

The Two Germanies since 1945

Henry Ashby Turner, Jr.



The Two Germanies since 1945

Henry Ashby Turner, Jr.

Yale University Press

New Haven and London



"Inventory" by Günter Eich (trans. David Young) is reprinted here (pp. 64–65) courtesy of Oberlin College: *Valuable Nail*, Field Translation Series 5, trans. Stuart Friebart, David Walker, and David Young (Oberlin, OH: Oberlin College, 1981), pp. 41–42.

"The Solution" by Bertolt Brecht is reprinted here (p. 123) courtesy of Methuen London Ltd.: *Bertolt Brecht Poems*, ed. John Willett and Ralph Manheim (London: Methuen, 1976), p. 440.

With the exception of the two photographs acknowledged to the Arbeitsgemeinschaft 13. August, all the photographs in the book are courtesy of the German Information Center, New York.

Copyright © 1987 by Yale University.
All rights reserved.

This book may not be reproduced, in whole or in part, in any form (beyond that copying permitted by Sections 107 and 108 of the U.S. Copyright Law and except by reviewers for the public press), without written permission from the publishers.

Designed by Sally Harris
and set in Melior type by
Keystone Typesetting Company, Orwigsburg, Penn.
Printed in the United States of America by
Vail-Ballou Press, Binghamton, N.Y.

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Turner, Henry Ashby.

The two Germanies since 1945.

Bibliography: p.

Includes index.

1. Germany (East)—History. 2. Germany (West)—History. I. Title.

DD282.T87 1987 943 87-6205

ISBN 0-300-03865-8 (alk. paper)

The paper in this book meets the guidelines for permanence and durability of the Committee on Production Guidelines for Book Longevity of the Council on Library Resources.

10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

The Two Germanies since 1945



Aerial views of Frankfurt am Main, 1945 and in 1970s

Preface

Contrary to a widespread impression, German history did not end with the debacle of 1945. More than four eventful decades have ensued during which the Germans have again become an important factor in the world. This is a period of time which far exceeds the twelve-year rampage of the Third Reich and the fourteen troubled years of the Weimar Republic. Indeed, the postwar history of Germany is now approaching in length the entire duration of the German Empire established in 1871, which had attained the status of a venerable polity toward the end of its forty-seven years. The post-Second World War years must be added to the German record in order for it to be fully grasped.

Most of what has been written on the period since 1945 deals with either East or West Germany to the exclusion of the other. Yet, as this volume attempts to demonstrate, neither can be viewed in isolation without omitting essential influences on their development. Although the expression “the Germanies” is used here for convenience, an examination of the histories of the two German states reveals them inescapably linked together within a shared context that can only be designated as Germany.

This book is intended as an introduction to the subject for readers without access to German-language publications. It makes no claim to definitude and rests not on research in primary source materials but rather on a reading of the publications of scholars who have dealt with various aspects of the history of the Germans since the end of World War II. In the interest of brevity, many facets of German life, particularly in the cultural and intellectual spheres, receive short shrift here in what is intended as a basically political history. Those who wish to learn more about developments that can be dealt with here only briefly will find a list of suggested further readings at the end of the volume.

I am grateful to a number of persons and institutions for assistance with the preparation of this work. My student Curtis W. Bajak blazed trails for me into the increasingly dense scholarly literature on the subject. Richard F. Hamilton gave me the benefit of his encyclopedic knowledge and sound judgement. David Schoenbaum shared with me his insightful views. Hermann Rupieper, Wolfgang Leonhard, and Winfried Suhlo spared me some errors by scrutinizing parts of the manuscript. Michael Joyce contributed more than merely an excellent job of copyediting. The Robert Bosch Stiftung provided me with time free of other duties to pursue this project. The Yale Center for International and Area Studies enabled me to visit Germany and collect materials. Inter Nationes provided me with much valuable material. The staff of the German Information Center in New York was an unfailing source of assistance. The hospitality of the Wissenschaftskolleg zu Berlin enabled me to complete the work under optimal conditions.

Berlin, March 1987

Contents

Preface	vii
1. Defeat, Cold War, and Division	
The Wreckage of the Past	1
Differences among the Victors	8
The Revival of German Politics	16
Germany as Focus of the Cold War	22
2. The Birth of Two New Governments	
The Federal Republic	33
The German Democratic Republic	46
3. Two Decades of Christian Democratic Leadership in the Federal Republic, 1949–1969	
The Ascendancy of Konrad Adenauer	54
The Economic Miracle	59
Alignment with the Western Democracies	67
Rearmament and Sovereignty	71
The SPD's Godesberg Program of 1959	80
From Adenauer to Erhard	82
The Grand Coalition	91

4. The Ulbricht Era in the GDR, 1949–1971	
The Communist Regime and Its Leader	98
Socialization and Industrial Expansion	108
The Uprising of June 17, 1953	116
The New Course Gives Way to Renewed Repression	124
The Berlin Wall	129
The New Economic System and the Second Constitution	138
5. The Social-Liberal Era in the Federal Republic, 1969–1982	
Willy Brandt's Cabinet and the New Eastern Policy	146
Domestic Reform Efforts and Problems of the 1970s	161
Brandt Falls and Helmut Schmidt Takes Over	165
Vicissitudes of the Schmidt Cabinet's Last Years	169
6. The Two Germanies in an Era of Mutual Accommodation	
Erich Honecker's GDR	175
Helmut Kohl's Federal Republic	192
Common Problems and Shared Dilemmas	208
Suggestions for Further Reading	219
Abbreviations Used in Text	223
Index	225

1

Defeat, Cold War, and Division

The Wreckage of the Past

Early in May 1945, the German Reich came to an end.

It had existed for seventy-one years, long enough for most Germans to regard their country's unification as an irreversible achievement. Yet as the developments that began unfolding in the spring of 1945 were soon to demonstrate, such was not the case.

The Reich had come into being in 1871, ending centuries of German political fragmentation. Five years earlier, the Kingdom of Prussia, under the leadership of Prime Minister Otto von Bismarck, had defeated Austria, its chief rival for preeminence in the German part of Europe. Then, after Prussia's victory over France in 1870, Bismarck succeeded in bringing the smaller German states into a new polity, the *Deutsches Reich* or German Empire. As a federal monarchy under an emperor from the Prussian ruling house of Hohenzollern, the Empire immediately became one of the great powers of Europe. Led by Bismarck, who served as its chancellor until 1890, the new Germany displayed great vitality. Its formidable military establishment won it re-

spect and fear, while its rapid industrialization quickly thrust it to the economic forefront. By the end of the century, the Reich was making its influence felt around the globe. The resulting frictions with other powers contributed importantly to the outbreak in 1914 of the First World War, in which Germany fought at the side of the decaying Austro-Hungarian and Turkish empires against a coalition that included Britain, France, Russia, Japan, and eventually the United States.

In 1918, in the wake of defeat following more than four years of bloody conflict in World War I, Germany underwent a revolution that transformed the government of the Reich into a parliamentary democracy that became known as the Weimar Republic. After a stormy fourteen years the republic collapsed and was succeeded in 1933 by the so-called Third Reich of National Socialist dictator Adolf Hitler. His Nazi regime imposed a totalitarian tyranny and adopted racist policies that relegated Germany's Jews to the status of resident aliens subject to many forms of harassment. But the regime also surmounted the worldwide depression that defied all remedies in other major industrial countries. Within only a few years the Third Reich had restored virtually full employment and achieved a level of prosperity envied elsewhere. As a result, the dictator won popularity at home and widespread recognition abroad. Hitler intended, however, to use the productive capacities of Germany not to improve the lot of its people but rather to prepare for a war of ruthless and far-reaching conquest. His goal was an empire of continental proportions in which the Germans, by right of alleged racial superiority, would subjugate—or eliminate—lesser peoples.

Following a series of diplomatic triumphs that undid many provisions of the Versailles peace settlement imposed upon Germany by the victors in 1919, Hitler launched what was to become the Second World War by attacking Poland in September 1939. During the ensuing five and a half years Germany, which was joined in 1940 by Fascist Italy, fought against a growing coalition of powers. At first, German military might

seemed unstoppable. Poland, France, the Low Countries, Denmark, and Norway quickly succumbed to Hitler's *Blitzkrieg*, or "lightning war." Allied with the Soviet Union and joined by Fascist Italy in its conquest of France in the spring of 1940, the Third Reich dominated the European continent and posed a grave threat to the survival of its sole remaining foe, Britain. But in the summer of 1941 Hitler unleashed his armies on the Soviet Union and plunged the Reich into a ruinous war of attrition in that vast country. In December 1941 he declared war on the United States after Japan had attacked American outposts in the Pacific.

Eventually the tide of war turned against the Third Reich. At the end of 1942 the Russians halted the German advance, and the Red Army began pushing the invaders back. The Western Allies expelled the German forces from North Africa and in 1943 pushed northward through Italy, sweeping away Mussolini's Fascist regime. In the summer of 1944 Allied expeditionary forces breached the German defenses on the French coast and began battling their way eastward toward the Reich. In the spring of 1945 the European conflict finally came to an end. With Hitler dead by suicide and the country overrun by invaders, the German army leaders agreed to Allied demands for unconditional surrender. Their signing of the capitulation documents transferred sovereign authority from the German Reich to the victorious occupying powers. Germany had ceased to exist as a state and become a geographical region, ruled by foreigners.

The victors found themselves in possession of a devastated and disrupted country. Whereas the Reich had escaped physical damage in the First World War, which was fought almost exclusively on foreign soil, the second great conflict brought home to Germans the horrors of modern, industrialized war. In the course of Allied bombing raids, millions of tons of high explosives rained down on German factories and cities. During the final stages of the war, large parts of the country became bloody battlefields. The full extent of the human costs can never be calculated with precision, but the toll was heavy. Estimates of



Battle wreckage at the Brandenburg Gate in the center of Berlin, 1945



People struggling to board an overcrowded train, 1945



Barefoot women carrying possessions through the ruins of a German city, 1945



the German war dead—military and civilian—run as high as 5.3 million; millions of others suffered disabilities.

The war left the German economy maimed, with thousands of mines, factories, warehouses, and other places of business heavily damaged by bombing raids. The economic infrastructure would eventually prove less seriously impaired than seemed the case at the end of the war, when a paralyzed transportation system obstructed distribution of vital goods and raw materials, including the coal that served as the main source of industrial energy. Still, in 1945 the prospect of economic recovery seemed remote. So did the rebuilding of Germany's bomb-devastated cities. An estimated quarter of the country's housing lay destroyed or damaged beyond use, and in many cities the toll exceeded 50 percent. The resulting acute shortage of housing left millions without adequate dwellings. A disrupted and understaffed health-care system struggled to cope with an incidence of disease that frequently reached epidemic proportions.

The most pressing problem of all, however, resulted from a dire food crisis that reduced the average diet of Germans to levels dangerously close to the malnutrition level. Foodstuffs had become increasingly scarce as fighting surged into the agricultural regions of eastern Germany and Eastern Europe on which the Reich heavily relied for supplies of grain. The exodus of between ten and twelve million German refugees from these eastern regions compounded the problems of food and housing. Whereas in 1939 the territories that would comprise postwar Germany—East and West—had a population of under 59 million, by 1946 over 64 million lived there, despite the heavy wartime losses and the absence of millions of former soldiers held abroad as prisoners of war.

The war left Germany ravaged in more than merely material ways. In twelve years of tyrannical dictatorship the Nazi regime had ruthlessly crushed the country's democratic organizations and driven their leaders into exile or subjected them to imprisonment that often ended in broken health or death. On political grounds or to assure "racial purity," the Nazis system-

atically purged the bureaucracy, the universities, the arts, the press, and the professions. Deprived of livelihoods and in peril of persecution, some of Germany's most talented people fled abroad, where the resolute and fortunate among them made new careers, greatly enriching the cultural and intellectual life of their new homelands, particularly the United States. Most of these involuntary emigrés looked back with revulsion at the country that had scorned them and resolved never to return. The Third Reich thus inflicted an enormous intellectual and cultural loss upon Germany. At the end of the war, the country's once proud universities and scientific institutes sat idle and discredited after twelve years of collaboration and repression, stripped of much of the talent that had won them worldwide prominence before 1933. The media, which the Nazis had turned into conveyors of propaganda, collapsed along with the regime. In May 1945 the country was without a single functioning newspaper, magazine, publishing house, or radio station of its own. German art and literature, prostituted to the Nazi regime, stood discredited. Once a major contributor to Western civilization, Germany seemed mute and culturally sterile after a twelve-year relapse into barbarism.

Morally, the country appeared bankrupt in 1945. The Nazi regime had not only inflicted a repressive dictatorship on Germany itself but had also deliberately unleashed a brutal war of conquest that resulted in the deaths of some forty million people across Europe. In the vast territories they conquered, the Nazis imposed an oppressive domination that awakened hatred of all things German. At the head of their many crimes stood the most massive campaign of premeditated genocide in history. By means of calculated mass-murder, the Nazis systematically slaughtered between five and six million innocent men, women, and children whose only offense was their Jewish ancestry. Others, such as gypsies, Russian prisoners of war, and mentally retarded Germans, were classified as subhumans unfit to share the earth with a Germanic master race and were executed or worked to death as slave labor. When the full magnitude of these

crimes came to light in the spring of 1945, the very word *German*—already stigmatized by military aggression—became anathema for many people.

Once the Germans learned the full extent of the crimes committed in the name of their nation, they had to struggle with a heavy burden of shame in addition to coping with defeat, foreign occupation, and hardship. Few sought to defend the Third Reich. Its leaders had already discredited themselves in the eyes of most by refusing to surrender long after defeat became obvious, thereby condemning millions to senseless death or disablement and much of the country to devastation. Some nevertheless harbored ambiguous feelings about the collapse of a regime that had restored prosperity and made Germany once again proud and powerful before the war. But even die-hard Nazis found it hard to defend a regime that had so obviously ended in a national disaster. Few welcomed the imposition of foreign rule, but no popular indignation arose when the victors tried and convicted surviving leaders of the Nazi regime for war crimes and put some to death. For many Germans, their national heritage seemed bankrupt. For them, 1945 became the “year zero.” Shamed or daunted by their country’s immediate past and struggling with the ruins bequeathed them by the Third Reich, most sought to erase what had happened from their minds in hopes of starting anew. Something approaching a national amnesia gripped the country.

Differences among the Victors

The victorious Allies, like the Germans, assumed that the issues of the war would, as after previous conflicts, find resolution in a peace treaty. But no immediate steps in that direction followed the capitulation of Germany. In the spring of 1945 the Second World War seemed far from over in the Pacific. The Japanese Empire still defiantly occupied much of China, large parts of Southeast Asia, and many islands of the Pacific. Unaware that detonation of the first