

# Post world war two german partitioning and the building of the berlin wall essay ...

[War](#), [World War 2](#)



World War II ended with the fall of the Nazi government in Germany at the hands of the Allied forces in 1945. It had lasted twenty seven years since 1918 (Goldstein 9). By the time it was over, the German army had caused remarkable damage to the countries it had invaded. After the war ended, the allies divided Germany into territories to occupy at the Potsdam Conference of 1945. The French army was allocated Southwest Germany, the British Northwest, the Americans South and the Soviet army occupied the East. The former capital of Germany, Berlin, was also divided into four sectors each for an Ally to control. The occupation was controlled by the Allied Control Council where the commanders-in-chief exercised executive powers in the respective territories. This occupation lasted five years from 1945 to 1949 when the two German states were formed (MacDonogh 17). Most of the territories Germany had acquired during the war, especially in the East were taken back by the original countries. The four occupying armies were seen to be looking for reparation from Germany for the costs of the war it had started. Although not their public intention, reparation was seen to take place around the whole country by both the Allies and the Soviets. There were several effects as a result of these compensations from Germany made at the expense of the German people.

One of the most crippling effects came from the reduction of German industrial capabilities through dismantling of factories and other infrastructure. The allied control council decided that for Germany to refrain from being a threat, they had to dismantle most of its industries especially those with military potential including those that could be used to finance the military. The Allies had already dismantled the German army.

Dismantling of facilities started around 1945 and went on partially even after 1949. Ship and aircraft factories were dismantled, ammunition factories were also dismantled, and caps were placed on the production of steel at only 25% of the prewar level of production. Car production was reduced significantly to only 10% of what used to be produced (Connelly 72). The armies destroyed German forests, sighting potential for forest wars. France tried to gain economical control of the Rhineland, Saar and Ruhr areas. These were the main industrial and mineral deposit areas of Germany. This was all in an attempt to ensure Germany never posed a threat to them again. In East Germany, the Soviets were draining the resources and exporting them to the Soviet Union. Even though this hurt their communism agenda in the area, they had decided that solving the deteriorating problem in their own country was more important. When Germany invaded the countries around it, including the Soviet Union, they took back with them food and other goods back to Germany. The Soviet Union considered these resources including industrial infrastructure as their compensation for damages done by the Germans under the Nazis. These acts had crippling effect on the East Germany economy, which continued to suffer long after the Soviets had left.

Another form of compensation agreed upon at the Yalta conference of 1945 was that the prisoners of war from Germany would be forced to work for the countries they had invaded to repay the costs in whichever way. Though this directive only applied to the soldiers captured, there was widespread forced labor on German civilians especially in the East. Up to four hundred thousand

German nationals were forced to work for the Allies and the Soviets, with death rates reaching 30% for those working for the Soviets (Bessel 94). The French used German prisoners to clear minefields, injuring and killing a majority of them in the process.

In the aftermath of the defeat of the German army, countries that had been occupied by the Germans started to expel Germans from their countries. This was often done in very cruel ways and under the harsh winter weather.

Poland and Czechoslovakia regions that had been German occupied contained over 10 million people of German descent (Goldstein 16). The Polish authorities immediately began to expel the Germans in slow and badly managed trains. Thousands died in transportation during winter and others due to dehydration and hunger. When the Red Soviet armies moved into East Germany, there was an influx of mass rape of women and young girls by the soldiers. It is believed that over two hundred thousand females were raped, some being assaulted multiple times, up to fifty times (Naimark 95).

During the period that the Allies and Soviets controlled Germany, there was a high rationing of food. Many Germans died of hunger in the winter cold because food production had greatly reduced. The Allied armies would fly in relief food but this was mostly consumed by the vast number of prisoners of war they had, greater than they had anticipated. There was no nutritional balance in the food that was available, leading even more people to death from diseases. International aid relief was not very concerned of German citizens with most of the food donations being focused at the non-German nationals who had been captured and put in concentration camps. Empathy

towards starving Germans was not common and this led to the death of many German nationals. The German Red Cross had been dissolved along with other German organizations while the international Red Cross and other relief agencies were forbade from helping Germans through strict control of supplies. The local agencies that were allowed to help were disallowed from using imported food and other supplies (Judt 244).

The United States and the United Kingdom took perhaps the most valuable of all reparations from Germany. It is estimated that intellectual property in terms of patents worth above \$10 billion, at that time, was confiscated and licensed to companies from the Allied nations. These patents and other knowledge contained decades of scientific advancement made by the Germans. This would leave the German nation with very little advantage when it came to technology. It is however seen as a bad decision for the Allied forces, that they disallowed continued research in Germany for the time they were there, since they would have had access to it anyway, this profiting from it. In an operation codenamed Paperclip, the US, undertook to turn and employ over a 1000 German scientists in their country (Clarence 70). This was a massive brain drain that was at the cost of the Germans. It was also carried out to limit the knowledge the other allies acquired from the Germans.

Coming out of the portioning of Germany and its occupation by the Allied forces and the Soviets, two different countries emerged, one in the west and the other in the east. The Federal Republic of Germany also called Western Germany was the democratic and capitalist part of Germany that was formed

in the west in 1949. It was influenced by the Allies' ideology as opposed to its Eastern neighbor. In May 1949, the Grundgesetz (Basic Law) constitution was promulgated in Western Germany, giving way for formal elections that were held in August the same year (MacDonogh 53). Konrad Adenauer was elected Chancellor and formed a government. Western Germany was given sovereignty except in a few cases such as the size of the army they were allowed to have. The allied forces still controlled some aspects of the Federal Republic of Germany but allowed them self-rule over the years. In 1951 it was one of the inaugural members of the European Coal and Steel Community, which later gave way to the European Union, with France, Italy and other European countries. Western Germany joined the Northern Atlantic Treaty Organization, NATO in 1955 after the London and Paris agreements of 1954 restored most of its sovereignty (Judt 28).

Western Germany experienced a phenomenon economic growth over the next decade recording on average a 6% annual growth, with unemployment rates falling from about 10% at the start of the decade to almost zero in 1960 (Goldstein 109). There was virtually full employment and the growing industrial and agricultural sectors demanded even more labor. Before the construction of the Berlin wall, the excess labor required by the country came from the neighboring East Germany, from where more than three million young men and women had defected to work in the thriving Western Germany. This migration caused a problem for East Germany, as their productive labor was all being drained away. To deal with this issue the country constructed the Berlin wall. This caused a crisis for the Western

Germany government since it would not be able to satisfy the demand for labor in its economy. It turned to other European countries and ended up employing over one million foreign workers in the first year.

The other German nation coming out of the partitioning was the German Democratic Republic, otherwise known as Eastern Germany. It was founded in 1949 executed communism on its population. The first election was held in 1946 with the Social Unity Party (SED) emerging the majority. Elections here were not by secret ballot and experienced a high voter turnout. Over 95% voted for the SED (Connelly 68). In 1949, the constitution was drafted under Soviet direction and by October the same year, Eastern Germany was declared a sovereign nation. It was always under the control and instruction of the Soviet Union government. The legislature was formed in 1949 and elected Wilhelm Pieck the new president (Salama 112). There was a National Front, mostly controlled by the SED that contained the youth, women, culture groups, and trade unions. It acted as the umbrella for all parties, thus, the country was a single party state.

The SED wanted to turn the country into a socialist state. They announced a five year plan, but the plans were thwarted by an influx of emigrants to the west, causing a deficiency in labor. The SED increased the production per day per person to cover the deficiency, resulting in a range of strikes and protests against this policy. Over 400000 workers participated and in response the SED used brute force of its police force and the Soviets to disperse them, in the process thousands were arrested and hundreds killed (Judt 41). This resulted in a bad image of the SED government.

East Germany had between 1955 and 1956, restricted or controlled the flow of its citizens into the Western part. Under the influence of the Soviet regime, the East German nation decided to ban all travel between the two sides of Berlin. The Berlin border crossing was however still porous as East Germans still crossed over. By 1961, about 20% of the East German population had defected to the west. The secretary of the SED, Erich Honecker, and the chairman of the GDR state council, Walter Ulbricht had before denied there being a plan to build a wall in Berlin, but after consultation with Nikita Khrushchev, the then Soviet leader, the chairman of the state council signed an order to start building the wall and Erich Honecker implemented it (Goldstein 12). The construction of the 43km Berlin wall from 1961 stopped almost all the attempted defections, with the few that were there ending disastrously. There were watch towers along the concrete wall that kept guard of anyone attempting to escape. In the period it was present there were estimated to be about 200 deaths from escape attempts.

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