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The division of Germany, 1945–1949

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"The future of Germany was the question of questions and had to be looked at in its own terms. It was Germany that twice in a quarter-century had generated world war," wrote Walt W. Rostow in 1972, when he analyzed the unfolding of the Cold War in Germany.[1] Rostow, national security adviser to President Lyndon B. Johnson in the 1960s, had been personally involved in the planning of American policies toward Germany in 1946. He was aware of the fear, the despair, and the hatred that German warfare, German occupation of Europe, and German atrocities had stirred up. But by 1947 most American decisionmakers had shifted their worries from Germany to the Soviet Union.

How did this change come about? Why did the insoluble questions of joint occupation lead directly into the Cold War in Germany? And how should we assess this historical event from the vantage point of the early twenty-first century? These are the leading questions of this chapter.

The German problem

"Germany is our problem," wrote Secretary of the Treasury Henry Morgenthau in 1945. The measures to curb German power were many and they seemed justified: military government and an unlimited period of occupation; abolition of the German armed forces and elimination of the country's industrial war potential; de-Nazification and punishment of all Germans involved in Nazi crimes; reparations to the Soviet Union on a gigantic scale as well as to the Western countries in order to restore – at least partly – the damages caused by Germany. In addition to occupation and security controls, radical structural changes seemed necessary. All sorts of recipes were on the table: "dismemberment" of the German Reich that, since its founding by Bismarck, in 1866 and 1871, had played a semi-hegemonic role in Europe and had ruled

1 Walt W. Rostow, *The Diffusion of Power: 1957–1972* (New York: Macmillan, 1972), 9.

Europe from 1940 to 1944; the annexation of large portions of eastern and western Germany; a sharp reduction in the economic potential of this industrial giant; international control of the Ruhr; deep, perhaps revolutionary, reforms in many realms of economy, society, and administration; elimination of the economic, cultural, and administrative "old" elites that had joined up with Hitler's party; reeducation.

Yet, upon closer inspection, it was much easier to draw up a list of draconian policies than to agree upon them. The joint occupation of a defeated, still potentially powerful great nation by a coalition of victorious but heterogeneous great powers was a unique historical experiment. With the benefit of hindsight, it is easy to see why the system of joint occupation was doomed to fail.

This failure of joint occupation had a multitude of causes. Five primary factors can be singled out: the breakup of Germany into zones of occupation; the power vacuum in Central Europe; the ideological incompatibility of the wartime Grand Alliance; the controversies over reparations; and the interdependence of the German economy with the economies of continental Western Europe.

For practical reasons, each of the four powers had to appoint a military governor to supervise its own zone of occupation and to act as the highest authority in his zone. Yet in order to ensure coordination "in matters affecting Germany as a whole," the commanders-in-chief were supposed to act "jointly" in the Allied Control Council (ACC), established in Berlin.[2] Decisions of the ACC would require unanimity. Thus the concept of the joint occupation of Germany that was agreed upon in the winter, spring, and summer of 1945 was based on a contradictory dualism. The ACC could evolve into the nucleus of a joint administration of Germany in order to ensure the necessary economic and political unity, or it could degenerate into a cumbersome multilateral body. In the latter case a bureaucratic nightmare as well as an inherent tendency to postpone common decisions was inevitable. By agreeing that each military governor should have a veto in the Allied Control Council, the occupying powers had made clear that in case of nonagreement their own national policies should prevail in their respective zone. More or less insoluble conflicts were unavoidable. In the case of the Allied Control Council, it took

2 Agreement on Control Machinery in Germany, November 14, 1944, in: US Department of State, *Foreign Relations of the United States: The Conferences of Malta and Yalta, 1945* (Washington, DC: US Goverment Printing Office, 1955), 124.

only a year for the attempts at joint decisionmaking to come to an effective standstill.

The second factor was also more or less natural. The collapse of Germany had created a power vacuum in Central Europe. "Germany is no longer the dominating power of Europe, Russia is," wrote Britain's chief of the Imperial General Staff (CIGS), General Sir Alan Brooke, on July 27, 1944, when the defeat of Germany was already a certainty. And he continued: "Therefore foster Germany, gradually build her up, and bring her into a federation of Western Europe. Unfortunately this must all be done under the cloak of a holy alliance between England, Russia and America."[3] Such a hard-nosed analysis of the postwar world was not only confined to British decisionmakers. Everywhere, in London, Moscow, Washington, and Paris, it was no secret that the policies toward Germany would determine the structure of the new international system that would emerge from the rubble of devastated Europe.

In addition to the tensions engendered by the vacuum of power, these uncertainties led to the third factor. In Europe, a deep ideological schism had existed since the Bolshevik Revolution in 1917. It had been patched up by the Grand Alliance. During the war, in Western eyes, Germany was much more frightening than Iosif Stalin's Soviet Union; by the same token, in Soviet eyes, Fascist Germany was perceived as a much greater danger than the capitalist democracies. But how long could this strange alliance endure? When the hostilities ended on May 8, 1945, the joint occupation had to be made operative. In the beginning, there were compelling reasons for each of the Allied victors to make it a success. But the revival of ideological conflict between Western democracies and the Soviet Union made cooperation difficult. The Western democracies, sooner rather than later, had to decide whether they could attempt to build democratic structures and, if so, when and together with which German political parties. And the Soviet Union, for its part, had to work out policies to thwart the attractiveness of Western pluralism and freedom.

One of the most divisive factors relating to the treatment of Germany concerned reparations. For victorious powers, it is always tempting to compensate for wartime damage by imposing heavy reparations on the conquered adversary through dismantling existing industrial plants or taking the goods produced. The Soviet Union, in particular, whose industrial regions to the

3 Lord Alanbrooke, *War Diaries 1939–1945*, ed. by Alex Danchev and Daniel Todman (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 2001), 575.

west of Moscow were destroyed by the German armies, was determined not only to bring about a massive dismantlement of German factories in the Soviet zone of occupation, but also to secure large quantities of reparations from the western zones. Yet American and British planners knew that the densely populated and highly industrialized zones of western Germany even before World War II had had to import roughly 20 percent of their food. This requirement significantly increased when large parts of agrarian eastern Germany were transferred to Poland. Western occupation authorities then faced a dilemma: allow millions of West Germans to starve or spend large sums for food imports; or, alternatively, permit the reconstruction of west German industry and the export of industrial commodities to pay for the food and other indispensable raw materials. In any case, London and Washington did not want indirectly to finance German reparations to the Soviet Union.

A final factor making cooperation difficult related to the restoration of the shattered economies of Europe. Among Western economists, businessmen, and diplomats, it was common knowledge that the economies of Western Europe were indissolubly linked not only to the coal and steel industries of the Ruhr, but also to the chemical, electrical, and machine-tool industries of Germany. Economic interdependence, in fact, had been reinforced during the war, when Germany ruled all of continental Western Europe. It seemed unlikely that the shattered economies of France and the Benelux countries could be rebuilt without resuscitating the industrial life of occupied Germany. To Soviet planners, the Western insistence on a certain amount of German industrial recovery for the sake of the economies of Western Europe smacked of a silent cooperation between the capitalists of the Western powers and those of western Germany. Thus, the contradiction between Soviet demands for reparations and US and UK desires for a reasonable level of industry in their zones was a great impediment to the joint administration of Germany.

To defeat Germany had been a difficult task. But to administer the destroyed country and to incorporate it into a viable peace structure seemed even more difficult. One may rightly speak of two quite different divisions of Germany. The first occurred in 1945, when the four occupying powers built up their respective zones of occupation as autonomous units with sharply divergent policies regarding politics, economics, education, and culture. In the spring of 1946, a second phase began. Two factors shaped events. The dramatic worsening of the economic situation called for a rapid economic merger of the zones. At the same time, the growing mistrust between the Anglo-Saxon powers and the Soviet Union poisoned attempts to agree on a German peace treaty. Germany was regarded as a pawn in the evolving Cold

War, vividly illustrated by the failures to reach an agreement on a peace treaty at the Moscow and London conferences of the Council of Foreign Ministers in 1947. Then, from the winter of 1947/48 until the fall of 1949, came the last phase. The three western zones were merged into a viable economic and political entity, a demarcation line arose between the western and eastern zones, two German states emerged, symbolizing a divided Europe, and Berlin became a powder keg in the center of Europe that might ignite a third world war. During subsequent decades, the failed attempts to achieve a cooperative joint occupation haunted East–West diplomacy until Germany was reunified in 1990.

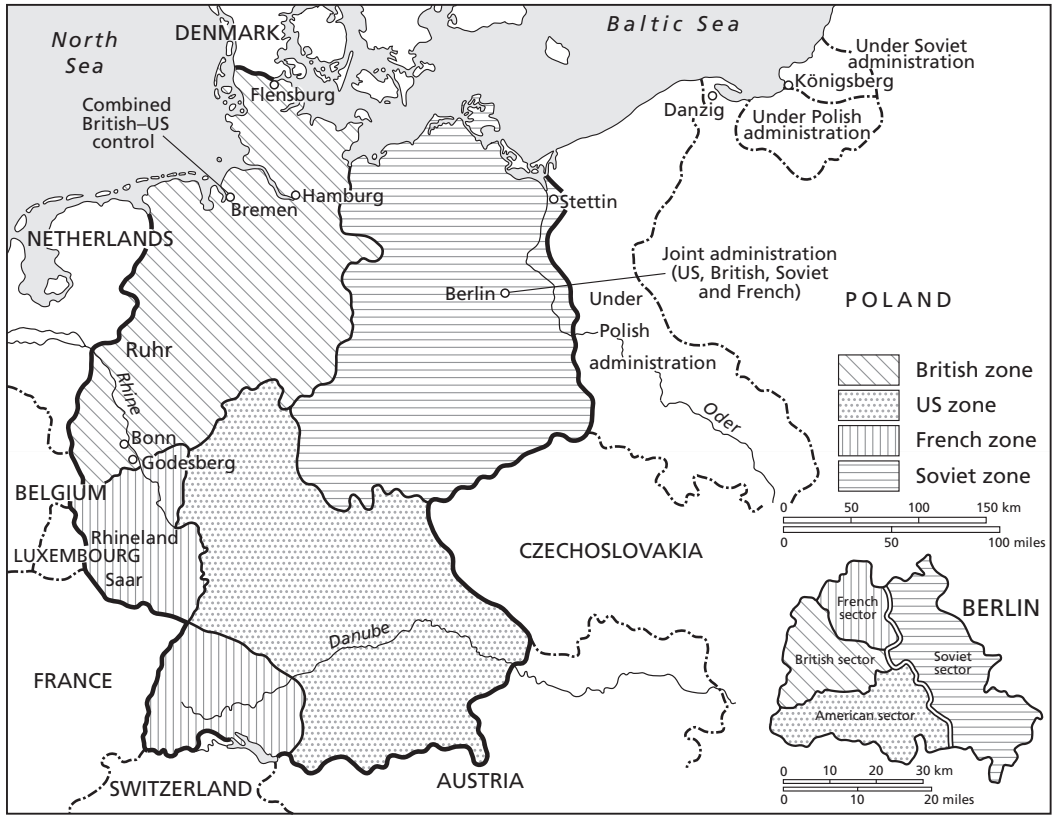
Who was to blame for partition? While Germany was divided, this question engendered endless political and historical controversies. To address it in the aftermath of the Cold War, it is best to examine why and how the four powers pursued divergent policies, policies that had their roots in wartime planning.

The four powers and Germany: from joint occupation to partition

British policies had a considerable impact upon the division of Germany. From the Teheran Conference (November 28 to December 1, 1943) to the Yalta Conference (February 4 to 11, 1945) and the Potsdam Conference (July 17 to August 2, 1945), the British government greatly influenced the planning of the postwar occupation of Germany. Some of the most far-reaching decisions originated in a Cabinet committee presided over by Deputy Prime Minister Clement Attlee.

In the fall of 1943, when German armies were still fighting deep within the Soviet Union and six months before the successful invasion of France, the British government decided to assign to the Soviet Union an occupation zone comprising 40 percent of German territory within the Reich's borders of 1937 (including East Prussia, Mecklenburg, Pomerania, Saxony, and Thuringia). These proposals were submitted to the European Advisory Commission (EAC), composed of the British, American, and Soviet ambassadors in London. They were gladly accepted by the Soviet Union and, ultimately, in February 1945, adopted by Winston Churchill, Franklin Roosevelt, and Iosif Stalin.

Thus, the Soviet Union was offered strategic positions on the banks of the Elbe, putting its tank divisions just sixty miles from Frankfurt and the River Rhine, where they were to remain until the final Soviet withdrawal from Germany in 1994. Likewise, Attlee's Cabinet committee did not object to the joint administration of the Reich´s capital, Berlin, although it lay deep inside



2. The division of Germany into occupation zones.

the Soviet zone of occupation. This would become one of the most crucial decisions, shaping more than forty years of the Cold War in Europe.

Britain also accepted the zone of occupation in the northwestern part of Germany (with roughly 22.3 million inhabitants), including the Ruhr area, the Cologne basin, Lower Saxony, Schleswig-Holstein, and the important port of Hamburg. To London, control over the Ruhr seemed a priceless asset. During the first years of occupation, the British doggedly warded off all French and Soviet attempts to have a say in the control of the Ruhr. But the occupation of some of the most important industrial centers of Germany had its price: London had to foot the bill for food imports in order to feed many starving Germans and, therefore, felt obliged to ask for help from the United States, whose zone of occupation was in the south.

Another fateful British initiative took place at the Yalta Conference. Prime Minister Churchill spoke vehemently in favor of allowing France to become a fourth occupying power. Reluctantly, President Roosevelt handed over the southern and western part of the US zone to France. Thereafter, the United States had to govern 17.1 million Germans while the small and largely agrarian French zone had 5.7 million inhabitants. Decisions in Whitehall profoundly shaped the new map of Germany, which would endure for much of the Cold War.

The British did not wish to be left alone in Germany. At Yalta, the British delegates blanched when Roosevelt said the US occupation was likely to end just two years after the war. They, therefore, wanted France as a fourth occupying power in order to provide a West European counterweight to the Soviet Union. But the British failed to see the unwelcome consequences of this decision. In fact, the French looked to the USSR to control Germany. And London overlooked the fact that the French wanted to dismember Germany, a policy that Britain, the United States, and the Soviet Union were tacitly abandoning in the spring of 1945. As soon as France was formally admitted to the ACC, it vetoed the installation of central German administrative agencies, thereby thwarting the economic unity of Germany. In the fluid period of 1945/46, when the British, Americans, and Soviets were still entertaining the idea of joint economic management of Germany, the inclusion of France had a most counterproductive effect.

In the first year after the war, Britain tried to make the best of the system of joint occupation. But already in the spring of 1946 skepticism prevailed at the headquarters of the British military government as well as in Whitehall. There were significant fears in London: apprehension about Soviet and French efforts to participate in the control of the Ruhr; concern about the failed

attempts to agree on common economic policies for Germany as a whole; alarm about the rapid deterioration of the economy; anxiety over the financial burden of feeding a starving population in their overpopulated zone; and a general fear of Soviet expansionism. In 1945, Churchill and Attlee had worried about a revengeful and resurgent Germany. By the spring of 1946, British apprehensions took a different turn: their worst fear was not a revived Germany. "The worst situation," wrote Foreign Secretary Ernest Bevin in May 1946, was "a revived Germany in league with or dominated by Russia."[4]

With increasing intensity, the British tried to bring about an economic, political, and military alliance with the United States and with the democracies of Western Europe.[5] In Germany, one step followed the other. On August 23, 1946, the British military governor established the large, though initially highly artificial, state of North Rhine-Westphalia. It included the Ruhr, the British-occupied Rhineland, and large rural districts of eastern Westphalia. This decision was partly a reaction to French and Soviet attempts to put an isolated Ruhr under joint Allied control. At the same time, London gave the green light to the merger of the British and American zones. "Bizonia," initially an expedient initiative with an economic motive, subsequently became the nucleus of a new political entity, the Federal Republic of Germany.

In the spring of 1947, the United States assumed leadership in West Germany. But Britain was not yet merely a weak junior partner of Washington. From 1946 to 1950, London often initiated steps to integrate the western zones of Germany into the emerging bloc of Western democracies. But given the evolving Cold War, the British often had to wait for the United States to shoulder the costs and bear the risks.

Compared to the straightforward British approach to the occupation of Germany, American policies were far more complicated. During the war, Roosevelt had been the chief advocate for patient cooperation with Britain as well as with the Soviet Union. He wanted to keep the Grand Alliance together to conquer Germany and, subsequently, to secure Soviet help to defeat Japan. However, when Roosevelt died, on April 12, 1945, a few weeks before the surrender of Germany, it soon became clear that his unflinching commitment to the Grand Alliance with Stalin might be a passing phenomenon.

The new president, Harry S. Truman, did not share Roosevelt's strong commitment to perpetuating the Grand Alliance after the war. Nevertheless, for the next two years, Roosevelt's legacy still shaped US policy toward

4 Alan Bullock, *Ernest Bevin: Foreign Secretary 1945–1951* (London: Heinemann, 1983), 267.
5 See Anne Deighton's chapter in this volume.

Germany. When he died, Germany's defeat was so imminent that there was no alternative to joint occupation. And that meant trying to compromise with the Soviets. Thus, President Truman brushed off Churchill's last-minute attempts to rearrange the prior agreements regarding occupation zones. When the president and his secretary of state, James F. Byrnes, met Stalin at Potsdam, there was one overriding American motivation: to install, as quickly as possible, the control apparatus for Germany and to work out some essential compromises, particularly over reparations. The main motive of US decision-makers was to postpone the German question. Other issues seemed more urgent: to end the Pacific war, to demobilize the American armies in Europe, to "bring the boys back home," and to convert the war economy to peacetime purposes. The phrase "policy of postponement" aptly summarizes American policies in the early period of occupation.

Many American experts knew that the compromises of Potsdam were contradictory and full of loopholes. In the wings, there were already those who predicted that the joint occupation of Germany was doomed to fail. One of them was George F. Kennan at the American Embassy in Moscow. In the summer of 1945, he cabled: "The idea of Germany run jointly with the Russians is a chimera … We have no choice but to lead our section of Germany … to a form of independence so prosperous, so secure, so superior, that the East cannot threaten it … Better a dismembered Germany in which the West, at least, can act as a buffer to the forces of totalitarianism than a united Germany which again brings these forces to the North Sea."[6] That was a precise outline of American policies after mid-1947. Yet, in 1945, Kennan and those who shared his opinions were still marginalized.

The top ranks of the Office of Military Government, United States (OMGUS) – namely, General Dwight D. Eisenhower, until December 1945 Supreme Commander in Europe and Military Governor of Germany, and his deputy, General Lucius D. Clay, who subsequently became the military governor in charge of OMGUS – were determined to make the joint occupation a success. Eisenhower had developed a liking for the Soviet military governor, General Georgi Zhukov. He was also favorably impressed by Stalin, whom he described to a *New York Times* correspondent as "benign and fatherly."[7] Eisenhower cabled Clay in October 1945 to "move instantly to meet the Russians always at least half way." But that was not necessary: Clay, too, was favorably disposed toward his Soviet counterparts.

6 George F. Kennan, *Memoirs 1925–1950* (London: Hutchinson, 1967), 258.
7 Stephen E. Ambrose, *Eisenhower*, vol. I (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1983), 430–31.

From the very beginning, Clay and his economic advisers believed that the strict curtailment of German industry was madness, because it would hamper the recovery of Western Europe. Nevertheless, he was determined to carry out the punitive policies of the basic directive of the Joint Chiefs of Staff of April 1945 while hoping to convince his superiors in Washington (as well as the Soviet and British representatives) that a more reasonable course of action was more likely to produce better results. Clay personified the "can-do" attitude of US occupation officials. Initially, he used all his administrative and political talents to overcome the problems besetting the joint occupation. Subsequently, when his attempts failed and when his superiors in Washington shifted policy, he worked arduously and successfully to bring the West Germans into the Western bloc.

In the early days of the occupation, when Eisenhower and Clay were on friendly terms with the Soviets, they made a major mistake by failing to conclude water-tight agreements on the access routes to the western sectors of Berlin. Another mistake was Clay's acquiescence to the Soviet wish that the Western allies assume the obligations to provide food and fuel for the German population in their sectors. These decisions were made in a few hurried meetings in June and July 1945, and they were to have lasting consequences.

For many years, historians have debated various aspects of the American policy in the Allied Control Council just as vigorously as officials did at the time. But it is undisputable that until the spring of 1947 General Clay's policy was characterized by a basic willingness to compromise with his Soviet counterparts. Yet the limits of American patience became increasingly clear: "no" to the Soviet and French wish to internationalize the Ruhr; "no" to the continuation of the economic and human misery in the American and British zones; and "no" to Soviet proposals to create a centralized Germany.

In addition to disputes over reparations and the level of industry, Western ideas of democracy engendered acrimony. Like all the other occupation powers, the Americans established political structures in their zone that they hoped would serve as models for the political and economic organization of Germany as a whole. Free elections were held locally in the American zone in early 1946. The Americans wanted federalism to prevail; the *Länder* (states) should be the starting point for the building of national institutions.

In 1946, at the highest level of decisionmaking in Washington, the question of the long-term treatment of Germany became more and more urgent. For more than a year and a half after the end of hostilities in Europe, the Truman administration had been reluctant to open the most difficult negotiations on a German peace treaty. Well into 1946, Secretary of State Byrnes pursued his

policy of postponement. But when the American delegation under the new secretary of state, General Marshall, went to the meeting of the Council of Foreign Ministers at Moscow (March 10 to April 24, 1947) for the first serious negotiations, the international as well as the domestic scene in the United States had fundamentally changed. The mid-term elections in November 1946 had brought about the 80th Congress, dominated by a vocal anti-Communist Republican majority. Britain's admission that it could no longer stabilize the situation in the eastern Mediterranean had convinced the Americans that they had to fill the vacuum there. On March 12, 1947, President Truman asked Congress to give aid to Greece and Turkey, and declared his famous doctrine that the United States would not allow totalitarianism to spread. At the same time, there was a growing awareness that the reconstruction of Western Europe would be set back if recovery did not accelerate in the western zones of Germany.

After two years of economic stagnation under the joint occupation, many issues remained unresolved: where should the borders of Germany be? Should Germany be centralized or largely federal? How should it be organized politically and institutionally? Should it be neutral, linked to the Western democracies, or allowed to serve as a bridge between East and West? What sorts of controls should remain over Germany in the long term and how long should occupation troops stay in the country? How much should Germany pay in total reparations and to what extent should its industries be allowed to revive? Should the Ruhr be internationalized, or should its industries and resources be linked to the economies of Western Europe? And how should a provisional, representative, and democratically responsive government of Germany be established?

These and many other difficult questions could not be solved at a single conference. Stalin was right when he remarked to Marshall at the end of the Moscow Conference: "We may agree the next time, or if not then, the time after that."[8] Yet protracted negotiations in Moscow convinced the American decisionmakers that time was running out. Thereafter, Kennan's earlier beliefs became US policy: the western zones of Germany were to be incorporated into plans for the reconstruction of Western Europe. This became the core concept of the Marshall Plan.[9] Washington conceived the integration of the western zones into Western Europe as a central element of its Cold War policies, and General Clay ultimately became the founding father of the Federal Republic of Germany.

8 Charles E. Bohlen, *Witness to History, 1929–1969* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1973), 263.
9 See William I. Hitchcock's chapter in this volume.

And what was the French contribution to the division of Germany? To put it briefly: in 1945 and early 1946, it used its veto to thwart the attempts to establish joint economic administration under the Allied Control Council. When Britain and the United States sought to merge the western zones, Paris hesitated until the last moment. And when the founding of the Federal Republic was under way, the Quai d'Orsay did its best to hamper the establishment of a strong federal government.

French policies were understandable. In spite of the strict provisions of the Treaty of Versailles, Germany had emerged after 1933 as a formidable foe. The Germans had crushed the French armies in 1940, and followed their victory on the battlefield with a humiliating occupation. Because of these experiences, along with the obvious weakness of postwar France, its insecurity, and its desire for reparations, the harsh policies of French governments had strong support among the French people.

During the war, Stalin, Roosevelt, and Churchill had talked about the complete dismemberment of Germany. But in the spring of 1945, Moscow, London, and Washington silently abandoned this idea in favor of a joint occupation of a unified Germany. France objected. From 1944 to 1947, Paris called for the dismemberment of Germany: transformation of the Saar and of the western Rhineland into autonomous political entities; the cession of part of East Germany to Poland; the internationalization of the Ruhr (with a decisive French influence); and the dismemberment of the remaining Reich through the creation of a large number of small, autonomous, loosely connected German states. French officials also wanted to steer a middle course between the Anglo-Saxon powers and the Soviet Union in order to be in the best position to maximize their own goals.

Yet, of the four occupation powers, France held the weakest cards. Their obstructionist policies led nowhere, and they wrecked any slight possibility of working out common policies in the ACC. Reluctantly, in 1947 and 1948, when France had to take sides, the Quai d'Orsay decided to support Anglo-Saxon policies. The French extracted significant concessions from the United States and the UK: promises to receive cheap coal from the Ruhr, to incorporate the Saar area, with its rich mining and steel industry, into a French protectorate of sorts, and to allow France to participate in the international regime supervising the Ruhr and to have equal rights in the High Commission that would oversee the Federal Republic of Germany. At the same time, in separate negotiations, the French received assurances that their security would be guaranteed by a new North Atlantic Treaty.

From the vantage point of Paris, the control of West Germany by a more integrated Western alliance entailed fewer uncertainties than the continuation of the failed joint occupation. Moreover, the French were witnessing a partial dismemberment of Germany between the three western zones on the one hand and the eastern zone on the other. A united Germany, composed of the four zones of occupation, would have had 68 million inhabitants with an enormous industrial potential, much larger than France's. Instead of that united Germany, two Germanies were emerging: the Federal Republic (FRG) had 49.8 million inhabitants (including the western sectors of Berlin) and the German Democratic Republic (GDR) contained 18.7 million (including the eastern sector of Berlin).[10] Two German states, integrated into the rival camps of the Cold War, were more acceptable to the French than a united Germany, whose future trajectory could not be assured.

And how shall we assess the Soviet Union's policies toward Germany? Contrary to a widely held belief, in the spring of 1945, Soviet actions were not particularly consistent. The Kremlin's policies, even more than those of the Western powers, were plagued by inherent contradictions. Stalin, who obviously kept policies in Germany under his personal control, made even more mistakes than his Western counterparts.

In spite of new archival sources on Soviet policies that have become available since 1990/91, historians still do not agree about Moscow's short-term and long-term goals. In Vladimir O. Pechatnov's view, for example, Stalin vacillated between three conflicting options: "a united pro-Soviet Germany" ("all of Germany must be ours," as he told Georgi Dimitrov); a "demilitarized and neutral Germany serving as a buffer between Western and Soviet spheres of influence"; and "a client state in the Soviet zone of occupation which would at least preserve the Soviet presence in the heart of Europe."[11] Not surprisingly, other historians argue that Stalin, openly or secretly, pursued one or another of these options, but not all three of them at the same time.

Instead of trying to speculate about the ulterior motives of the inscrutable Soviet dictator, it may be more rewarding to ask simply what he did in practical terms. In the heat of the war, Stalin, like Roosevelt and Churchill, wanted to break up the dangerous Reich once and for all. He was the first of the statesmen of the Grand Alliance to conceive, as early as November 1941, an

10 Figures are for 1950; see *Deutschland-Jahrbuch 1953*, ed. by Klaus Mehnert and Heinrich Schulte (Essen: Rheinisch-Westfälisches Verlagskontor, 1953), 67–68 and 370.

11 See Vladimir O. Pechatnov's chapter in this volume, 103.

10. Soviet soldier directing traffic in bombed-out Berlin, 1945.

elaborate program of dismemberment.[12] Yet in the spring of 1945, when the Western allies had obviously moved away from dismemberment and when he had become aware that the great bulk of German industry and a large majority of the German population would be overseen by the Western powers, Stalin changed tack. With customary opportunism on May 9, 1945, when the German high command had capitulated, he declared that "The Soviet Union will celebrate victory, yet it is not prepared to dismember or annihilate Germany."[13] From the spring of 1945 until the end of his life in March 1953, he remained committed to preserving German unity – of course, on conditions favorable to the Soviet Union.

In the summer of 1945, the overall position of the Soviet Union in Germany weakened when the Kremlin transferred large regions of its original zone of

12 V. Molotov to I. Maisky, November 21, 1941, in Georgij P. Kynin and Jochen Laufer (eds.), *Die UdSSR und die deutsche Frage 1941–1948: Dokumente aus dem Archiv für Außenpolitik der Russischen Föderation* (Berlin: Duncker & Humblot, 2004), I, 11–12. See also Eden to Churchill, January 5, 1942, in Winston S. Churchill, *The History of the Second World War*, vol. VI, *War Comes to America* (London: Cassel, 1964), 228.

13 "Ansprache des Genossen J. W. Stalin an das Volk, 9.5.1945," in Josef Stalin, *Über den Großen Vaterländischen Krieg der Sowjetunion* (Berlin: n.p., 1946), 218–19.

occupation east of the Oder and Neisse Rivers to Poland. Stalin's decision, taken without consulting his British and American allies, had far-reaching consequences – the occupation zone of the Soviet Union shrank considerably (from 40% of the territory of the Reich in its 1937 borders to a meager 16%, with only 28% of the population). Thus, the United States, Britain, and France occupied the richest and most populous part of Germany (84% of the territory with 72% of the population). Although the Soviets boasted that they had made the major contribution to the victory over Germany, Stalin nevertheless remained the *demandeur* toward the Western powers. He wanted reparations from their zones and he called for Soviet participation in a four-power supervision of the Ruhr. He also wanted to influence political evolution in the western zones. Overall, he wanted to make sure that a final German peace treaty met Soviet strategic and economic requirements, but he had to pursue his objectives from a position of relative weakness.

Stalin tried to employ parallel strategies to overcome this weakness. But the strategies contradicted one another and backfired. First, there was the contradiction between the initial Soviet willingness to preserve the economic unity of Germany by cooperating in the ACC and the insatiable Soviet thirst for reparations. Most contemporary experts in the West, and many historians afterwards, were convinced that Stalin's entire German policy was largely dictated by reparation requirements. And in this respect Soviet and Anglo-Saxon short-term interests were incompatible, making it very difficult to implement joint economic policies. This was especially the case because at the Potsdam Conference Moscow had been given a free hand to take reparation deliveries from its own zone, thereby deepening the rift between the economy of the Anglo-Saxon zones and that of the Soviet zone.

There was a second contradiction in Stalin's policies. Very early, the Soviets discovered the utility of a centralized German party system. Even before the Western allies started to move into their sectors in Berlin, the Soviet military governor not only licensed, but also encouraged, the founding of four political parties in Berlin and in the Soviet zone: Communists (the KPD), Social Democrats (the SPD), Liberals (the LDPD), and Christian Democrats (the CDU). These parties had their headquarters in Berlin, inside the Soviet zone, yet all their leaders sought recognition in the western zones and wanted to speak for all of Germany. It quickly became apparent that the Soviet Military Administration of Germany (SMAD) had a hidden agenda: to bolster the leading role of the Communists. When the political weakness of the SPD and the KPD became obvious in the spring of 1946, Soviet authorities arranged a forced merger of the two parties (under the new name Sozialistische

Einheitspartei Deutschlands, SED) in the Soviet zone. But in the western zones, a strong SPD, under the determined anti-Communist leadership of Kurt Schumacher, reacted against the SED and its Soviet masters. The CDU and the Free Democratic Party were likewise motivated by deep-rooted anti-Communism. Jakob Kaiser, chairman of the popular CDU in the eastern zone, steered a compromise course. On the one hand, he tried his best to operate freely in the face of Soviet pressures; on the other hand, he said he wanted Germany to be "a bridge between East and West," hoping to avoid taking sides in the incipient Cold War. But when he hailed the Marshall Plan, he was forced to resign in December 1947. Neither the German Communists in Berlin nor their Soviet overlords were willing to accept Western pluralism. Thus, Soviet attempts to influence the German parties in the western zones by stressing the need for German unity were doomed to fail.

This leads to a third contradiction in Soviet policy. In the ACC, SMAD called for joint occupation policies in all four zones, but reserved for itself a free hand in the eastern zone. In addition to curtailing non-Communist parties, land reform was decreed, large-scale enterprises were nationalized, the traditional high school was marginalized, and children were required to take Russian-language classes after the fourth year of elementary school. By the spring of 1946, one year after the establishment of SMAD, society and the political system in the eastern zone of Germany increasingly conformed to the model of "people's democracies" in Eastern Europe. The Soviets achieved their goal of transforming the eastern zone into a relatively solid base for unchallenged Communist power. Yet to the Germans in the West, the Soviet zone was anything but a shining model of progressive policies; it was a nightmare of repression and brutality.

Then, in June 1948, the Soviet Union made its worst mistake. In reaction to the Western military governors' offering to convene a constitutional assembly for their zones and carrying out a separate currency reform (in June 1948), Stalin ordered the blockade of the roads and waterways to Berlin. The Western powers had to decide whether to abandon their plans to establish a Western government or pull out of their sectors in Berlin with a tremendous loss of prestige. The blockade risked war and was a desperate gamble. It convinced Western public opinion of the aggressiveness of the Soviet Union. And the determination of the Germans in West Berlin to resist Soviet pressure had another significant impact in the West. For the first time since the war, West Germans appeared ready to opt voluntarily for the West and become reliable allies in the Cold War. When President Truman, supported by London and Paris, decided to break the blockade with a huge Allied airlift,

Stalin dared not to interfere, and his German policies were shattered. Nobody could have devised a better plan to convince the West Germans of the need to accept a provisional division of their country.

In the fall of 1949, after the establishment of the West German government, Stalin permitted the formation of the GDR, thereby sealing the division of Germany, although he had always been against it. In the great game for Germany, the Soviet Union was the loser. But, although the Soviet Union lost its chance to attract Germany into its orbit or, at least, to neutralize a united Germany, it won a crucial strategic position in the heart of Europe. The GDR served as a reliable "iron wall" that separated Poland from the West. Thereafter, the exposed western sectors of Berlin always reminded Western statesmen and FRG leaders that they were highly vulnerable to Soviet pressure.

The role of the Germans: coming to terms with partition

After the unconditional surrender, the Germans were merely the objects of Allied policy. From 1945 to 1948, they had only a minor role in a play that was staged by politicians, generals, diplomats, and economists from the occupying powers. When George Kennan, in March 1949, on the eve of the establishment of the Federal Republic of Germany, took part in a meeting between the three Western military governors and the top German representatives, he commented: "To me, the spectacle of these … meetings, the unlimited power of the one side and the abjectness of the other, was distasteful."[14] Even in the western zones, not to mention the Soviet zone, the Germans had no real choice of their own.

Nevertheless, as the rift between the West and the East deepened, it became a matter of primary importance which side in the Cold War the West Germans would choose or if they would want to stay "uncommitted" at all costs. In this respect, during the entire period of occupation the overwhelming majority of the population was strongly against the Soviet Union and its Communist German supporters. When an OMGUS poll asked in October 1947 about the German attitude toward the four Allies, 63% trusted the United States to treat Germany fairly, 45% placed their trust in the British,

14 Kennan, *Memoirs 1925–1950*, 433.

only 4% in the French, and none in the Soviets.[15] During the years 1946–48, the German Communists proved to be unable to garner more than 5–12 percent of the vote in local or *Länder* elections in the western zones. And in one of the politically decisive local elections in all four sectors of Berlin a few months after the enforced merger of the KPD and SPD, on October 20, 1946, the SED won only 19.8 percent of the vote.

The anti-Communist feelings had many sources: traumatic experiences caused by the atrocities of the Red Army when it occupied East Germany and Berlin, the fresh memories of the refugees or of Germans expelled from East Germany, and the bad reputation of Soviet occupation policies. To a large extent, Soviet Communism was associated with rape and plunder.[16] The anti-Communist fervor of the political leaders in the West also played an important role. Kurt Schumacher, the charismatic leader of the Social Democrats who had suffered nine years in Hitler's concentration camps, called the German Communists "red-painted nazis." At an executive meeting of his party on August 1, 1946, Konrad Adenauer, chairman of the CDU in the British zone, who would become the first chancellor of the Federal Republic three years later, had recognized that Stalin sought to exploit German nationalism and use it for Soviet purposes.[17] Starting with this assumption, Adenauer did his best to turn his party toward the United States and the democracies of Western Europe. Although West Germans possessed grievances against the Western occupation powers, they were to a large extent united in their anti-Sovietism. Thus, Communist propaganda campaigns for national unity and against the founding of a German state in the western zones were an exercise in futility.

Yet, in the western zones, political leaders and voters were not willing to accept the permanent division of Germany. They regarded the founding of the FRG as an expedient. After all, the German Reich had existed for seventy-four years. In spite of all the catastrophes and crimes of the recent past, most Germans still regarded the Reich and German unity as supreme political values. Even in the East, neither Stalin and his followers in the ranks of the SED, nor the silent majority of suppressed Germans, ceased to call for the restoration of German unity. For the moment, Germany was divided. But

15 Anna J. Merritt and Richard L. Merritt, *Public Opinion in Occupied Germany: The OMGUS Surveys, 1945–1949* (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1970), 180–81.

16 See Norman Naimark's chapter in this volume.

17 Hans-Peter Schwarz, *Konrad Adenauer*, vol. I, *From the German Empire to the Federal Republic, 1876–1952* (Providence, RI: Berghahn Books, 1995), 580–81.

how and when the division could be overcome became one of the main issues of the Cold War in Germany.

Perhaps now, from the vantage point of the twenty-first century, it is time to change our historical assessment. There were, of course, the obvious negative aspects to the division of Germany. From 1949 until the collapse of Communism in the GDR, both German states were exemplary protagonists in the Cold War. In spite of many attempts at détente, they could never overcome their fundamental ideological, political, economic, and cultural conflict. Twice, in 1948/49 and from 1958 to 1962, diplomatic crises over Berlin threatened to lead to an outright military confrontation. For the German people, the division was a national tragedy. After August 13, 1961, 17 million East Germans were locked behind the Wall. Most of them felt their lives were impoverished by a dysfunctional socialist economy forced upon them by the Soviet Union. And from the perspective of the captive Polish and Czechoslovak peoples, the Soviet-occupied GDR appeared as a barrier to their access to the Western democracies.

Small wonder that the negative consequences of the division of Germany have deeply influenced historical writing. For many historians the main question has been: who is to blame for the partition? The Soviets, the Americans, the British, the French? Or all four to a certain extent? When the partition was already under way, from 1945 to 1949, the controversy over responsibility for the division had been an issue of paramount importance. As is often the case, the subsequent controversies among historians have mostly recycled the political controversies of a previous era.

The antitotalitarian Cold War school in the West insisted that the division had been unavoidable since the Soviet Union was not prepared to concede human rights, true political pluralism, and a decent standard of living in the GDR. Soviet and East German historians, for their part, have criticized the integration of the western zones into the camp of aggressive Western capitalism and insisted that this was the main reason for the failure of joint occupation policies in Germany. Since the mid-1960s, in the ranks of the scholarly community of the West, a certain self-flagellation about Western policies has been conspicuous. Revisionists in the United States, Germany, and France have ridiculed the selfishness of the West: instead of giving the Soviets a fair share of reparations and of keeping the guilt-ridden Germans under strict joint control (maybe with a neutralized and demilitarized status), the United States, Britain, and, very reluctantly, France decided to give priority to West European recovery, to the return of West German capitalists, and to the establishment of a West German

state as bulwark of anti-Soviet containment. Thus, historical controversies on responsibility for the division of Germany have been as irreconcilable as the arguments that took place in the ACC or in the Council of Foreign Ministers between 1945 and 1948.

Today, two decades after the end of the Cold War, verdicts are blurred. There were four great powers – each with contrasting ideas about the shape of Europe and all with conflicting national interests – jostling over authority within a vanquished fifth great power; it is therefore not surprising that each bears some responsibility for the division of Germany. But one should not overlook the benefits, one might even say miracles. First, West Germany helped propel the economic reconstruction and political integration of Western Europe and laid a foundation for unprecedented peace and prosperity. As a result of the integration of West Germany into the framework of the Atlantic world, Franco-German rivalries were overcome, and a second miracle occurred: the conversion of most West Germans to democracy, to peacefulness, and to Western values. These outcomes, of course, had a price: the Cold

11. West German leader Konrad Adenauer.

12. East German leader Walter Ulbricht.

War and the division of Germany, with all their tensions and human tragedies. But nevertheless a third miracle also took place: in a long, tortuous, often dangerous process, the division became manageable: East and West worked out a peaceful *modus vivendi*. Eventually, in 1989/90, the four occupation powers, driven by events inside Germany, allowed for its reunification into a more integrated and peaceful Europe. From this vantage point, the initial failure of joint occupation appears in a more favorable light.[18]

18 For events at the end of the Cold War, see John Young's and Helga Haftendorn's chapters in volume III.