

# Free east and west germany essay example

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After the Germans lost to the Allies in World War II, the issue with what to do with the losing nation was one of the most complicated issues of the 1940s. Eventually coming up with the idea to occupy four separate zones of the country, the occupation was considered to merely be a stopgap until Germany was allowed to reconstruct and could reunite successfully. However, the eventual creation of East and West Germany dashed those hopes for reunification for the entirety of the Cold War. Various factors contributed to the failure of occupying powers to agree upon exactly how to unify Germany, most notably the onset of the Cold War and political differences between the US/UK and the Soviet bloc.

While the Potsdam Protocol established a unified front for the Allies in terms of how to treat Germany as a unified country, and facilitate expulsion of Polish communists east of the dividing line, there were other comments and communications between East and West that implied further dissent among the Allied leaders. One of the biggest tensions that arose was a sense of paranoia in the East that the West was pushing for a post-war attack on the Soviet Union. In a letter to Stalin from Marshall Zhukov in 1946, Zhukov states his dissatisfaction with the demilitarization proposals by James Brynes: he believes that the goal of the Americans' proposals is to shut them out, limit reparations, and position themselves for a greater power base in Germany from which to strike the USSR. He also notes what he perceives as "the desire to inhibit the growth of political activity of the masses and the growth of Communist party influence in Europe" (Zhukov, 1946). Given that the Nazi threat was over, the next big fear of the West was the spread of Communism, which is the central party of the USSR; to that end, the

Russians wanted to shut down any possibility that the US and UK would be wanting to stymie their efforts to promote Communism throughout Europe. Another factor that contributed to the divides between East and West was the lack of discussion and leeway found in Communist party politics and rhetoric, which even other Soviet officials felt stifled discussion and the ability to get along. After the local elections in East Germany, a Soviet advisor noted that “ even the most farsighted Communists feel the need to discuss every issue with the Social Democrats in order not to offend them, [and this] has led to a lessening of flexibility within the party” (Tiul’panov, 1946). The Social Democrats and Communists maintained great distance and a lack of communication, making it harder for them to reconcile their own political leanings and priorities with each other. This inability to get along and facilitate greater compromise made both sides entrench themselves deeper in their politics, the sectarianism preventing any sort of reunification or compromise.

Party propaganda existed only to make the Communist German party, the SED, feel like a rudimentary extension of the Russian Communist party: “ Despite this, the SED's propaganda was unable to convince the population that the party is a real German party, and not simply the agents of the occupation authorities” (Tiul’Panov, 1946). Because of these sectarian conflicts and the overall sense of distrust, it was difficult for the East German authorities to form a unified government, and it became increasingly clear to the West that the East German Communists were simply an extension of the Soviet Communist influence they so feared.

The Potsdam Protocol was not clear enough in its assessment of how and

what reparations would be provided, and whose responsibility that was, and both West and East vehemently disagreed on how to interpret the protocol. According to the Americans, the reparations demanded were simply not possible given Germany's limited industry at the time, which needed to be increased before anything else. This added more fuel to the fire in Soviet Russia's claim that the US resisted reparations in order to fulfill a "capitalistic desire to destroy possibly future competition" (Clay, 1946). Political unification was dependent on an increase in industry, which was needed to prevent "several years of decay" in the unification process, if not "result in the partition of Germany with all that is implied thereby" (Clay, 1946).

The divided Germany became an ideological battleground between the Allied and Soviet forces for the viability of their respective political system. The Americans did, in fact, have the perspective that Western ideals of democracy in Europe is their central objective: "We have much at stake in gaining the opportunity to fight for democratic ideals in Eastern Germany and in Eastern Europe" (Clay, 1946). By the time of the Berlin Blockade, the use of Germany as a chess piece in the Cold War was clear. Because of the increased resignation of Western officials that East Germany would never accept Western democratic ideals, it became more viable to entrench themselves in the Western half of Germany. "If our policy succeeds, Western Germany can become a most effective barrier against the spread of Communism across Europe" (Bevin, 1948). The Soviets felt the same way; success for them meant the ability to control all of Germany and Europe as well. According to Bevin, the Russians' goals in Germany were "to obtain a

foothold and, ultimately, to communize the whole of Germany," as well as "to evict the Western Allies from Berlin" (Bevin, 1948). More hostile battle lines were drawn in these latter years of the 1940s, as Western and Soviet forces began to double down as best they could; they did everything possible to not get kicked out of Berlin, which became central to their keeping Germany. By this point, the Russians were seen as unwilling to compromise: "The Russians are unlikely to agree to take on the responsibility of feeding the population of the Western sectors unless under conditions which are unacceptable to us" (Bevin, 1948). By that point, the strict division of East and West Germany along political and party lines became clear.

The one final olive branch provided by Stalin in 1949, in which he offered to allow the country to reunify on the condition that it be considered neutral and be allowed to choose its own democratic destiny, was met with resistance by the Allies. They saw it as a threat that they would lose all of Germany to the USSR: "a unified Germany in a Europe which is still divided presents certain very grave dangers of German domination of the Continent or rapprochement with the Soviet Union" (US State Department, 1952). Talks with Stalin about Germany were advised to "be avoided if possible" (US State Department, 1952). That seemed to be the end of any hope that Germany would be unified until the end of the Cold War.

In conclusion, there were many reasons that the planned reunification of Germany after World War II went down. However, they all primarily boil down to mutual US and Soviet paranoia about gaining all of Germany leading up to the Cold War. After the Potsdam Protocol, the issue of reparations and industry became muddy, as suddenly the two opposing parties feared that

any leeway towards the other would give them an advantage that would lead them to take over Germany. Sectarian divides within each nation and internationally prevented effective communication and compromise to take place. To that end, any further attempts to achieve reunification were seen as an underhanded scheme to gain either a capitalist or Communist foothold in the country - neither of which the other party wanted. Because of this, a united Germany became one of the first casualties of the Cold War.

## **Works Cited**

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