

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-86496-1 - Black Market, Cold War: Everyday Life in Berlin, 1946-1949

Paul Steege

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

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.

Paul Steege is an associate professor of history at Villanova University and coeditor of the electronic discussion list *H-German*.

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-86496-1 - Black Market, Cold War: Everyday Life in Berlin, 1946-1949

Paul Steege

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

Black Market, Cold War

Everyday Life in Berlin, 1946–1949

PAUL STEEGE

Villanova University



CAMBRIDGE
UNIVERSITY PRESS

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-86496-1 - Black Market, Cold War: Everyday Life in Berlin, 1946-1949

Paul Steege

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY PRESS

Cambridge, New York, Melbourne, Madrid, Cape Town, Singapore, São Paulo

Cambridge University Press

32 Avenue of the Americas, New York, NY 10013-2473, USA

www.cambridge.org

Information on this title: www.cambridge.org/9780521864961

© Paul Steege 2007

This publication is in copyright. Subject to statutory exception and to the provisions of relevant collective licensing agreements, no reproduction of any part may take place without the written permission of Cambridge University Press.

First published 2007

Printed in the United States of America

*A catalog record for this publication is available from the British Library.**Library of Congress Cataloging in Publication Data*

Steege, Paul, 1970–

Black market, Cold War : everyday life in Berlin, 1946–1949 / Paul Steege.

p. cm.

Includes bibliographical references and index.

ISBN-13: 978-0-521-86496-1 (hardback)

ISBN-10: 0-521-86496-8 (hardback)

1. Berlin (Germany) – History – 1945–1990. 2. Berlin (Germany) – History – Blockade, 1948–1949. 3. Cold War. 4. Berlin (Germany) – Strategic aspects.

I. Title.

DD881.S738 2007

943'.1550874–dc22 2006019642

ISBN 978-0-521-86496-1 hardback

Cambridge University Press has no responsibility for the persistence or accuracy of URLs for external or third-party Internet Web sites referred to in this publication and does not guarantee that any content on such Web sites is, or will remain, accurate or appropriate.

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-86496-1 - Black Market, Cold War: Everyday Life in Berlin, 1946-1949

Paul Steege

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

To my parents

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-86496-1 - Black Market, Cold War: Everyday Life in Berlin, 1946-1949

Paul Steege

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

Contents

<i>List of Maps, Tables, and Figures</i>	page viii
<i>List of Abbreviations</i>	xi
<i>Acknowledgments</i>	xv
<i>A Note on Terminology</i>	xix
Introduction	i
1. Postwar Berlin: The Continuities of Scarcity	18
2. October 1946: Rolling Back Soviet Power	64
3. June 1947: Berlin Politics in the Shadow of the Black Market	105
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
<i>Bibliography</i>	299
<i>Index</i>	329

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-86496-1 - Black Market, Cold War: Everyday Life in Berlin, 1946-1949

Paul Steege

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

List of Maps, Tables, and Figures

Maps

1	Occupied Germany, 1945–9.	<i>page</i> 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.	xxi
2	Illustration from <i>Life</i> 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

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-86496-1 - Black Market, Cold War: Everyday Life in Berlin, 1946-1949

Paul Steege

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

<i>List of Maps, Tables, and Figures</i>	ix
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

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-86496-1 - Black Market, Cold War: Everyday Life in Berlin, 1946-1949

Paul Steege

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

List of Abbreviations

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

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-86496-1 - Black Market, Cold War: Everyday Life in Berlin, 1946-1949

Paul Steege

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

xii

List of Abbreviations

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

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-86496-1 - Black Market, Cold War: Everyday Life in Berlin, 1946-1949

Paul Steege

Frontmatter

[More information](#)*List of Abbreviations*

xiii

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

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.

My remarkable colleagues in Villanova's history department helped make this a much better book than it might otherwise have been. The opportunity to read their work, engage them in regular conversation, and solicit their comments and criticisms provided the perfect mix of intellectual stimulus and collegiality and reminds me how pleasurable this intellectual work can and should be. Marc Gallicchio, Judy Giesberg, Jeff Johnson, Maghan Keita, Catherine Kerrison, Adele Lindenmeyr, Larry Little, Emmet McLaughlin, Charlene Mires, Rachel O'Toole, and Paul Rosier at various times patiently discussed this evolving project and offered numerous fruitful insights. Particular thanks are due Seth Koven for his generosity on both an intellectual and personal level. His regular encouragement to get to the core issues helped me to clarify my arguments and to reorganize the book in a way that brought those arguments to light.

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-86496-1 - Black Market, Cold War: Everyday Life in Berlin, 1946-1949

Paul Steege

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

Late in the project's dissertation stage, Bruce Cumings and Sheila Fitzpatrick raised questions that subsequently influenced its reworking. Thomas Lindenberger, Arnd Bauerkämper, Michael Lemke, Konrad Jarausch, and their colleagues at the Zentrum für Zeithistorische Forschung in Potsdam provided a welcome point of intellectual exchange during my regular trips to Berlin and consistently pointed me in productive directions. I am grateful to Lew Bateman at Cambridge University Press for his interest in this project, for the two anonymous readers whose comments and critiques did much to improve the manuscript, and to Christine Dunn, whose copyediting saved me from myself on many occasions.

The cohort of Central Europeanists during my time at the University of Chicago – Jim Bjork, Melissa Feinberg, Paul Hanebrink, Heikki Lempa, and Andre Wakefield – have been much more than onetime seminar classmates, and their friendship and intellectual engagement are inspiring. Thanks as well to Drew Bergerson, Mo Healy, and Pamela Swett, whose collaboration has helped me grasp more fully the implications of everyday life history. In Philadelphia and elsewhere, a number of colleagues have commented helpfully on portions of this work, especially Belinda Davis, Greg Eghigian, Geoff Eley, Fred Enssle, Martin Geyer, Ron Granieri, David Imhoof, Pieter Judson, Mark Landsman, Andy Lees, Jay Lockenour, and Troy Paddock. Of course, any errors and shortcomings remaining in the book are entirely my own.

My thanks as well to the archivists and staff who helped me find my way to the sources that made this study possible, including those at the Landesarchiv Berlin; the Bundesarchiv in Berlin-Lichterfelde; the National Archives in College Park, Maryland; the Archiv der sozialen Demokratie; the Brandenburgisches Landeshauptarchiv; the Landeshauptarchiv Sachsen-Anhalt; and the Archiv des Polizeipräsidiums, Berlin. At Villanova University, I came to rely on the dependably speedy assistance of the staff at Falvey Library. Donna Blaszkowski in Villanova's office of media technologies and creative design cheerfully accommodated my repeated requests for "small" changes to produce the remarkable maps. Thanks to graduate research assistants Jim Perrin, Catherine Holden, Kirsten Helgesson, Rachel Wineman, and Jeff Ludwig, who helped in many small ways that are hard to discern from the outside. Harold Hurwitz took time to share both his personal experiences in Berlin as well as his scholarly expertise. Martha Mautner generously offered insights into the flavor of life in postwar Berlin that would otherwise have been inaccessible. In Berlin, the Hasselblatt, Kent, and Tui-Lorenzl families deserve particular thanks for so regularly creating a second home for me

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-86496-1 - Black Market, Cold War: Everyday Life in Berlin, 1946-1949

Paul Steege

Frontmatter

[More information](#)*Acknowledgments*

xvii

in the city. Our many years of friendship have enriched me immeasurably. Thanks also to the Bakke, Heyn, and Hoffmann families for sharing their homes when they were away for extended periods. The staff and morning regulars at the Gryphon Café in Wayne, Pennsylvania, created the perfect mix of distraction and intellectual energy without which most of my revisions would never have happened.

I gratefully acknowledge permission to reproduce materials published elsewhere. An earlier version of Chapter 4 appeared in *Central European History* as “Holding on in Berlin: March 1948 and SED Efforts to Control the Soviet Zone.” Portions of Chapter 6 appeared as a chapter in *Earth Ways: Framing Geographical Meanings*, published by Lexington Books. Figures 3 and 5–14 appear courtesy of the Landesarchiv Berlin. Figure 4 appears courtesy of the United States National Archives. Research for this project was supported by the Friedrich Ebert Foundation, the Mellon Foundation, the Max-Planck-Institut für Geschichte, Villanova University, and a Bernadotte E. Schmitt Grant from the American Historical Association.

On a much more personal level, my wife Julie has watched this project evolve and patiently endured the occasional obsessions intrinsic to and personal sacrifices demanded by academic life. For her unwavering support and gentle humor, which prevents me from ever taking myself too seriously, I am eternally grateful. She and our two daughters share their boundless enthusiasm for life and are a source of constant joy. Thank you.

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.

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-86496-1 - Black Market, Cold War: Everyday Life in Berlin, 1946-1949

Paul Steege

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

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*.

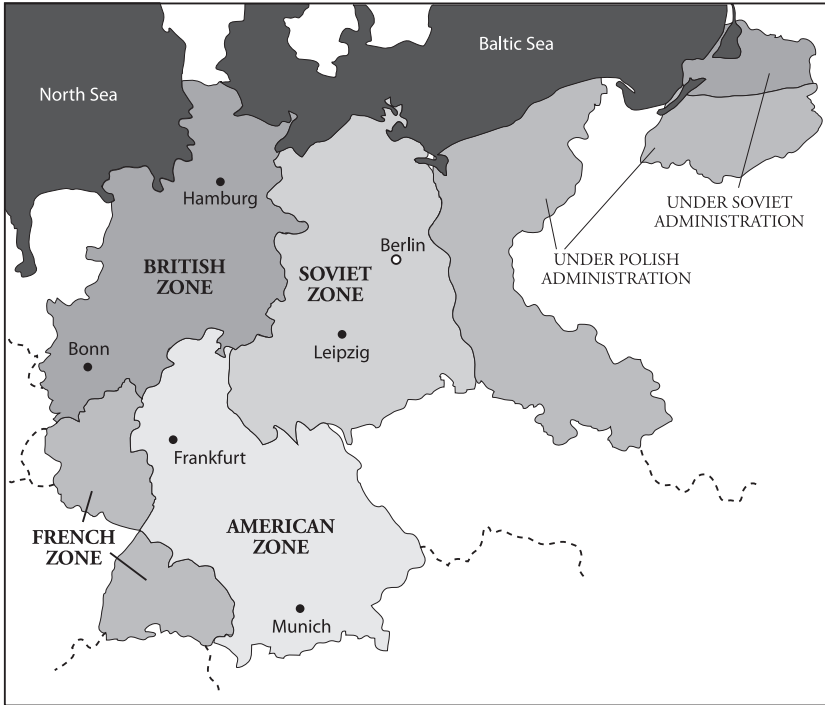
Even before the dual currency reforms in 1948, there were several currencies circulating in Berlin: the reichsmark (RM) – the official German currency – rentenmarks – the Weimar-era currency created to help resolve the 1923 hyperinflation crisis – and allied occupation scrip. The 1948 currency reform 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.

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-86496-1 - Black Market, Cold War: Everyday Life in Berlin, 1946-1949

Paul Steege

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

MAP 1. Occupied Germany, 1945–9. *Source:* Villanova University Office of Media Technologies.

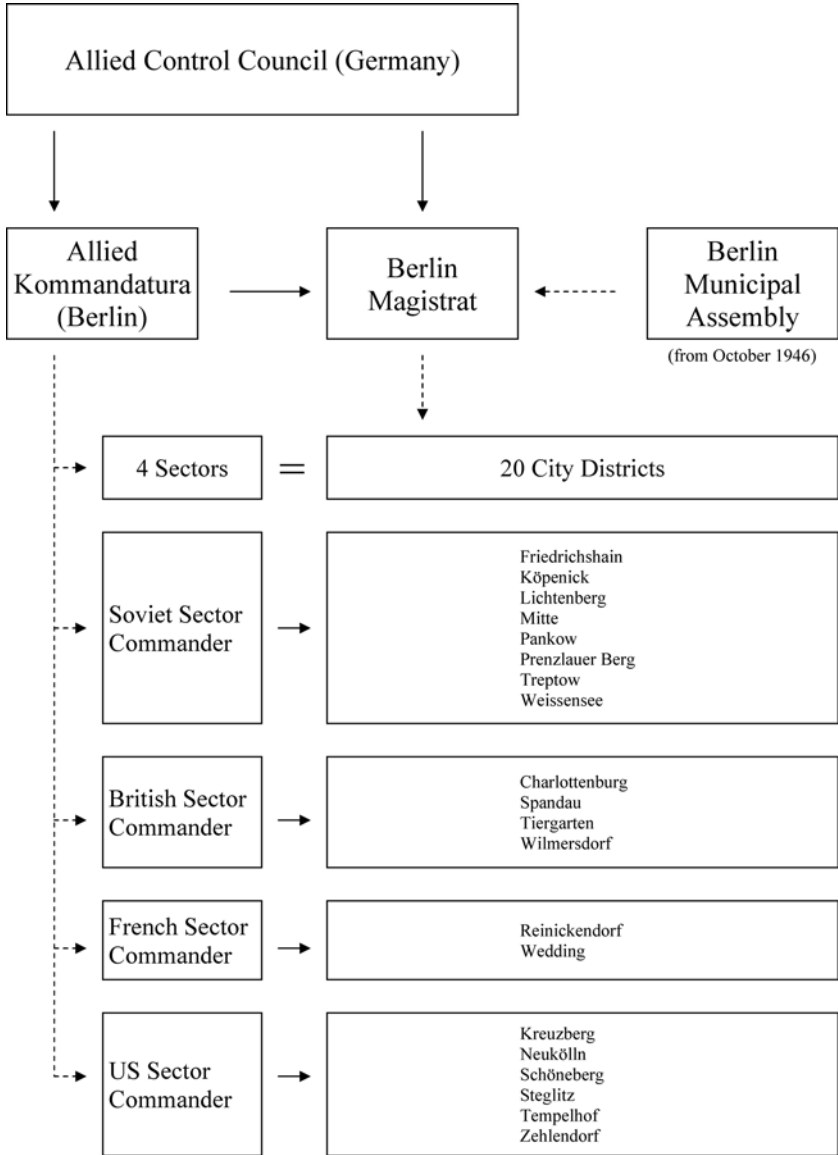


FIGURE 1. Lines of authority in postwar Berlin.

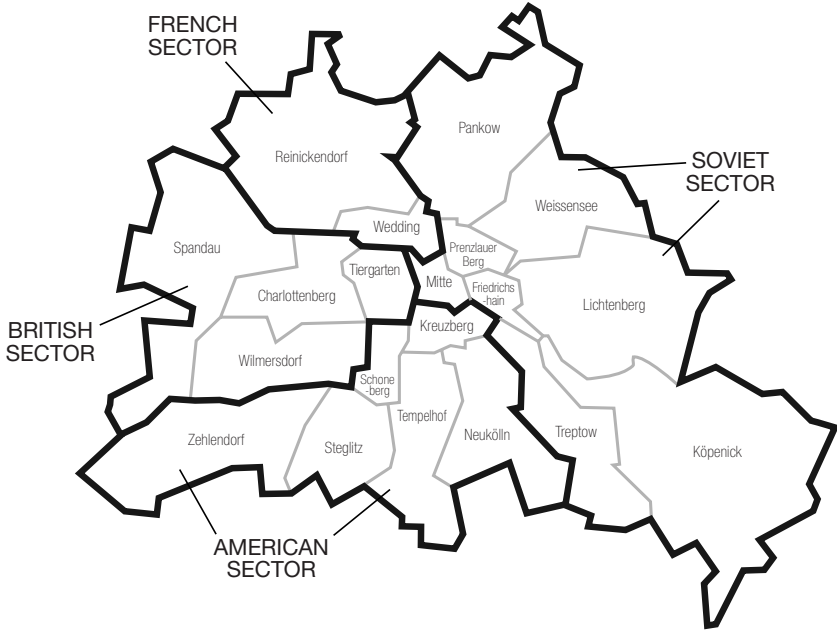
Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-86496-1 - Black Market, Cold War: Everyday Life in Berlin, 1946-1949

Paul Steege

Frontmatter

[More information](#)



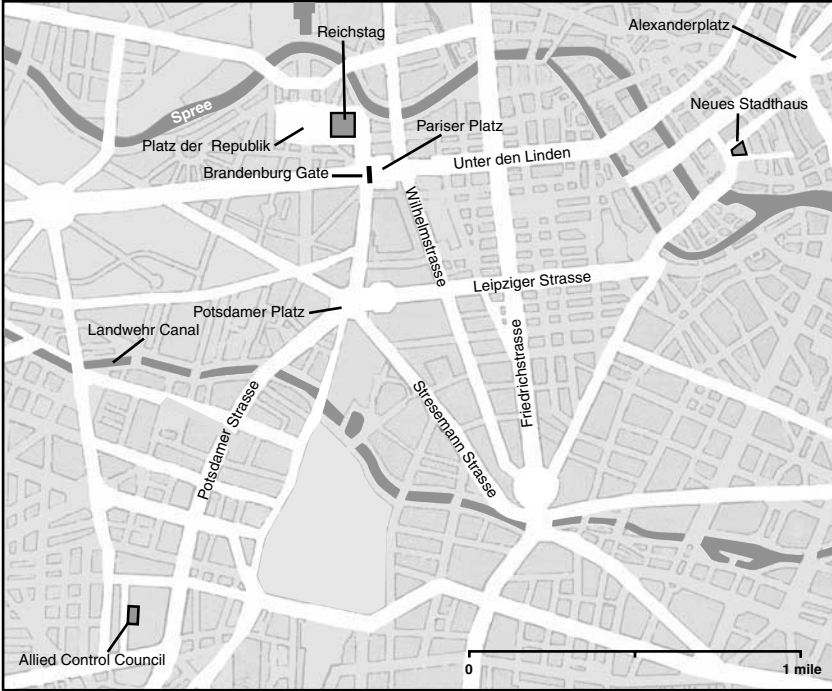
MAP 2. Postwar Berlin: Occupation Sectors and City Districts. *Source:* Villanova University Office of Media Technologies.

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-86496-1 - Black Market, Cold War: Everyday Life in Berlin, 1946-1949

Paul Steege

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

MAP 3. Berlin City Center. *Source:* Villanova University Office of Media Technologies.