

Occupation and the Emergence of Two States (1945-1961)

Introduction

The texts, images, and audiovisual materials included in this volume trace the developments beginning with the immediate aftermath of the Second World War and leading to the physical manifestation of Germany's division: the building of the Berlin Wall. Its twenty-eight chapters cover topics ranging from denazification and war crimes trials, Allied policies, the economic miracle, and Germany's love for jazz and blue jeans to the founding of two competing German states, the FRG and the GDR, and the entanglement of these two states in the emerging Cold War. Divergent developments not only in politics and the economy, but also in social and cultural trends are reflected through the sources featured here. By presenting a diversity of perspectives from both official and unofficial documents, images and footage, we hope to capture this time in all its complexity and its significance for the further course of German history.

1. The Overall Structure of this Volume

Whereas previous volumes address the troubling question of how Germans got themselves into one of the most brutal dictatorships of the twentieth century, this one focuses on how they emerged from the experience of Nazism and World War II to rebuild their economy, society, political system, and culture. Key aspects of this process will be introduced in the present narrative and explored in greater detail in the accompanying primary source documents, historical photographs, video clips, and other visual material. Before we proceed, however, a few words about the organization of this volume are in order.

The documents included in *Occupation and the Emergence of Two States, 1945–1961* are divided into twenty-eight sections. The first one looks at Allied planning in the final months of war and Allied policies after Germany's defeat. Various sections on the re-emergence of political and economic life in East and West Germany follow. These sections introduce the major domestic and international issues that the two Germanies, together with the occupying powers, grappled with throughout the 1950s, right up to the building of the Berlin Wall in 1961.

Roughly speaking, the first half of the volume examines economic and political history, foreign and security policy, and population movements, while the second half focuses more broadly on the social and cultural history of East and West Germany. Gender and sexuality, consumption, popular culture, and so-called modern lifestyles are just some of the topics covered. The volume concludes with a selection of West German public opinion polls. These surveys constitute a fitting endpoint insofar as they show how contemporary Germans responded to various questions relating to a host of issues raised in the preceding sections.

Confronted with millions of documents from the postwar period, we had to be highly selective. Readers should note that the question of Nazi legacies—such as the competition between capitalist liberal democracy and state socialism—shaped all aspects of life in Germany between 1945 and 1961. Unlike in the volumes that follow this one, readers thus will not find a separate section on coming to terms with the Nazi past. Rather, readers will find extensive or passing references to Nazism and German crimes in World War II in most sections of the volume.

While the documents we have chosen go a long way in illuminating the process of reconstruction in both

East and West, the visual and statistical materials included in this volume constitute an equally rich source of information. We would encourage our readers to take full advantage of them, drawing connections wherever possible. Having said this, we will first offer some general reflections on the postwar period, with the aim of providing a larger narrative framework and some basic points of orientation.

2. The Situation in 1945

In May 1945, Germany was finally and totally defeated and surrendered unconditionally to the Allies. World War II was over at last in Europe, even though it continued in Asia until August. Some fifty million people had died and an entire region stretching from the Atlantic coast to the Soviet Union had been devastated; the surviving populations were physically and emotionally drained. In Germany, the country responsible for this devastation, some seven million had perished, almost half of whom were civilians of all ages. Among the German dead were at least 170,000 German Jews who had been systematically murdered in the Holocaust, the Nazis' genocidal campaign to murder all European Jews, in which Germans and their helpers had killed 6 million European Jews.

With the exception of those living in remote rural districts in the western or southern portions of the country, everyone in Germany was surrounded by chaos in the summer of 1945. Millions of people living in Germany that summer were among those seriously injured during the war. Systematic Allied air attacks on German cities and the Nazi regime's efforts to defend Germany from the Allied invasion and to sow chaos had destroyed 3.4 million apartments and houses—out of a total of 17.1 million—and severely damaged a third of the remaining housing stock. Millions of Germans and people displaced from other countries were drifting about the country, adding to the general state of confusion and human misery. In the summer of 1945, mothers and children who had been evacuated to the countryside struggled to return to the cities they had once called home. Millions of demobilized German soldiers were trying to make their way back to their families if they had not been captured and put in internment camps. On clogged roads and in packed train cars, they mixed with ethnic German refugees and expellees from the East who had fled before the advancing Soviet armies or had been told to leave when the Red Army arrived. By the late 1940s their number had swelled to 11 million. Also moving around or waiting in camps in the months and years after the end of the war were six million non-German DPs (Displaced Persons). Many of them were former concentration camp inmates or forced and slave laborers whom the Nazi regime had forcibly recruited to work in the armaments industry or agriculture; others were migrants out of regions of Europe under Soviet control.

These are the cold statistics. It is much harder to describe in a few words, or even a full chapter, the extent of the catastrophe that World War II had brought to all of Europe including Germany itself, even after the fighting and mass murder had finally come to an end in 1945. The volume contains a number of statistics, photographs and video clips that may give an inkling of what it was like to have survived this catastrophe—emaciated, starving, in poor or ruined health, confused, without hope as millions of men, women, and children then were. Additionally, the volume also includes documents about the economic and moral issues that this devastation raised.

The unconditional German surrender meant, first, that the defeated Nazi regime had disappeared, and second, that sovereignty lay completely in the hands of the victorious Allies, the United States, the Soviet Union, the United Kingdom, and France. They were responsible for restoring law and order, feeding the population, caring for and, where appropriate, repatriating DPs, and eventually stabilizing and reconstructing the country they had defeated. Accordingly, the first documents deal with the decisions that the Allies took when the defeat of the Third Reich appeared on the horizon. To be sure, postwar planning had begun at lower levels as early as 1942, soon after the United States entered the war, when it became clear that the defeat of the three Axis powers—Germany, Italy, and Japan—would only be a matter of time. The postwar order was then discussed in broad terms at the highest level when U.S.

President Roosevelt, British Prime Minister Winston Churchill, and Soviet dictator Joseph Stalin met at conferences in 1943 and 1944.

At these meetings, the Allies found it relatively easy to formulate “negative” peace aims, i.e., the Germans were to be denazified and demilitarized, and their industries were to be decartelized. It proved much more difficult to achieve consensus on what to do with the country “positively.” Should Germany be treated as an economic and political unit, or should it be broken up into smaller entities? Should its borders be permanently changed? What should the political and economic constitution be under which the Germans were to live and, relatedly, how could democratization, the fourth “D” besides denazification, demilitarization, and decartelization, be implemented?

In light of these difficulties, the so-called Big Three—the United States, Great Britain, and the Soviet Union—could only manage to agree upon the zones of occupation. They decided to leave all questions concerning the future internal or external shape of the country to a later date. The picture was further complicated when the Big Three agreed to carve out a region in the south-west of Germany to become the French zone of occupation, thus making France part of a system of Four-Power control that was ratified at the Potsdam conference in July/August 1945. Berlin, located squarely in the middle of the Soviet Zone, was also divided into four sectors and put under joint Allied administration.

While some politicians and bureaucrats in the West had still been hoping in 1945 that the wartime alliance with the Soviet Union would continue beyond the defeat of the Axis powers, it soon became clear that the aims of the two new superpowers of the postwar period, the United States and the Soviet Union, were irreconcilable. Ideological and structural incompatibilities lay at the root of the East-West split. American capitalism and the basic principles of the American political system just could not be aligned with the axioms of a highly centralized planned Communist economy and a Stalinist “dictatorship of the proletariat.”

Some scholars have argued that the antagonism between the West and Bolshevik Russia had existed since 1917, the year in which Vladimir Lenin seized power and established his “New Order.” Still, after several years of successful wartime cooperation, it was only in 1945/46 that full tensions reemerged. The superpower confrontation sharpened, and the two sides decided to consolidate the territorial gains that they had made in the heart of Europe after Hitler’s refusal to sue for peace before the Allies had reached Germany’s borders. Europe was carved up into two blocs with the dividing line—soon to be called Iron Curtain—running through Germany right along the border between the Soviet zone, on the one hand, and the British zone in the north and the American one in the south, on the other (see map).

After 1947, the growing perception of a mutual military threat caused the East-West conflict to escalate to such a degree that war might easily have broken out. The West believed that Stalin’s Russia was an expansionist regime, bent on conquering Europe west of the Iron Curtain. To cope with this threat, Washington, London, and Paris began to pursue a policy of containment that culminated in 1949 in the creation of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO). Members of this alliance saw it as a political counterforce and deterrent to what they perceived as the aggressive designs of the Soviet dictatorship. Conversely, Stalin viewed the

United States as a capitalist-imperialist power that aimed to spread its political and economic system eastwards. The result was a deepening of the division between East and West along the Iron Curtain and the creation of two opposing German states. By 1949 the three Western zones had been transformed into a new state, the Federal Republic of Germany, while the Soviet zone became the German Democratic Republic.

Thenceforth, the Germans and the former allies made the Iron Curtain into an increasingly fortified and guarded border, particularly on its Eastern side. NATO forces were stationed on the Western side, the Red

Army on the Eastern side, and German police and border patrol units each controlled their respective side. As Cold War tensions rose, the border became increasingly impassable, except in Berlin, or in some places where local farmers knew hidden paths through the woods to keep in touch with members of their families on the other side. Finally, in August 1961, the East German regime received permission from the Kremlin to seal off the Soviet sector of Berlin. With the construction of the Berlin Wall and the erection of barbed wire fences along the East-West zonal border, the border between the two Germanies became virtually impenetrable. For political and economic reasons, some East Germans still tried to reach the West by scaling the Wall or crawling through barbed-wire fences—attempts that often proved fatal.

Thus, Allied cooperation lasted at most until 1947; but even during those early years it was largely confined to implementing the “negative” peace aims agreed upon at Yalta and Potsdam. The Allies found it challenging to achieve consensus on how to rid Germany of Nazis. From November 1945 to October 1946, they cooperated in the Trial of the Major War Criminals before the International Military Tribunal (IMT) in Nuremberg, where leading figures in the Nazi party, the German military, and the country’s business community and other professional groups were tried and sentenced. This, however, remained the sole instance of Allied cooperation in bringing war criminals to justice. Meanwhile millions of ordinary Germans had to fill in a long questionnaire, listing all their political activities before and during the Third Reich. They then had to appear before local Allied-supervised tribunals in order to be put in one of several categories of active or nominal Nazis depending on the extent and nature of their collaboration with the regime. Many Germans viewed the denazification program with much cynicism. In the Soviet zone, leaders managed to create the impression that denazification was more thorough than in the Western zones. The Soviet program dismissed numerous educators who were former Nazis. However denazification was primarily directed against landowners and the commercial and industrial middle classes who, according to Stalinist doctrine, were deemed to have brought Hitler to power and then acted as the string-pullers behind the scenes. Some were imprisoned, many more had their property confiscated. Their land was partly redistributed to small farmers; industrial and commercial enterprises were nationalized.

2. Economy and Politics in the Two Germanies

With the Iron Curtain having been drawn, the Soviet Union, on the one hand, and the three Western powers, on the other, began to stabilize their respective zones of occupation in line with their own principles of political and economic organization, promoting the establishment of two divergent orders. In West Germany, liberal democracy came to be enshrined in the Basic Law that the Federal Parliament in Bonn, the new capital of West Germany, ratified in 1949. The Soviet-installed communist regime in East Germany, with East Berlin as its capital, promulgated a constitution that looked good on paper and indeed very similar to the West German Basic Law, but that was constantly violated by the repressive policies of a Stalinist government headed by SED (Socialist Unity Party) leader Walter Ulbricht.

In the realm of the economy, the stabilization measures adopted in the West with Allied guidance and material U.S. aid of the Marshall Plan yielded initial results after the currency reform of 1948. Industry’s latent potential was unleashed with the establishment of a market economy based on competition. Under the leadership of Ludwig Erhard, the economics minister in the newly appointed coalition government led by federal chancellor and Christian Democrat Konrad Adenauer, the “Economic Miracle” of the 1950s unfolded. It stimulated production, created employment, and provided consumer goods that West Germans had been dreaming of for years.

However, this was not an economy that relied exclusively on the dynamic of market forces. Erhard’s liberalism was tempered by a welfare net that provided support for the millions of war widows, orphans, veterans, refugees, and others who had lost their assets. Legislation introduced in line with Article 131 of the Basic Law also restored the pension and employment rights of civil servants and former soldiers that

had been suspended by the Allies in 1945. The ratification of the Equalization of Burdens Law in 1951 represented an attempt to redistribute wealth from those fortunate enough to have retained their property and other assets to those who had lost everything. The West German government made some efforts at restitution to families whom the Nazis had expropriated and forced to emigrate. Article 20 of the Basic Law put society under a permanent obligation to preserve the Republic as a “democratic and social federal state”. The hope was that full employment and “prosperity for all” (L. Erhard) would eventually solve the enormous social problems left by the war and hence stabilize the expansion of the welfare state that offered universal support in case of illness, unemployment, and in old age.

A growing majority of the working population had no wish to return to the class conflicts of the 1920s, and this aided the creation of socioeconomic harmony and the gradual spread of prosperity. Trade union members supported a reformist trend that focused on improving wages and working conditions within the framework of a capitalist market economy. This situation was one factor behind the low incidence of strikes in the 1950s; another was a peculiar West German institution, labor-management co-determination. In the coal and steel industries, co-determination went so far as to provide for a “worker director” who sat on the company management board and participated in all major company decisions. Moreover, capital and labor were equally represented on the company supervisory board under a neutral chairperson. The Works Council Law of 1952 did not extend this arrangement to all larger companies in the remaining fields of industry—the result unions had been hoping for in 1950/51. Still, the law that was eventually passed reflected some union gains and stipulated the election, by the workforce, of works councils with which management was required to cooperate on questions such as redundancy and location planning.

By 1955, anxieties over the future labor pool were so severe that West Germany concluded its first treaty with Italy on the recruitment of Italian guest workers [*Gastarbeiter*]. Over the next decade, it made similar agreements with Spain and Greece (1960) and Turkey (1961). West German politicians emphasized the economic dimensions of these treaties but also viewed them as opportunities to prove their willingness to cooperate with a range of international partners.

The East German government faced similar problems in its quest to emerge from the rubble of 1945 and create a dynamic economy that was capable of fulfilling the promise of a better life. In accordance with Stalinist doctrine, the East German approach was based on central planning and the expropriation of private industry. Additionally, the government began to collectivize agriculture and to socialize the wholesale and retail trades. By 1953, this system had produced so many contradictions, inequalities, broken promises, and dislocations that popular anger led to the June 17th uprising. Strikes and demonstrations began in the capital of East Berlin and quickly spread throughout the country.

The reconstitution of political parties and the restoration of democratic elections at both the local and state levels established a civic infrastructure before the founding of the two German states. For the West, scrutiny of the election results and opinion polls featured in this volume will show that the political system was far from consolidated. The first Adenauer government had to rely on a welter of smaller parties to gain the required parliamentary majority. There were still many disaffected voters who would vote for parties of the radical right or left. Some of these parties’ rhetoric was so radical that authorities questioned their constitutionality. In 1952, the neo-Nazi SRP [*Sozialistische Reichspartei*] was banned. In 1956, the federal constitutional court also banned the German Communist Party (KPD).

The broad majority of West Germans increasingly reconciled themselves to their new form of government and were prepared to lend active support both to the republic and its four mainstream parties. This process unfolded in the context of Erhard’s economic policies that delivered the prosperity people were looking for. Meanwhile, East Germany’s multi-party landscape became increasingly meaningless as the regime continued to waver between making concessions, especially after the June 17th uprising, and tightening its hold on what for all practical purposes was a one-party state run by the

SED.

The escalating Cold War also acted as political glue for each state. In West Germany, fear of Soviet expansionism—which was especially keen after the outbreak of the Korean War in 1950—triggered a long debate on the value of NATO’s protective shield, whose strength relied in part on the deterrent effect of nuclear weapons. It also led politicians to ask whether the provision of West German conventional military forces would make the Federal Republic more secure against an attack from the East. NATO’s “carte blanche” military exercises of 1955 were designed to test the shield defense strategy by showing how West Germany would look if it ever became a battlefield for tactical nuclear weapons. In spite of some popular resistance to West German rearmament, the Federal Republic joined NATO that same year. East Germany had built up the paramilitary People’s Police in the early 1950s; it now established the People’s Army and became a member of the Soviet-led Warsaw Pact, an economic and military alliance under Soviet control.

As the two Germanies became more deeply integrated into their respective military blocs, it became increasingly clear that this would cement the division of the country into two halves. Throughout the 1950s, West Germans continued to debate, often heatedly, whether and under what conditions national unity in one state might be achieved. The debate reached a climax in 1952, when Stalin proposed to unify Germany’s two halves under the condition that the Adenauer government abandon both West German rearmament and integration into the Western alliance. It is likely that Stalin did not expect the West to agree to these terms. Berlin, with its four Allied Sectors, remained another point of constant friction. Tensions had started with the currency reform in the Western Zones; this in turn led to the Berlin Blockade of 1948. The crises continued throughout the 1950s, finally culminating in the building of the Wall in 1961.

With NATO providing military security, even if its nuclear shield always raised anxieties that the deterrent might fail or that war might start in the heart of Europe by accident, the decisions of 1949 enabled Western Europeans to contemplate close political and economic cooperation in their quest to rebuild their still ruined cities and industries. As to politics, there was the earlier dream of founding a United States of Europe that had been discussed in the 1920s, if not long before. While a few non-governmental organizations advocating political cooperation had emerged after 1945, it soon became clear that West Germany’s neighbors just could not imagine a union that included the Western zones of occupation or, from 1949, the Federal Republic. Memories of the Nazi occupation and warfare among the populations of the Benelux countries, France and Britain were just too raw for politicians to pursue this aim.

But what about closer economic integration? To begin with, it could be advertised as a path to greater prosperity. It was also more technical and did not awaken the emotions that had complicated debates on political integration. It was also known that the United States favored the creation of a larger market, even if Washington did not wish to be an official member and expected to be able to exert its economic hegemony indirectly. One of the Europeans who was keenly aware of the American vision of the European world was the French businessman Jean Monnet. Having escaped to Britain after the defeat of France in 1940, he had spent part of the war in Washington helping to organize American military aid for the British in their lonely struggle against Nazi Germany. He also learned about Washington’s plans to reconstruct Western Europe after the defeat of Hitler and to integrate its economies into the Open Door international trading system that was being discussed in Washington at this time. When Monnet returned to liberated France, he was put in charge of the “Commissariat du Plan, de Modernisation et d’Equipeement” with which French industry was to be prepared for the competitive New American Economic Order. Having completed this program more or less successfully, Monnet turned his energies to facilitating the integration of the coal and steel industries of France and West Germany as a first step to more comprehensive union. He persuaded the French foreign minister Robert Schuman to adopt and announce what thenceforth became known as the Schuman Plan. After the heavy industries of Italy and the Benelux countries had been added, the negotiations yielded the European Coal and Steel

Community (ECSC) treaty that was ratified in 1951 and created a common market for the two industries that were fundamental for the reconstruction of Western Europe.

As these economies began to flourish in the 1950s, the next logical step seemed to be to build a common market for all other branches of industry. Further negotiations between the six countries ensued and on January 1, 1958, the treaties that had been negotiated in Rome came into force, hailed as a major achievement of Western European cooperation. However, Britain did not join the initial negotiations for the ECSC, preferring to concentrate on the strengthening of its Empire and Commonwealth as a trading bloc. London even hoped to preserve its colonial possessions. When they attempted in 1956 to reoccupy Egypt, the Americans, for whom the age of formal colonialism was over and had been replaced by an Open Door trading system, intervened and U.S. President Dwight D. Eisenhower told British prime minister Anthony Eden to get out without delay or he would arrange for the sinking of Britain's currency, the pound sterling. Eden complied, and with Western Europe booming, Britain created the European Free Trade Area (EFTA) next to the EEC. Its trading system proved much less impressive than the EEC's and in the early 1960s Britain applied to join the European Six, a move that entailed many difficulties, which are discussed in volume 9.

East and West Germans followed through media reports the conflicts, political transformations, and new alliances that were reshaping European colonies, especially in South and Southeast Asia and Africa, and other regions of the world including Cuba, Latin America, and East Asia. These reports usually differed considerably in East and West, shaped by the political prerogatives of the Cold War adversaries. Some of these conflicts, such as the Korean War, had a direct impact on the German economy. Of particular interest were anti-colonial movements and wars, such as the partition of India and Pakistan in 1947, and the efforts of former colonies and other states, including Yugoslavia, to form the non-aligned movement, which began to take shape with the Bandung Conference of 1955.

East German authorities and media reports emphasized solidarity with the non-white world and tried repeatedly to portray West Germany as a player in a neo-colonial and imperialist endeavor controlled by the United States. Many West German leaders seemed relieved that Germany had been divested of its overseas colonies with the defeat in World War I and saw Germany as largely unaffected by the legacies of European colonialism. At the same time, German commentators in East and West were fascinated by the conflicts over control of the Suez Canal in 1956, or the Cuban Revolution led by Fidel Castro in the late 1950s. West Germans became increasingly likely to regard places outside of Europe, the United States, and the Soviet Union as developing countries in need of external support. The form that such support should take was debated as well, usually within the ideological frameworks of the two Cold War opponents. West Germany became a participant in Western and United Nations efforts regarding so-called developing nations, joining the newly formed Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) and establishing a ministry dedicated to development in 1961.

3. Reconstructing and Dividing German Society

The policies adopted by the Allies and the two German governments after 1945 also shaped societal and cultural transformations, including family structures, social and sexual mores, and aesthetic norms. Elites and ordinary Germans debated these throughout the years of chaos, reconstruction, and division, on increasingly different terms on the two sides of the Iron Curtain.

Casual visitors to occupied Germany who glimpsed the physical, psychic, and moral wasteland that was Central Europe in the summer of 1945 could be forgiven for believing that the country was in the midst of a social revolution, that this was *Stunde Null* (Zero Hour). This metaphor was deceptive, however. Social structures proved durable, as did cultural attitudes and practices. The impact of the Nazi dictatorship and World War II was no doubt profound, but it did not create a *tabula rasa*. For instance, if one takes a purely quantitative approach to what sociologists call "the circulation of elites," it becomes clear that

the turnover was in fact much lower than human losses and wartime destruction had initially led contemporaries to believe. When viewed from a more qualitative angle, the picture is complex.

Not surprisingly, contemporaries perceived the years after 1945 in Germany as a period of intense crisis, but their exact perspectives varied considerably depending on political outlook and wartime experiences. In the Western occupation zones—especially the American zone—Jewish DPs, most of whom came from Central and Eastern Europe, insisted on separate DP camps, after finding themselves initially thrown together with perpetrators and antisemites. They viewed the project of rebuilding Jewish lives in both personal and political terms. Jewish organizations pressed hard for improved camp conditions and for visas allowing emigration out of Germany. Jewish men and women, most of them torn from their families by the Nazi genocide, others migrating from areas under Soviet control, formed new relationships and married with a speed that was often disturbing to Allied observers. A veritable Jewish baby boom soon followed. Over the next few years, only a very small Jewish community would settle or resettle in Germany, for the most part in the West. In both German states, Jews continued to confront antisemitism as well as demands for complete assimilation.

Ethnic German women had much lower birthrates in the years immediately after the war and into the 1950s. A range of factors contributed to this. Many women of childbearing age were war widows and could not—or did not—find new partners quickly. Under economic and social strain, divorce rates shot up. Until the late 1940s women in all occupation zones and from all ethnic backgrounds could make use of emergency abortion provisions, put into place because of the many rapes, especially by Soviet soldiers, at the end of the war.

In October 1945, the Allied ban on fraternization between occupiers and the German population was lifted. Liaisons between German women and Allied troops, particularly American GIs, contributed to a sense of crisis among many Germans, a sense that German men had failed as providers and protectors and that German women were turning to foreigners for material security. Some of the babies that were born came under scrutiny, especially when born out of wedlock or when born to German women and African American soldiers. The publicly voiced concerns about the obstacles faced by “mixed-race” children revealed German difficulties of thinking about Germans as anything other than “white” at a time when many Germans hoped they were achieving a “race-blind” society in the aftermath of Nazi racism. But of course, the Allies were far from color-blind: many states in the U.S. had miscegenation bans that included prohibiting co-habitation, making it difficult for mixed-race couples who did get permission from Military Government authorities to marry in order to move together to the U.S.

In the 1940s, competition for scarce resources such as food and apartments was intense and often manifested itself in German hostility toward the millions who had been displaced by the war as well as in particular policies, including the Allied requisitioning of living quarters or local rationing systems that tried to take victimization under National Socialism into account.

Gender relations seemed upended to many contemporaries. Women shouldered many of the burdens of cleaning up cities and providing for families; in subsequent years, and especially in West Germany, different groupings celebrated them as “women of the rubble” [*Trümmerfrauen*] for their bravery and independence, asking few questions about what these women had done before 1945 or about how eager they were to have “normal” families. Politicians and psychologists also wondered about the physical and mental health of former soldiers and their integration into society. For some in the West, this issue seemed resolved when in 1955 the last remaining POWs returned from the Soviet Union, repeatedly portrayed as men who had survived their ordeal with their manliness and commitment to their families intact, again rarely considering what these men might have done during the war in Eastern Europe. In East Germany, the political reliability of returning POWs questions was initially questioned, but soon enough they were touted as “state fathers,” men who had successfully converted to the Socialist cause.

The constitutions of both Germanies gave women and men equal rights, but the two political systems tended to encourage different gender models. East Germany, out of Marxist conviction about the importance of labor for female emancipation, out of acute shortages, and through low pensions paid to widows, encouraged women to join the labor force, and began in the 1950s to provide daycare centers for young children. By contrast West German leaders fostered the so-called housewife marriage, where a male breadwinner provided financially for wife and children. Conservatives tied such ideas to their notion of a Christian West, which they saw as a counterweight to National Socialism, state socialism, and American style “materialism” and consumerism. Families with housewives not working for wages remained far from the reality for millions in West Germany, not only because many women had to be heads of households, but also because increasing numbers of women with school-age children worked for wages in order to contribute to the family income during the emerging “Economic Miracle” in the 1950s.

The constitutional requirement of gender equality necessitated the reform of some provisions of the Civil Code, which occurred slowly and led to extensive public debate and litigation. The Equal Rights Law of 1958 introduced important positive changes for women: for example, it abolished the husband’s automatic right to manage property brought into the marriage by the wife. On the negative side, however, this new law also reinforced the decisive role of the husband in disputes regarding children, a provision struck down by the Constitutional Court in 1959. However, the question of how to distribute parenting and household chores and whether women were achieving equal professional standing with men continued to occupy Germans in East and West. Concerns about birth rates and morality also led to severe restrictions on abortions in both Germanies until the 1960s and 1970s.

Contemporary West German sociologists such as Helmut Schelsky perceived a leveling of class differences, which was supposedly attributable to both wartime dislocation and postwar prosperity. Such assessments may seem overdrawn, particularly since considerable disparities in wealth and education levels continued to exist. Still, class definitions did indeed change in postwar Germany. For example, it became increasingly common for male workers to earn a “family wage” (i.e., one that allowed them to support a wife and children). With its Godesberg Program of 1959, the Social Democratic Party of Germany—the party most closely aligned with the trade unionists who had fought for the family wage in the early decades of the century—abandoned any notion of socializing industry and accepted capitalism as the basic framework of the economy. As workers achieved greater participation in consumer society, workers’ organizations became less important to them. Additionally, employment patterns began to shift away from blue-collar work and agriculture towards the service sector and government jobs. While many members of the bourgeoisie remained highly pessimistic about “mass society” and “mass culture,” business leaders followed the example of their American counterparts and became more accepting of competition as well as mass production and consumption.

The Cold War also shaped efforts to come to terms with the past and to compensate victims of Nazism, genocide, and war. As a socialist state, East Germany regarded itself as inherently antifascist. As such—at least according to East German leaders—it could not be viewed as the successor state to Hitler’s German Reich. East German leaders eagerly ceded that title to West Germany. Moreover, the East German regime would not contemplate reparation payments to Israel. In East Germany, Soviet occupiers and then East German leaders had a rather simple interpretation of the Nazi dictatorship and its war of aggression: they blamed the Nazi movement and “monopoly capitalists” as well as large landowners for having brought the regime to power. And they pursued collectivization and nationalization policies that claimed to root out National Socialism and achieve social justice. As a result, ordinary East Germans were also let off the hook as long as they presented themselves as victims of fascism and were prepared to identify with the government’s efforts to build a socialist society.

In contrast to East Germany, West German leaders involved their state in efforts to “make good” [*Wiedergutmachung*]. In the 1950s, West Germany agreed to pay reparations to Israel and in 1956 its

parliament, under strong pressure from Chancellor Adenauer, passed a law designed to pay restitution to victims of racial or political persecution during the Nazi regime who were residing in Germany. Adenauer and his allies saw such measures as important for moral reasons and as a precondition for West Germany's reintegration in the community of nations. The implementation of these measures, however, was regularly hindered by bureaucratic inertia. Moreover, these measures did not cover a whole range of people persecuted or mistreated under National Socialism, including foreign slave laborers, Sinti and Roma, so-called "asocials" or homosexuals.

West Germany also embarked on a controversial, decades-long policy of "equalizing burdens" [*Lastenausgleich*] between those Germans who had lost property as a result of the war or as expellees and those who had retained their assets. Payments into the fund were long-term, and while initially experienced as considerable burdens, they were designed not to touch the principal. As critics pointed out, former Nazis could profit from the payments.

The Protestant and Catholic churches issued statements that reclaimed their moral authority over their members after 1945 but were ambiguous about the Nazi past. Skating over the churches' role after Hitler's rise to power, they tended to stress the need to rebuild and look toward the future, while also arguing for the restoration of ideal nuclear families and a housewife marriage that had never been the norm for all Germans.

Allied efforts to show Germans the horrors of the Nazi crimes (especially the concentration and death camps), denazification efforts, the Nuremberg Trials, and the American trials that followed were seen by many Germans as "victors' justice." With news about Nazi horrors available, but still incomplete, it took many West Germans a long time to accept terrible truths. If many claimed not to have known about the Nazis' intention to murder all European Jews, they also found it relatively easy to minimize whatever involvement they had had with the regime as enthusiasts, collaborators, or people who just "went along" to keep their job or protect their families. Instead, many West Germans preferred to contemplate the suffering Germans had endured during the war and postwar period.

While trials of Nazi crimes took place on both sides of the Iron Curtain in the 1940s and 1950s, including in German courts, it would take decades for fuller acknowledgement that many ordinary Germans, not just members of the SS, had become complicit in the crimes of the Nazi regime, including the genocide of Jews and Roma and the particularly brutal treatment of civilian populations and prisoners of war, especially in the parts of Eastern Europe occupied by the Germans during World War II. At the same time, the East and West German press reported on figures implicated in the Nazi regime, for example Veit Harlan, director of the antisemitic film *Jud Süß* and his attempt to redeem himself in the 1950s with a film directed against homosexual men. At times, the East and West German press also reported with great interest on individual high-ranking perpetrators of Nazi crimes, for example the capture of one of the key organizers of the genocide of European Jews, Adolf Eichmann, by Israeli operatives in Argentina in 1960.

The Cold War division also shaped public acknowledgments of the resistance against National Socialism. East Germany put emphasis on the communist resistance and the victimization of political prisoners, as was clear in the obelisk memorial with red triangles (the triangles worn by political prisoners in the Third Reich) planned from 1956 on in the former Sachsenhausen concentration camp and opened in the spring of 1961. In West Germany, it took years, despite persistent efforts, for example, by the prominent journalist Marion Countess Dönhoff, some of whose relatives had been executed, before public opinion moved away from the notion, first promoted by Goebbels, that the men who tried to kill Hitler on 20 July 1944 were "traitors" and should be deleted from memory. It took even longer for West Germans to accept the work of the leftist resistance although they had been the first to be tortured, tried, and executed under National Socialism.

4. Culture in a Divided Germany

In debating the moral foundations of the two new German states, contemporaries delved into the arenas of religion and culture. Although many church leaders had become accessories to National Socialist policies, the Catholic and Protestant Churches in West Germany still managed to position themselves as bulwarks of morality in the wake of the Third Reich. They sought to bolster sexual conservatism as a pillar of the Christian West and railed against cultural goods that appeared to run counter to this goal (i.e., certain movies, types of music, and forms of dance). Representatives of the churches sat on the West German movie rating board and retained an influence on formal education in many West German states. The East German leadership viewed the churches with suspicion. Competing with churches for the allegiance of the young, East Germany promoted the *Jugendweihe* (a state ritual in which young people swore their allegiance to socialism) as a secular alternative to religious confirmation or communion.

Differences between East and West German schools and universities became increasingly pronounced during the Cold War, as was the case with many other types of institutions. One of the primary goals of state socialism was to open up the East German educational system to the children of workers and peasants. The West German educational system, on the other hand, helped reproduce existing differences between bourgeois and working families (at least until the early 1960s) and in this way worked at cross purposes with other West German institutions that were contributing to a redefinition of class difference in the postwar period.

In both Germanies, intellectuals concerned themselves with the diverse legacies of National Socialism and the question of German responsibility. Since the 1950s, many West German historians, writers, and producers of popular culture had highlighted the trope of Germans as victims of war, expulsion, deportation, and imprisonment. In the West, in particular, calls for a united Europe seemed a healthy antidote to the excesses of German nationalism. Arguably, critical engagement with National Socialism declined under Cold War pressures, but Germans nonetheless debated the nature and extent of German responsibility for Nazi crimes.

East German intellectuals and artists, generally committed to the building of a democratic culture, experienced several rounds of severe repression, often because of developments in the Soviet Union. One such instance were the debates about “Formalism” versus “Socialist Realism” in literature, music, and the arts in the late 1940s and early 1950s, which led numerous leading figures to leave East for West Germany at a time when the border in Berlin remained still porous. East German authorities, like their Soviet counterparts, promoted a Socialist Realism that was supposed to depict and promote the formation of a “new man” in styles usually drawn from realism and neo-classicism. Both Germanies claimed the heritage of a classical past of Goethe, Schiller, and Beethoven for themselves, but by the late 1950s West Germany began to add Wilhelmine modernists and the Weimar avant-garde to the German cultural canon, often brushing over the political diversity and leftist roots of this heritage. Abstract Expressionism, a school of painting that developed in New York in the 1940s, was initially rejected in West Germany, but soon became the preferred style of artists there. This seemingly apolitical abstract style stood in marked contrast to Socialist Realism, with its figurative compositions and explicit political visions. Still, promoters of Abstract Expressionism believed that it carried its own message of freedom and autonomy—a message that, if subtler, was no less political.

By the second half of the 1950s, the East German regime encouraged writers to embark on the so-called Bitterfeld Path. This party-sponsored initiative aimed to expose members of the intelligentsia to the lives of workers and peasants. Their experiences would become the central subject of cultural production, which the party leadership envisioned as a marked contrast to the alleged “decadence” and “cosmopolitanism” West of the Iron Curtain. West German writers experimented with a range of genres, from poems to radio plays, and repeatedly criticized what they perceived as a lack of engagement with the German past and an uncritical embrace of the “Economic Miracle,” rearmament, and anti-

communism on the part of their government and compatriots.

The movies, more than the still emerging new medium of television, and more so than the radio, created narratives for broad audiences. Usually designed to entertain, but sometimes also to educate or obfuscate, German, American, and international productions, and debates about them, influenced how Germans thought about relations between men and women, or between the generations, or about questions ranging from sexuality to consumerism to the longing for home and *Heimat*. Movies, and some documentary films, also shaped the ways Germans were exposed to the crimes of the Nazi period and the ways in which many of them thought of Germans mostly as victims, not as perpetrators of Nazism and war.

Avoidance of frivolous ornamentation and the adoption of clear lines characterized both architecture and design in West Germany, where designers and commentators alike gave astonishing authority to “clean” designs to effect moral regeneration and rehabilitate Germany’s image abroad. In such a context it made sense that West Germans would be surveyed to detect changes in their design taste (and hopefully political outlook). Some East German architecture, especially the effort to present the wealth and innovation of state socialism in East Berlin’s Stalinallee, relied on ornamentation, but elsewhere the additional costs were avoided in the effort to construct efficient modern housing. For reasons of economy and fashion, apartment furnishings or clothing promoted in East and West mass magazines were rather similar in the 1950s. And while the East German planned economy had greater trouble than the West German one to provide consumer goods, press and politicians in both states celebrated an affluence that outpaced the pre-1939 period, before the Nazis started World War II.

American cultural imports, too, became Cold War battlegrounds. Initially, West German politicians and commentators proved sensitive to East German suggestions that West Germany was being overrun by American movies, music, and fashions. Soon enough, however, West Germans were arguing that youthful expressiveness and rock ‘n’ roll enthusiasm were signs of West German freedom and prosperity. In making these arguments, they also pointed to the repression of “open” dancing in East Germany. Some East German jazz fans managed to promote American popular music by presenting it as a product of the American “Negro” proletariat, but East German authorities remained skeptical. In the second half of the 1950s, they even arrested some outspoken jazz and rock fans. In West Germany, by contrast, politicians declared jazz the music of the new democracy. Jazz thus became part of a Cold War liberal consensus that linked aesthetic modernism to Western political forms and saw youthful rebelliousness as a psychological issue rather than a political threat.

Political and cultural repression in East Germany, together with economic hardship and the perception of greater economic opportunities in the West prompted over 2.5 million East Germans to leave for West Germany between 1949 and 1961. The West German government encouraged intra-German migration. Portraying itself as a haven of democracy and prosperity, the Federal Republic granted special benefits to recognized political refugees. By 1961, the East German leadership was so concerned about labor shortages and the weakening of its image as a workers’ state that it sought—and was granted—permission from the Soviet Union to build the Berlin Wall. Construction began on August 13, 1961. During its twenty-eight-year existence, the Wall severely curtailed personal contact between East and West Germany, a subject that is explored in detail in the next volume of this project, *Two Germanies, 1961–1989*.

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