Black Market, Cold War

_Everyday Life in Berlin, 1946–1949_

This book explains how and why Berlin became the symbolic capital of the Cold War. It brings the history of the Cold War down to earth by focusing on the messy accounts of daily struggles to survive rather than seamless narratives of diplomatic exchange. By following Berliners as they made their way from ration offices to the black markets, from allied occupation bureaus to the physical and symbolic battles for the city’s streets and squares, Paul Steege anchors his account of this emerging global conflict in the fractured terrain of a city literally shattered by World War II. In this history of everyday life, he claims for Berliners a vital role in making possible Berlin’s iconic Cold War status. The world saw an absolutely divided city, but everyday Berliners crossed its many boundaries, and these transgressive practices brought into focus the stark oppositions of the Cold War.

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*Everyday Life in Berlin, 1946–1949*

PAUL STEEGE

Villanova University
To my parents
Contents

List of Maps, Tables, and Figures  page viii
List of Abbreviations xi
Acknowledgments xv
A Note on Terminology xix

Introduction 1
1. Postwar Berlin: The Continuities of Scarcity 18
2. October 1946: Rolling Back Soviet Power 64
4. March 1948: Berlin and the Struggle for the Soviet Zone 147
5. August 1948: Battle Lines on the Potsdamer Platz 192
6. June 1949: Ending the Blockade 245

Conclusion 287

Bibliography 299
Index 329
List of Maps, Tables, and Figures

Maps
1. Occupied Germany, 1945–9. page xx
2. Postwar Berlin: Occupation Sectors and City Districts. xxii
3. Berlin City Center. xxiii
4. Berlin Area Rail Network. 246

Tables
1. Ration Card Groupings in Berlin as of July 1, 1946. 41
2. Nutritional Status of Berlin Population, October 1947. 46
3. Responses to the Question: “How are you making out with food?” 47
4. Responses to the Question: “Do you get enough food to enable you to do your work well?” 47
5. Types of Black Market Behavior. 50

Figures
1. Lines of Authority in Postwar Berlin. xxxi
2. Illustration from Life Magazine, July 19, 1948. 2
3. Apartment Interior in the Tiergarten District (British Sector), 1949. 26
4. A Sample “Normal Consumer” Ration Card (Card III), February 1948. 41
List of Maps, Tables, and Figures

5 Two Women Pass in the Entryway of a Schöneberg (American Sector) Grocery. 43
6 Berlin Women Cultivate Vegetable Gardens on Apartment Floors that Wartime Bombing Exposed to the Open Air (ca. 1946). 53
7 A Crowd of “Hamsterers” Prepares to Depart a Potsdam Station, Just Southwest of Berlin. 54
8 A Black Market in the Upper-Middle-Class District of Zehlendorf (American Sector), July 1948. 57
9 In the Run-up to the October 1946 Election, a Veritable Sea of SED Campaign Posters Covers Shop Walls in Berlin’s Prenzlauer Berg District. 79
10 Large-Format SED Campaign Posters Trumpet the Party’s Claims to Legitimacy as a Voice against Militarism, Corrupt Privilege, and the Black Market. 84
11 Berlin Municipal Police Round up People Caught in a 1946 Raid of a Black Market. 195
12 A Young Crowd Watches Anxiously as a Policeman Strikes a Vigorous Blow in a Battle for Control of an S-Bahn Station in the Tempelhof District (American Sector). 248
13 A Young Man Leaps from a Barge with an Armful of Stolen Coal. 258
14 A UGO Official Stands on the Platform of the Idled S-Bahn and Distributes the Contents of CARE Packages to Striking Railroad Workers. 283
List of Abbreviations

Abt.:  Section (Abteilung)
ACC:  Allied Control Council
ADN:  Universal German News Service (Allgemeiner Deutscher Nachrichtendienst)
AdsD:  Archive of Social Democracy (Archiv der sozialdemokratischen Demokratie)
AEG:  General Electric Corporation (Allgemeine Elektrizitätsgesellschaft)
AK:  Allied Kommandatura
BA-DDR:  German Federal Archives, GDR Section (Bundesarchiv, Abteilung DDR)
BEWAG:  Berlin Electric Company
Bgm.:  Mayor (Bürgermeister)
Bl.:  Archival Page (Blatt)
BLHA:  Brandenburg Main State Archive (Brandenburgisches Landeshauptarchiv)
BPA:  District Party Archive of the Berlin SED (Bezirksparteiarchiv)
CDU:  Christian Democratic Union (Christlich-Demokratische Union)
CFM:  Council of Foreign Ministers
DBD:  Democratic Farmers’ Party of Germany (Demokratische Bauernpartei Deutschlands)
DDR:  German Democratic Republic, GDR (Deutsche Demokratische Republik)
List of Abbreviations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Full Form</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>DWK</td>
<td>Deutsche Wirtschaftskommission (German Economic Commission)</td>
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<td>FDGB</td>
<td>Freier Deutscher Gewerkschaftsbund (Association of Free German Trade Unions)</td>
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<td>FDJ</td>
<td>Freie deutsche Jugend (Free German Youth)</td>
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<td>FRUS</td>
<td>Foreign Relations of the United States</td>
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<td>GDR</td>
<td>German Democratic Republic</td>
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<td>GPU</td>
<td>Gosudarstvennoe Policheskoe Upravlenie (State Political Directorate)</td>
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<td>HfGB</td>
<td>Handelsgesellschaft für Groß-Berlin (Trade Association for Greater Berlin)</td>
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<td>IHK</td>
<td>Industrie- und Handelskontor (Industry and Trade Office)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Kdo.</td>
<td>Kommando (Command)</td>
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<td>KPD</td>
<td>Kommunistische Partei Deutschlands (Communist Party of Germany)</td>
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<td>LAB</td>
<td>Landesarchiv Berlin (Berlin State Archive)</td>
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<td>LAZ</td>
<td>Landesarchiv, Zeitgeschichtliche Sammlung (State Archive, Contemporary History Collection)</td>
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<tr>
<td>LDP</td>
<td>Liberal-Demokratische Partei (Liberal Democratic Party)</td>
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<tr>
<td>LHAM</td>
<td>Landeshauptarchiv Magdeburg (Magdeburg Main State Archive)</td>
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<tr>
<td>LPB</td>
<td>Landespolizeibehörde (State Police Bureau)</td>
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<tr>
<td>LV</td>
<td>Landesverband (State Organization)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NA</td>
<td>National Archives (United States)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NDPD</td>
<td>National-Demokratische Partei Deutschlands (National-Democratic Party of Germany)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NKVD</td>
<td>Narodni Kommissariat. Vnutrennykh Del (People's Commissariat of Internal Affairs)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NL</td>
<td>Nachlass (Personal papers)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NSDAP</td>
<td>Nationalsozialistische deutsche Arbeiterpartei (National Socialist (Nazi) Party)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OB</td>
<td>Oberbürgermeister (Lord Mayor)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OMGBS</td>
<td>Office of Military Government (United States)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OMGUS</td>
<td>Office of Military Government (United States) Berlin Sector</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RBD</td>
<td>Reichsbahndirektion (German Railroad Authority)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rep.</td>
<td>Repositum (Repository)</td>
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List of Abbreviations

RG: Record Group
RIAS: Radio in the American Sector
SAG: Soviet Joint-Stock Company (Sowjetische Aktiengesellschaft)
SAPMO: German Federal Archive, Foundation Archive for the Parties and Mass Organizations of the GDR (Stiftung Archiv der Parteien und Massenorganisationen der DDR)
SBZ: Soviet Zone of Occupation (Sowjetische Besatzungszone)
SED: Sozialistische Einheitspartei Deutschlands (Socialist Unity Party of Germany)
SMA: Soviet Military Administration (Sowjetische Militäradministration)
SPD: Social Democratic Party of Germany (Sozialdemokratische Parteи Deutschlands)
Sta. Ort-Nr.: Location Code
SVAG: Soviet Military Administration in Germany (Sovetskaia Voennaia Administratsia v Germanii)
UGO: Independent Trade Union Organization/Opposition (Unabhängige Gewerkschaftsopposition/-organisation)
VdgB: Association for Mutual Farmers’ Assistance (Vereinigung der gegenseitigen Bauernhilfe)
VEB: People’s Factory (Volkseigene Betrieb)
VVN: Association of the Victims of the Nazi Regime (Vereinigung der Verfolgten des Naziregimes)
ZK: Central Committee (Zentralkomitee)
ZKK: Central Control Commission (Zentrale Kontrollkommission)
Acknowledgments

This book has survived a long journey, and I am grateful for this opportunity to acknowledge the many acts of generosity that helped it along its way. Its intellectual roots lie in the graduate seminars and workshops of the University of Chicago. The first classroom door I walked through took me into Alf Lüdtke’s research seminar on the history of everyday life, a course whose influence on my subsequent work cannot be overestimated. Michael Geyer helped me to frame the big questions, and I hope that he sees his influence in my effort to wrestle with the global implications of everyday life. I am increasingly aware of the subtle ways in which his intellectual encouragement has helped me refine my interests, and I count myself fortunate to have been his student.

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In a way, this book’s journey began even before I started my graduate studies and reflects an evolving love affair with a city that I first came to know as a teenager – when Berlin was still split by a wall. As an adult, I have had the great fortune to wander through what had been east and west and to revel in the dynamic tensions of this city where a tumultuous past remains close to the surface and a contested future is always just around the corner. And so, supremely aware of the extent to which no work of history can be divorced from the personal story of which its writing is a part, I dedicate this book to my parents, who first took me to Berlin.
A Note on Terminology

The dynamic environment of post–World War II Berlin makes it a particularly fascinating subject, but its fluid political and economic landscape produced a confusing array of terminology, even before two separate administrations came to govern the city. While I have tried to explain these shifting terms in the course of the text, two contexts merit more explicit clarification.

In discussing the main body of German authority in the city, I have retained the German term *Magistrat* throughout the text. Selected by the Berlin city assembly, the councilors who comprised the executive branch of the Berlin government represented something more than a city council, and the term *Magistrat* conveys that most precisely. Additionally, I have translated the term *Oberbürgermeister* as *mayor* and not the more cumbersome *lord mayor*. The three subordinate *Bürgermeister* are thus *deputy mayors*.

Even before the dual currency reforms in 1948, there were several currencies circulating in Berlin: the reichsmark (RM) – the official German currency – rentenmarks – the Weimar-era currency created to help resolve the 1923 hyperinflation crisis – and allied occupation scrip. The 1948 currency reform introduced a new deutsche mark (German mark) in eastern and western flavors. Contemporary documents refer to these currencies in various shorthands, including marks, DM, D-Mark, or even B-Mark (for the west mark in Berlin with a distinct “B” stamp). For the period after 1948, I generally use east mark and west mark to describe the distinct currencies. In order to provide some sense of the fluid and uncertain currency environment facing Berliners at the time, I do, however, retain the diverse currency designations when quoting from contemporary sources.
Figure 1. Lines of authority in postwar Berlin.
MAP 3. Berlin City Center. Source: Villanova University Office of Media Technologies.