wall. There is a mention of the United States sending LBJ and a retired general to make a statement in Western Berlin. As mentioned in class, the United States had a hands-off approach at the start of the Berlin Walls construction, not wanting to risk a conflict escalation. Brandt's call for peace is mentioned, but the contrast in approach between Brandt and Adenauer is not mentioned in detail.
3. "President Kennedy and Chancellor Adenauer Disagree on the Demand for Removal of the Berlin Wall." *Sheboygan Press*, Sheboygan Wisconsin, 17 Nov. 1961,  
[www.newspapers.com/article/the-sheboygan-press-president-kennedy-an/47033204/](http://www.newspapers.com/article/the-sheboygan-press-president-kennedy-an/47033204/).  
 -This article is important for understanding the differing views of the United States and

Germany after the wall's initial construction. The United States does not want to be directly involved in Germany's affairs, fearing a more large-scale conflict. Published in the Wisconsin newspaper, the "Sheboygan Press." Adenauer's speech is not mentioned in the newspaper article because it was written roughly two months afterward. Kennedy's name comes up once again, and he seems to be quite a large figure in the Western Berlin conflict.

4. Mayer, Frank A. *Adenauer and Kennedy a Study in German-American Relations, 1961 - 1963*. Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire Macmillan, 1996.  
-The information contained in the chapters "Adenauer and the Federal Republic" and "Before the Wall" parts one and two reference Adenauer's interaction with Kennedy before the wall was built. Adenauer's Berlin Wall Crisis is covered in depth. His plans for the immediate future and strong stance on the matter are also noted. Although his speech is not directly mentioned, there are multiple references to him addressing the West German nation and his involvement in the proceedings.
5. Bundeszentrale für politische Bildung. "Chronicle of the Berlin Wall 1961 | Chronicle of the Wall." *Chronik-Der-Mauer.de*, Chronik der Mauer, 2024, [www.chronik-der-mauer.de/en/chronicle/\\_year1961/\\_month11/?moc=1](http://www.chronik-der-mauer.de/en/chronicle/_year1961/_month11/?moc=1).  
-A detailed website that displays the month-by-month development of the Berlin Wall from 1961 to 1990. Konrad Adenauer is mentioned multiple times in the 1961 section, including multiple speeches he made. His speech is covered under the "August 18, 1961" tab and the violation of the "Four Powers Agreement" is one of his key references when addressing the nation. I enjoyed viewing this website because it helped me develop a much deeper understanding of the events leading up to Adenauer's speech.
6. Rueger, Fabian. "Kennedy, Adenauer and the Making of the Berlin Wall, 1958-1961." Stanford University, 2011. In ProQuest Dissertations & Theses A&I: <https://www-proquest-com.proxy.library.ucsb.edu/dissertations-theses/kennedy-adenauer-making-berlin-wall-1958-1961/docview/2454186247/se-2>.  
-I find this book very useful because it contains dozens of citations and sources that can be further utilized to research Adenauer's speech and the Berlin Wall impacts. Multiple claims and speeches from Adenauer are covered in the book, and the depth of information is immense. The controversial relationship between President Kennedy and

Adenauer is a recurring theme in many sources I used for the source resource assignment. It gives me the impression that lack of intervention from the West may have made the Berlin wall issue worse in the long run.

7. Deutsche Welle (www.dw.com. "How Did West Germany Respond to the Building of the Berlin Wall? | DW | 04.11.2014." *DW.COM*, 2014, [www.dw.com/en/how-did-west-germany-respond-to-the-building-of-the-berlin-wall/a-18035420](http://www.dw.com/en/how-did-west-germany-respond-to-the-building-of-the-berlin-wall/a-18035420).

-This article provides information on the initial formation of the wall, and statements from Konrad Adenauer and Willy Brandt. It is important to note the differing approaches of these leaders. Brandt is outwardly angered by the German separation, while Adenauer condemns the wall from a more neutral stance. Although Adenauer is very enthusiastic in his speech, it is important to note he did not make this statement until nearly 5 days after the wall began construction. Brandt took action right away.

8. Wikipedia Contributors. "Berlin Crisis of 1961." *Wikipedia*, Wikimedia Foundation, 7 June 2019, [en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Berlin\\_Crisis\\_of\\_1961](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Berlin_Crisis_of_1961).

-Wikipedia article about the escalation of the Berlin Wall crisis in 1961. Konrad Adenauer is mentioned as a Leader but is only briefly written about in the last paragraph. His speech is not mentioned. The editors of this Wikipedia page do not feel his speech is a significant event, even though it occurred days after the East began placing barbed wire and stopping people from leaving Berlin. Adenauer is overshadowed by Brandt in this article.

9. "Konrad Adenauer." *Wikipedia*, Wikimedia Foundation, 7 Feb. 2020, [en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Konrad\\_Adenauer](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Konrad_Adenauer).

-Konrad Adenauer's personal Wikipedia page covers the Berlin Wall escalation in great detail, and the year "1961" is mentioned 16 times on the site. Statements made by Adenauer on the Berlin Wall are mentioned under the section "Fourth government." His speech on the 18th is not mentioned, but one four days previous on August 14th is mentioned where he makes a personal attack on Willy Brandt's citizenship status. This further reinforces the fact the Wikipedia editors may have overlooked his speech on the 18th.

10. Bundeszentrale für politische Bildung. “Chronicle of the Berlin Wall 1961 | Chronicle of the Wall.” *Chronik-Der-Mauer.de*, Chronik der Mauer, 2024, [www.chronik-der-mauer.de/en/chronicle/\\_year1961/\\_month11/?moc=1](http://www.chronik-der-mauer.de/en/chronicle/_year1961/_month11/?moc=1).

-A detailed website that displays the month-by-month development of the Berlin Wall from 1961 to 1990. Konrad Adenauer is mentioned multiple times in the 1961 section, including multiple speeches he made. Out of all the articles I researched, this has the most information overall. Each year has a plethora of information and links that lead to additional articles for certain events, including Adenauer's speech on the 18th. The article says Adenauer believes the wall shows “indications of an open attack, civil war and military provocations by West Germany against the GDR.” This helped me to understand the Eastern point of view and their side of the story.